

# The Commercial

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## IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES.

For some years there has been a growing feeling in the United States against the wholesale immigration of foreigners into the country. As the country settles up this feeling increases. A few years ago when the great western states and territories of the Republic were practically uninhabited, immigration was greatly desired, and the people were not so particular as to the quality of their immigrants either. The western railway companies, which owned large grants of land, and were anxious to sell these lands, as well as to get the country settled to provide traffic for their roads, placarded the civilized world with the most alluring descriptions of their respective districts. The great Republic was the el dorado of the world, and all were invited to come and enjoy its advantages.

But now matters have considerably changed. Already in even some of the more recently settled states, population has grown so surprisingly that people are beginning to elbow each other for room. Some of the railways in the west still own considerable land which they wish to dispose of, and they are, of course, anxious to increase settlement, with the object of extending their traffic. On the other hand, however, the idea is gaining ground that the remaining unsettled portion of the public domain should be held in trust for the rising generation of native-born citizens. Although a number of the western and southwestern states are yet very sparsely settled, the dread of overcrowded population in the future is beginning to be felt, and the tendency of the day is to discourage, rather than encourage immigration. This has been shown in various ways, from the platform, in the press, and in legislation.

The opposition to Chinese immigration is long-standing, and the reasons therefor are generally well known. This opposition culminated a few months ago in the passage of the monstrous Chinese exclusion bill, an act most unworthy of a civilized nation. Another form of opposition to immigration has come from the labor organizations. In fact the earliest opposition to immigration came from organized labor, and has been persistently followed up by such societies, with consider-

able effect. The labor organizations protested against the introduction of foreign labor into the country, on the ground that already there was an over-supply at home. This led to the passage of the Contract Labor act, providing that no laborers should be brought into the country on contract. That is, foreigners should not be engaged to come to the United States under contract or agreement to work.

Another reason for the growing feeling against immigration has come from the disturbances of a political and social nature, caused by the foreign element. The foreigner has come to be an institution in United States politics, and the most disreputable and contemptible of party tricks have been designed to catch or influence the foreign vote. The respectable portion of native population are beginning to resent this state of affairs. They reasonably ask:—"Why should this noisy foreign element exert such an influence in our national affairs, and introduce disturbing elements into our social and political life which are entirely foreign to our institutions?"

This is all quite right, and the citizens of the United States should discourage these exhibitions of foreign hatred in their national life. But really is this boisterous foreign element as much to blame for the exhibitions which have been made, as are the politicians who have worked up, pandered and encouraged it? If national questions have been made subservient to foreign prejudices, are not the politicians who seek to profit by such prejudices really the guilty parties? Though this will doubtless be admitted, yet the result has been to foster the growing feeling against immigration generally, which is not to be wondered at.

This growing feeling against immigration has recently found expression at Washington, in a bill introduced to further restrict immigration. The immigration committee has been making investigations during the past year, and as a result has reported a bill "prohibiting the admittance into the United States of idiots, paupers, and those who have been convicted of crime or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude, persons afflicted with a loathsome or contagious disease, or those coming under contract to work in this country, except university professors or ministers of the gospel. The penalty for a person violating this provision or assisting another to violate it is

a fine of \$1,000 dollars on conviction within two years. No vessel is to bring over more than one passenger to every five registered tons, computing two children between one and eight as one person. The penalty for violation of this provision is \$500 fine for each excess passenger. A vessel bringing immigrants is made responsible for the head tax of \$5 which each is required to pay. Intending emigrants are to prove good character three months prior to embarkation before the United States consul, who is to receive no fee for certificate. It is made obligatory on common carriers to notify United States officials before the landing of the number of the aliens on board. The secretary of the treasury is given power to carry out the provisions of the act."

If this bill becomes law, it will show that the feeling in the United States in favor of restricting immigration is becoming very strong. In respect to Anarchists and persons of this class, the committee urges the necessity of their exclusion from the country. The committee regrets that a large number of the immigrants arriving, especially the coal miners and laboring class, are not suited to become citizens of the country. Many are of a very low order of intelligence, and of vicious habits. In the coal regions it is claimed this undesirable foreign element has almost completely driven out native laborers, their mode of life enabling them to exist on lower wages than the more advanced native miners. The report of the committee concludes as follows:

"The committee believe that the time has come when immigration should be more effectively regulated, that persons who immigrate to the United States should at least be composed of those who in good faith desire to become its citizens and are worthy to be such."

This concluding paragraph epitomises the whole question of immigration in a few lines.

The effect upon Canada of the passage of such an act as the one outlined above, by the United States would be considerable. It would likely have the effect of turning quite a tide of undesirable immigration towards this country. Heretofore Canada has had little to complain of in this matter, immigration to this country on the whole being of a superior class in comparison with that going into the United States. Dynamiters, Anarchists, Communists, and the lower classes