

WHY THEY COME

By **MARY GRACE QUACKENBOS**
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SCANT one-third of the immigrants who land on our shores come voluntarily and of an intelligent desire to better their condition by hard work. Of these it is not the purpose of this article to treat. The remainder of the yearly output from foreign countries come here because they have been caught up and torn away from their native homes by the superior power of a vast and intricate "machine." In its main outlines this "machine" may be likened to an enormous dredging apparatus stretching forth gigantic cranes to every port of Europe, catching up and heaving back loads of emigrants collected from every corner of the eastern hemisphere by the tireless efforts of no less than 50,000 steamship agents and their canvassers. The fuel which energizes this colossal structure is an equally colossal greed for yearly dividends, and the combined intellects controlling our greatest steamship and railroad companies may be said to represent the engineer. The pivot upon which the entire mechanism turns is fraud and evasion of the United States immigration law.

No large city in the United States without its element of foreign-born purchasable voters, criminal cliques, "black handers," anarchists, paupers, its "cheap labor" supply controlled by foreign-born contractors, its overcrowded tenements breeding disease; furthermore, a careful estimate shows that about 90 per cent. of the unaccompanied immigrant male adults who enter our country are legally ineligible.

Our laws are therefore an ever recurrent subject of controversy. Yet, despite all discussion, no person will dispute but that an immigrant is desirable from every sane standpoint, if he has a reasonable amount of intelligence, is physically sound and of good moral character, is possessed of sufficient money earned by himself to cover the expense of his journey and comes here of his own initiative, capable for work, but not under contract to work at a wage which will lower the American standard. But this in plain language is precisely what our present immigration law requires; it is the legal definition of immigrant desirability.

To understand the real evil underlying the present condition of immigration we must take into consideration that while our dilettante theorists are consuming reams of paper with interesting reflections upon the "problem," while our country is in its chronic state of optimism over present conditions, whatever they are—and while our legislators are engaged in the passage of new, unnecessary and often impractical laws—thousands of foreigners excludable under the laws already passed are being yearly dumped upon our shores by various interests which work together as one machine. It is well known that the fabulous profits derived from an artificially stimulated immigration are participated in by the allied interests of the transatlantic steamship companies, the Ellis Island railroad pool and the Atlantic coastwise steamship lines. Co-operating, as they do, they run automatically of their own weight, practically without friction, and thrive by reason of a continuing abnormal immigrant supply. They all combine upon a single instrument—namely, the European steamship agent—to solicit a trade in immigrants that will appreciably increase passenger fares. He it is who, actuated by prospective fees which are dependent upon sales made, gives impulse to the "machine" by selling its "through tickets" in every European town and hamlet.

The several affiliated steamship lines, having created their zones of influence, enjoy what is practically a monopoly upon the sale of steerage tickets, and by spreading their field agents over the entire European territory from which immigrants are drawn they effectively suppress competition.

At the immigrant gateway of America, all these lines converge to hand over their immigrant cargoes to the other participants in the "machine."

From the vantage point at Ellis Island the railroad "pool"—known as the "Immigrant Clearing House," which is a combination of thirteen of our largest railroads, together with one of the consolidated steamship companies—takes the immigrants in hand to tag and forward them to every point in the country at special third-class rates.

The railroad "pool" finds it profitable to pay to the United States an annual rental of \$4,000 for its headquarters on government ground, where it sells special tickets "for the benefit of ship immigrants only" for rail transportation from New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore to about 7,000 selected places in the interior of the United States. Since these tickets, sold either in Europe or Ellis Island, are cheaper in price than can be obtained by our citizens, the plain intent of congress to close every avenue against railroad rate discrimination, as expressed in the laws relating to interstate commerce, is clearly defied. Further, the "committee" by which this "pool" is managed restricts its private rate book—"Joint Tariff No. 13"—to the use of the European steamship agents and the "pool's" "joint agents" here, and it is said that the individual companies of the "pool" share in succession in the lucrative profits.

It is also said that the railroad companies, as well as the coastwise steam-

ship companies, regularly pay commissions for inland transportation to the Atlantic steamship companies, where such transportation is purchased from the European steamship agents of these steamship companies in Europe.

And so the "machine"—an aggregate of these commercial interests—with its employment of not less than 50,000 European agents and sub-agents whose sole purpose is to pack the steerage and load the trains with its secret operations fortified by enormous resources, backed by the best intelligence in both continents—is practically in control of all the channels of immigration.

Vigorous attempts are being made to successfully combat every law now before congress which will reduce the number of these agents by restricting immigration, while repeated violations of our present laws are regularly practised and may be classed under two main heads.

1.—SOLICITING AN ARTIFICIAL EMIGRATION IN EUROPE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE STEAMSHIP COMPANIES.

2.—MISLEADING AND CONCEALING THE ADMISSION OF IMMIGRANTS INTO THIS COUNTRY TO PREVENT A REDUCTION OF PROFITS.

Under the first heading the specific violations are:

(a) **SOLICITING EMIGRANTS.** This is "forbidden on the part of transportation companies, owners of vessels or others engaged in transporting aliens into the United States." For every violation there is a penalty of \$1,000.—(Sec. 7, U. S. Immigration Act of February 20, 1907.)

(b) **DECEITFUL CONTRACT LABORERS.** This includes those who have been "assisted, encouraged or induced to migrate by offers or promises of employment or in consequence of agreements, oral, written or printed, express or implied, to perform labor in this country of any kind, skilled or unskilled." For every violation of this law there is a penalty of \$1,000.—(Sec. 7, U. S. Immigration Act, February 20, 1907.)

(c) **ASSISTING ALIENS TO MIGRATE BY REPAYING THEIR PASSAGE.** "One whose ticket or passage is paid for with the money of another, or who is assisted by others to migrate, is excludable alien.—(Sec. 2, U. S. Immigration Act, February 20, 1907.)

In a single case all three of these violations are too often found. The following is an illustration.

A well-known American citizen, and a member of the Mississippi bar, is a member of a firm of cotton "factors" which employs Italian immigrants upon its plantation. An Italian steamship agent, whose brother solicited emigrants in Italy, worked in this plantation commissary.

It was the agent's practice to extract from immigrants upon the plantation the names and addresses of their kindred living in Italy. These he forwarded to his brother, who in turn persuaded them to become cotton workers.

Such remunerative commissions resulted that the agent soon left the planter's commissary and, moving to a business center in the Yazoo delta district, built up upon an extensive scale a general business of importing contract laborers, which he termed "Italian products." He published the following notice:

ITALIANS! If you have not money to send passage fares to your relatives, I have the possibility of making them come here with the understanding that they will place themselves where they are assigned, lands the most fertile, conditions the best."

He furnished laborers for the surrounding cotton farmers, and among other influential patrons was the planter named above, who ordered a number of Italians for a second plantation which he controlled. Names of persons in Italy, accordingly furnished and the planter sent the agent a check of some \$3,866.50, with which to purchase "prepaid tickets," as well as \$750 which was to be divided among the new arrivals in sums of \$10 each for display at Ellis Island. As a matter of fact the planter's money had gone from his pocket to the "machine" via the Mississippi agent, also via the same agent to the agent of the steamship line, and from thence to the steamship agent in Italy, who delivered "through tickets" to the Italians.

The Italian families promised before they left Italy to work out their transportation here, but it was the planter's policy to take the extra precaution of charging the advance he made against the account

of the Italian who furnished him names, which secure him against loss in case his imported laborers were refused a landing. The agent, however, arranged with this Italian to write the expected cotton workers individually and direct them how to violate the United States immigration law by giving them the following instructions:

They must pay great attention not to know at all that they have somebody in America who has prepared work for them or that they, the families, have entered into an agreement or contract.

If they say anything the opposite of what I am telling you they will absolutely be sent back to Italy. Also you will have to inform these families that the necessary money for their landing in New York will be handed them when they arrive in that city.

This shows plainly the three violations of law mentioned before—the Italians were solicited, they were imported as contract laborers and their tickets were prepaid. All but one or two entered the country successfully, making their false statements at Ellis Island, insisting, as per instructions given, that they themselves had paid for their tickets, that the money they exhibited was their own and also that they had made no contracts for work.

The unique feature about this transaction is that the planter, being a lawyer, availed himself of the legal quibble of calling his imported laborers "settlers," when as a matter of fact they were clearly contract laborers, whose entrance into this country is prohibited by law.

An even more striking law-breaking practice, however—and one which cannot fall to be a serious menace to our nation's welfare because it is so far-reaching—is that in which the immigrant appears as principal and commits perjury in violation of section 24 of the act of February 20, 1907, when he encounters the immigrant inspectors or board of special inquiry at Ellis Island. In this case he may be punished severely, if detected, while the steamship agent, as suborner and accessory before the fact, has no cause for reprobation, being beyond the arm of the law if he keeps out of the country. This violation falls under the general head No. II before mentioned, and is explained as follows:

Before the "machine" begins to load its daily steerage hold with emigrants the agent carefully coaches them in the questions and answers which constitute the Ellis Island inspection. This is intended to secure alike for the agent and the emigrant freedom from detection. These questions and answers the emigrant receives from the agent, together with his steerage ticket; he is told to commit them to memory and not to forget to throw the paper into the sea before the ship reaches America. It is made clear to him that to answer the questions according to the list, regardless of fact, is a prerequisite for entrance into the United States.

The steamship agent and sub-agent have come to be the most unique figures in European life today. By their secrecy, collusion and the almost hypnotic power they exercise over the ignorant minds, they are in such association with each other that they may be even more accurately described as a "fraternity" than the widely feared Black Hand society and the influence they exercise upon the destiny of our nation and upon the immigrants themselves is far more alarming. They hold the real key to the immigration situation.

An idea as to the extent of the returns may be gathered from what was told me by a steamship agent in a small community of the southern Peloponnese, Greece—a town so far from a railroad that one must ride nine hours mule back to reach the nearest station. This worthy said that in five years he had cleared in drachmas a sum equal to \$30,000. He had been in the United States to study the commercial aspect of immigration, and his brother was a Greek consul here. Returning home, all he had to do was to talk and talk again—everywhere—on the road, in the coffee houses, on the village green, near the fountain at sunset when men rest their cattle and

women draw water. He was "friend" in the homes of the despondent and to the poverty-stricken; he proffered sympathy to those who were heavily taxed; he listened to the various events in their lives and awakened the dormant impulse to migrate which is born in every human heart. Thus he created a demand for his steerage tickets by spreading discontent with home surroundings and by arousing hope and enthusiasm for America, always promising that there "everything will be all right."

Hardly any commercial enterprise in Europe is more remunerative than that of encouraging emigration. From the sale of a single ticket several fees accrue which, fully computed, range from five to twenty-five dollars per emigrant. There is a commission upon the sale of the steerage ticket and the agent charges a third to the emigrant if he can; extra fees are added for procuring various official papers which the emigrant is told he needs; large fees are taxed for placing jetty mortgages and making loans of money secured by the promises of friends in the community, for which interest runs as high as 30 or 50 per cent.; while "helpers" who escort the emigrant to embarking points and march them to the pier—likewise emigrant-house keepers, money exchanges, ship interpreters—must be paid. On this side of the water at Ellis Island, there are other speculators, various persons "interested in the welfare of aliens," that insist upon sending telegrams from them, selling them food, changing their money, handling their baggage; and, frequently, on a plea of escorting them to their place of destination, runners will "guide" immigrants into the hands of some labor agent by which they are paid, thus drawing double fees.

One may think the agent conscienceless in his greed for gain, but on the other hand, he is gleaming profits greater than his own for men far above him in the business world. The "machine" depends upon him for passenger fares; contractors depend upon him for gangs of "greeners" to dominate and exploit; American employers beckon to the cheap labor which he alone can provide; even his own government may be tempted to withhold interference with all his maneuvers, for is he not an instrument through which wealth and benefit to his nation is accumulated? Bank deposits certainly are augmented through his efforts; economic and industrial conditions are improved; the large head tax also which is gleaned through his efforts brings a substantial increase to his nation's revenue; while the relief from supporting too many poor; from educating too many illiterates, perhaps also the temptation to quietly scatter criminals—who knows!—all are surely brought about through the efforts of the steamship agent. The respect accorded to him by all seems only to increase his zeal.

Mastering the situation from all sides, he systematizes his work and makes it efficient through a painstaking, persistent study of the lower classes of Europe—their weaknesses and their wants, and with a provident eye on the future, he trains his son from early manhood in all the intricacies of his subtle trade. In time he becomes all things to all men, he is never discouraged, and is able to wheedle almost every person within his reach into the belief that America is the great and only goal.

We have seen that our government officials are hoodwinked daily by thousands of foreigners, deposited at our ports by these allied interests, carefully coached in deceit by their agents. Fraud starts the immigrant upon his journey; fraud lands him in America. Fraud is merged into the very name "America!" The immigrant does not fully realize what he is doing, his trust is in his own countrymen and not in the people of a strange land.

Culture at any Cost

"We came back from Sicily this October," said a literary woman, "on a big emigrant boat. Along with some 1,500 Hungarians were five Americans, forced, like ourselves, out of their regular route by the cholera in Naples. They had embarked at Fiume and were already warm friends with each other and with the officers, so we newcomers decided not to 'butt in,' but to spend most of our time reading. There was only the officers' library and the only really worthwhile book in it was loaned, so the ship's doctor informed me. 'It's Henry James' 'Ambassador,'" he continued, 'and the lady from Oklahoma has it.'

"She not only had it, but she kept it. Morning, noon and night it was under her arm, as jealously guarded as a nun guards her breviary. About a week later, when we had scraped acquaintance, she accosted me one morning with, 'Say, I hear you write, so maybe you can tell me what this man's trying to get at, anyway?' I can't make head nor tail of the darned thing! I suppose you've heard of him, haven't you? His name's Henry James."

"Hoping to discourage her into giving up the book, I assured her she was not the first who had been unmercifully tortured by Henry's curious, involved style—that that was precisely what he was noted for and that nobody ever pretended to understand him.

"There, now, she ejaculated, 'I knew I'd get a lemon the minute I struck the first page! It made me so mad I felt like chucking it overboard. But you see, the doctor, who lent it to me, told me it was a sign of culture to be seen reading Henry James, so I'm going to stick to it right straight through the whole voyage.' And she did."

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A Most Impressive Arab
 Sir Conan Doyle Tells of a Night Spent With Him in the Desert.
 "It was now evening, and it was decided that the two caravans should camp together—an arrangement which was the more welcome as we were by no means sure that we had seen the last of the marauders. I had invited the leader of the Arabs to have supper with me, and, after a long exercise of prayer with his followers, he came to join me, but my attempt at hospitality was thrown away, for he would not touch the excellent wine which I had unpacked for him, nor would he eat any of my dainties, contenting himself with stale bread, dried dates, and water. After this meal we sat alone by the smouldering fire, the magnificent arch of the heavens above us of that deep, rich blue with those gleaming, clear-cut stars which can only be seen in that dry desert air.
 "Our camp lay in silence before us, and no sound reached our ears save the dull murmur of the voices of our companions and the occasional shrill cry of a jackal among the sandhills around us. Face to face I sat with this strange man, the glow of the fire beating upon his eager and imperious features and reflecting from his passion-lashed eyes. It was the strangest vigil, and one which will never pass from my recollection. I have spoken with many wise and famous men upon my travels, but never with one who left the impression of this one.
 "And yet much of his talk was unintelligible to me, though, as you are aware, I speak Arabian like an Arab. It rose and fell in the strangest way. Sometimes it was the babble of a child, sometimes the incoherent ravings of a fanatic, sometimes the lofty dreams of a prophet and philosopher. There were times when his stories of demons, of miracles, of dreams, and of omens were such as an old woman might tell to please the children of an evening. There were others when, as he talked with shining face of his converse with angels of the intentions of the Creator, and the end of the universe, I felt as if I were in the company of some one more than mortal, some one who was indeed the direct messenger of the Most High."
 —Sir A. Conan Doyle in Scribner's Magazine.