

NEW IMMIGRATION NET

How Other Causes Have Anticipated Effect of the Dillingham Act

By REMSEN CRAWFORD.

On Ellis Island, the nation's main gateway of immigration where eighty-five per cent. of the immigrants land on Uncle Sam's threshold, there arrived during the last month of March—which month is known to mark the beginning of the Spring tide of immigration—only 43,114 aliens. In 1914, preceding the war, the March arrivals on Ellis Island exceeded 82,000. The arrivals for April, just past, numbered 46,101, as compared with 115,000 for April, 1914.

Moreover, the official records of Ellis Island show that during last March 11,854 aliens departed from the port of New York, leaving a net balance of only 31,260 incoming foreigners. During April 25,181 aliens departed from New York by transatlantic steamers, leaving a net balance of just 20,920 immigrants for that month. Indeed, immigration from the desolated countries of Europe to the United States since the war, contrary to all expectations, has been flowing at the rate of about half what it was prior to the great conflict, and what loomed high as a national menace vanished like a shadow long before it reached the glare of the Liberty light.

Explain it? Certainly. For the first time since it was enacted the National Immigration law, the best in the world, has been enforced with something like decent precision. Emigrants from war-torn Europe have been halted at the gangplanks at the ports of embarkation. They were halted, first by an extra *cordon sanitaire* thrown around them by the American Public Health Service, again by rigid passport regulations enforced by the State Department, and thousands of them were turned back by news from America that there was no work, no high wages here.

The New Law.

As if to make assurance doubly sure, however, Congress has passed an act providing for still further restrictions, based upon a 3 per cent. prorating of nationals of foreign lands residing here under the census of 1910. This act, known as the Dillingham law, has just gone into effect. It is the claim of the believers in the new law that it will keep out of the country as long as it lasts one million aliens a year. This reckoning is based upon the high tide of immigration before the war when foreigners came here at the rate of 1,400,000 in a single year. By the terms of the Dillingham law it has been figured that only about 415,000 from all lands can come in a single year. "Therefore," comes the conclusion, and nobody can deny its logic, "the new law will keep out about a million a year."

In an earnest aim to arrive at the truth about immigration, can any one ignore the fact that during the first year of the resumption of immigration after the war, so far from registering 1,400,000, the immigration gateways of the entire country only scored a grand total of 633,371 arrivals, and that alien departures in this period numbered 423,062?

Does it not appear that the so-called immigration evil had begun to right itself by enforcement of the laws we already had? With no murmur of complaint about the new restrictions—they are only for one year and nobody will be hurt so long as industry lags—is there not room for the argument that the United States was already well safeguarded if the old law had been strictly enforced? Will it be necessary to continue the new law longer than its specified time limit of one year? Already the alarmists are beginning to do this. A movement has been started in Congress completely to revise all immigration laws and make permanent the plan of limiting immigrants by nationalities as well as handpicking them individually by the selective tests hitherto relied upon to keep out undesirables. Behind this movement lies a dread of seeing the old Nordic type of American extinguished by a deluge of humanity from Southern and Southeastern Europe.

To seriously urge this point of the deterioration of the Nordic strain in the individual type of the modern American as an argument against immigration from Southern Europe seems like lending one's self to insincerity, so plain are these truths: that we are building up groups in America rather than blending bloods and that the groups and not the blood present the problem for our lawmakers to solve. Not a large city, but there is a "Little Italy," or a "Little Hungary," or a "Little Greece" within its confines and the increase of population within these groups is rarely ever of other parentage, practically never of an old stock American mixture.

Need of an Object Lesson.

In his daily observations of the tide of immigration at Ellis Island for a year and a half the writer of this article has often thought that it might be a good plan for all the doctrinaires and theorists to be brought together there where things might be threshed out completely and the so-called immigration problem be cleared of its hypothetic fogs. Let the publicist who laments the tide of immigration since 1880 be asked this question and answer yes or no: "Would you exchange the America of 1921 for the America of 1880, plus the speculative achievements of the population of that day?" There are but thirty-two persons to the square mile in the United States, sixteen in North America, including Canada. There are 120 in Europe to the square mile.

The United States has sacrificed nothing because of immigration since 1880, but has grown greater, and is now growing greater every day. Sentiment?

Said President Harding the other day to a line of soldiers assembled around the coffins of their dead comrades:

"When I was making the inspection I was not so much concerned about the insignia on the shoulders of the service men who served so faithfully in the war; I was rather caught by the blend of racial origin in the faces of the men. I saw in this group the citizens and defenders of the Republic who, it seemed to me, came from origin across the seas that represent almost every land in the civilized world. Here is youthful, fighting America, which is the blend of citizenship of the old world. There is nothing finer than the equality in the United States of America."

Few American citizens are familiar with the immigration laws. Little is known of the methods of applying the selective tests. Ellis Island's management for many years past has failed to take the public into its confidence. There is a clause in the laws which says the hearings of immigrants before the Boards of Special Inquiry shall be held apart from the public. When the Act of

October 16, 1918, for the deportation of anarchists or revolutionists was passed this method of conducting hearings was not changed, so the trials of all persons accused of seeking to overthrow the Government by force had to be held behind closed doors.

Those Who Are Barred.

Handcapped as he has been in getting the news of the immigration station during the seventeen months he has been stationed on Ellis Island, the writer of this article knows that the immigration laws of 1917 now in effect and which will be continued even under the further restrictions of the new law as a means of individual inspection could hardly be improved upon. If they were rigidly enforced the United States would be safeguarded from all Orientals of unassimilable characteristics, including the East Indians who are shut out by a barred geographical zone. This nation would be protected against feeble-minded aliens, aliens with contagious diseases, alcoholics, insane, deformed, crippled, or infirm aliens.

No children under sixteen are admitted without relatives or legal guardians to send them to school and guarantee that they will not become public charges, according to the law. Criminals, or persons with criminal records, are excluded. Prostitutes, or persons of immorality, or procurers of persons for immoral purposes, are excluded. Persons under contract to perform labor, persons whose tickets are purchased by any other person, firm or corporation, persons who may have been deported within a year, are all excluded under the law from the United States.

The act of Oct. 16, 1918, known as the Anti-anarchist law, specially provides for the debarment of any person who may believe in anarchy, or the overthrow of government by violence, and for the expulsion of that person should he be an alien resident of the country.

The so-called literacy test requires that an alien over 16 years old who cannot read forty words in any language be excluded from the United States. It took fifty years of continual agitation on the part of immigration restrictionists to get this test in the law of the land. Three Presidents vetoed it—Cleveland, Taft and Wilson. It has resulted in hardships to a comparatively few who were deported, but under its exemptions many thousands of illiterates continue to come to the United States and, if otherwise admissible, are let into the country.

The New Restrictions.

But this glimpse of the law should be sufficient to clearly establish the fact

that the United States is well protected and has been prior to the enactment of mandatory restriction if the laws are properly enforced. In perfect fairness it should be stated that the fault for not enforcing the law in the past lies not with the boards of special inquiry on Ellis Island.

The boards of special inquiry, composed for the most part of men of the so-called "old stock" Americans have done their duty and rendered a verdict of "excluded" in the case of thousands of aliens who have later been admitted under bond by the discretionary power given to the Secretary of Labor. In a great many cases Congressmen intercede for the alien invoking the exercise of this discretionary power on the part of the Secretary of Labor. It isn't that the Secretary of Labor enjoys the practice of using this discretionary power that hampers the enforcement of the law. He probably would be glad to be rid of the job of determining the destiny of immigrants, persistently, pathetically appealing to him to let them enter the country. Congressmen, too, would probably prefer to be free from the obligation to intercede for the relatives of their clients.

An independent commission like the Interstate Commerce Commission, composed of men of sterling worth, and a law making it a misdemeanor for a Federal officer holder to use his influence before that commission interceding for an alien who had been excluded on examination, might be a means of securing better enforcement of the immigration laws.

Italy will be the country whose people are most severely handicapped by the new restrictions on immigration. Only 40,294 will be permitted to come from Italy during the next year under the new law. In 1920 there were 99,295 immigrants from Italy, and in 1914, 283,738. Austria will have a maximum of 19,500. In 1914 Austria-Hungary ran a close second to Italy with 278,152. Based upon the German population of the United States in 1910, there would be an allotment of more than 50,000 German immigrants to the United States next year, and from all accounts there will be fully that many clamoring to come, but it is interesting to note that in 1914 there were but 35,735 German immigrants to the United States, or about the same number as came from Greece. England, on the new schedule, stands to send a maximum of 26,332 immigrants next year; Ireland, 40,000, and Scotland 7,800. This would make a total of about the same number as came from the United Kingdom in 1914, which was 73,417. France will be allowed a maximum immigration of only 3,500 for the next twelve months, as compared with an average from that country of about 9,000 a year. Scandinavians may come to the number of about 37,000, while only 17,000 of them came last year and only 29,391 came in 1914 from Norway, Denmark and Sweden.