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Presented

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Mar. 6, 1905.

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**ADDRESS**

ON

**CONTINENTAL IMMIGRATION**

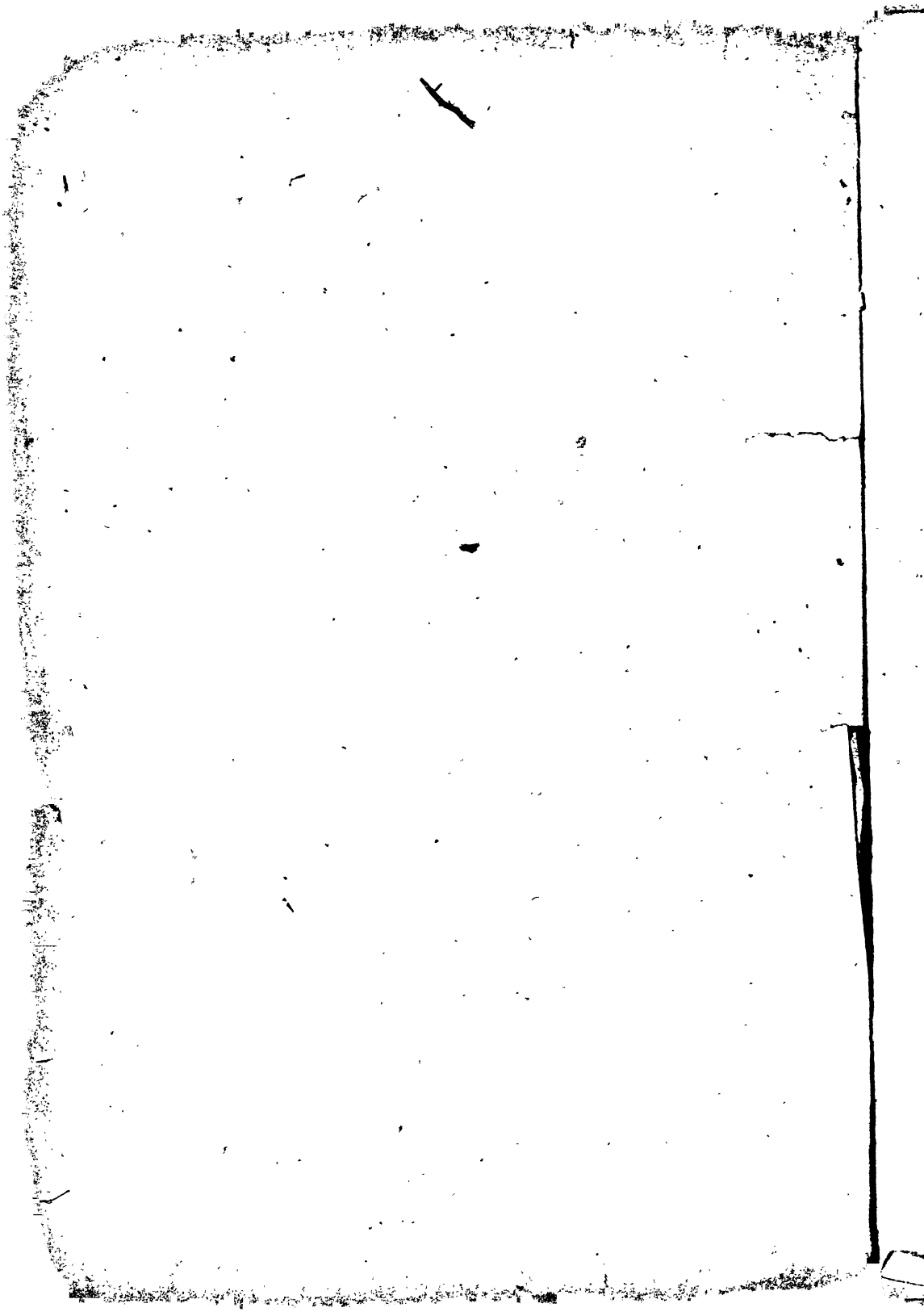
BY

**MADAME VON KOERBER.**

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Delivered before the City Council of Toronto, Ont.  
September, 1879.

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ADDRESS  
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CONTINENTAL IMMIGRATION,

BY  
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Madame Von Koerber, who was in the Council Chamber at the invitation of the Mayor, then appeared before the Council, and read the following address upon the subject of Immigration from European Continental countries :—

GENTLEMEN,—I have been kindly invited by His Worship the Mayor of this city, to address you to-night on a subject to which I have devoted many years of attention, and several years of actual labour—that of Emigration and Immigration. Immigration is the all-important point for the promotion of the welfare of this country, contrary opinions notwithstanding. I was anxious to address the municipality of this city, because Toronto is the key to this Province, the centre of commerce and industry, and ought, therefore, for mere personal consideration, so to speak, take a warm interest in the promotion of Immigration, and follow with full knowledge of the facts, the development and results of the Government's different Immigration schemes. But Toronto is also the seat of intelligence and of enlightened liberal ideas, and as such it would

be anxious to learn the bearing of this question as it applies to other countries than England, and to other subjects than mere personal interest; and thus Immigration soon becomes one of the most interesting of studies. Pre-supposing all this being the case, and that most of the gentlemen present have heard of my name as being connected with Emigration work in Switzerland, Germany and Austria, I may proceed to give you a short sketch of—

- 1.—Why I connected myself with Emigration matters.
- 2.—How and with what means I did it.
- 3.—What is the result of my work?
- 4.—What should be done in future, as far as regards the European Continent?

I have mentioned on another occasion that I consider a well-regulated and organized emigration the only rational means of relieving, to some degree, the over-crowded populations of Europe. I say, a well regulated and organized Emigration. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to reach influences which I was sure I would reach sooner or later, and it is for this reason that I connected my name with a work which stands in such bad repute—a work which pre-supposes mere mercenary principles, and those even of the meanest kind.

Organizing emigration—which organization comprises in itself a certain degree of protection, removal of difficulties, saving of time and money, and thereby assisting a portion of mankind to a better future—is, in my estimation, a work worthy of the noblest minds, but it is not commonly understood as such. You have no conception of the amount of distrust which exists towards any emigration movements—distrust which I think myself perfectly justified, for in many cases it is really but a traffic and speculation in human kind. On the Continent, your antagonists are, in the first place, this very distrust and the ignorance of the masses; in the second, the aversion of the Governments, influenced by the mistaken idea that a diminution of the population is a loss to the country, which idea is fostered by the interest of the possessing classes, whose endeavour it is to retain the masses, so that they can be employed at “starving prices.” Last and not least, the energetic endeavours of agents of other countries to spread damaging reports concerning Canada abroad. It was, therefore, not an easy task to try and overcome these prejudices, and turn the current of the stream of Emigration, to some degree at least, to a country so utterly unknown, or known to

disadvantage, as Canada is. In order to refute such reports, and make Canada a fair and honoured competitor for Continental emigration, I proceeded to Switzerland, where I had to fear no interference on the part of the Government. Now Switzerland is so small a country that it would appear to most of you an easy matter to gain entrance there; but take into consideration that this small country is divided into twenty-two cantons, each having its own Government, its own laws, its own press, (and there are over 250 newspapers in that little country), that the laws are strict concerning emigration, and that one has to suffer much persecution and many snares laid by shipping agents; besides, the Swiss are naturally the most distrustful people in the world. I say, if you take all this into consideration, then you will attach a little more than ordinary attention to the fact that I have formed several Swiss settlements in the Free Grant Districts of Ontario, composed of pioneers from some ten cantons. These people have now spent some three, and some two years in this country; they are able to judge the future as well as the present of it, and they have a correct idea as to their own expectations. These Swiss colonists have recently sent to the Department at Ottawa two letters, which they have desired to have published in Switzerland, so as to enlighten their countrymen as to the true condition of Canada. Switzerland has a yearly emigration of from 3,000 to 10,000 souls, which might be brought even to 13,000. Emigration has taken place from there in some shape or other for centuries, and it must of necessity take place. It is, therefore, quite in keeping with honourable principles to use legitimate means to draw part of this emigration to Canada, a country which suits them so much better than South America or the Southern States of North America, to which many resort at present. I may mention here, that during the last three years, emigration of agriculturists only has been encouraged, yet it happens not unfrequently that the shipping agents send others, sometimes at the most unpropitious season. This state of things will continue until the Canadian Government will accept my advice, and enter into a direct understanding with the Continental Governments as to the introduction of a system of control, to which I shall be happy at any time to give the outlines. I hope it is not considered arrogant or presumptuous if I mention here that I have succeeded in winning for myself a position of confidence with the Swiss Government—that my opinion has been resorted to with regard to new laws for the stricter control of

shipping agents, which laws are to benefit the emigrants, and that the President of the Republic has expressed the wish that I might be officially accredited to his Government.

To gain such a position of confidence has been my great success on the Continent, where the work of a Government Agent is so entirely different from a similar position in England, and where he ought to hold a position of higher trust and standing, because he must work only through his personal influence, and with the Governments and with the leading public. I think the Canadian Government has made one great mistake in overlooking this one point, as far at least as the Continent is concerned; and it is one which it should keep strictly in view in any future plans it may contemplate. Agents have hitherto been *quasi* accessories merely to shipping agents; and emigrant shipping agents as a whole are not much trusted either by the Governments or by the public. The scheme which I should propose to Canada to pursue for the promotion of emigration would be, to charge its delegate to Germany and Switzerland with the task of carefully selecting men of the country—men identified and familiar with its interests and necessities—men of good and influential standing, and who, above all, are known in the agricultural districts. These gentlemen would represent Canada exclusively, and work out the emigration scheme as it suits the peculiar views and circumstances of these countries. I lay particular stress upon the remark that Canada should be advocated exclusively by one person. Shipping agents are ever ready to serve any country, and arrangements with them never prove satisfactory. This agent or representative would shape his measures according to the desire of the Government of the country in which he operates, and would keep a watch over and control the shipping agents.

This certainly is the only way to make headway in Germany, and acting upon this view, I had a lengthy conversation upon the matter with the Minister of the Interior in Stuttgart, who thought that the only person in Wurtemberg capable of satisfactorily filling such a position would be Dr. Otto Hahn, in Reutlingen, a prominent lawyer and politician. I visited him and won him over to our cause. He is well versed in everything concerning emigration; he himself contributed a good deal towards its promotion to the United States some fifteen or twenty years ago, when it happened; that during the period of ten years 275,000 people left Wurtemberg alone for the last named country. I

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procured an invitation for Dr. Hahn from the Canadian Government to come and visit Canada, and give his opinion of this country. He was out last summer, but, strange to say, neither press mentioned this certainly important circumstance. His very interesting report, as given to his own people, and which gives testimony as to the higher standpoint from which he treats this question, is published in the last report of the Minister of Agriculture, and should find a larger circle of readers than the official Blue Books generally enjoy.

Wurtemberg is, at the same time, one of our best agricultural countries in Germany, and one of the most populated. It is an unfortunate feature of our time that the country people stream into the large centres of population, and then become in a short time physically and morally degenerated. The farm labourer, weary of the hard life, without any prospect of ever possessing an inch of ground himself, becomes discouraged and goes into town, where he promises himself some outdoor pleasure at least to compensate him for the loss of a contented, satisfied, family life. The small farmer (and in Wurtemberg that class is especially large, as the land is a great deal too much divided into small portions) sends his sons and daughters into factories, because his patrimony once more divided would not feed any of them. It is to this class that Dr. Hahn will devote his attention, and this class is the most useful to you. With the proceeds of the sale of the little homestead, the father will be enabled to emigrate, keep his family around him, become a more extensive land owner, and he dies a happier man, having saved his children and grandchildren from swelling the already alarming number of proletarians. You see, gentlemen, that we see in emigration something superior to the mere act of sending people from one Continent to the other. We see in it the only way for social reform, the only rational means of assisting our masses, saving them, however, before they are reduced to the abject condition of the East of London men, with whom your country has been inundated by charitable societies. We believe in helping a man before he has gone from one charity to another, and has his manhood taken out of him; placing him there where he can help himself. Dr. Hahn quotes Schiller in his Wallenstein, when he says:—

“Something a man his own must call,  
Or else he will murder and burn you all.”

And surely this kind of salvation of mankind is worthy of the close attention of prominent philanthropists and statesmen in Europe, as well



as on this side of the ocean. While we help, we try and guard also against losses and imposition, and smooth the way to their establishment as much as possible.

Dr. Hahn has now been appointed as representative of Canadian immigration interests in Wurtemberg. It is, so to say, an honorary appointment, as only a remuneration for a clerk and the expense of advertisements have been claimed by him and accorded by the Minister of Agriculture, so the country cannot complain of the expense. Dr. Hahn has sent out the first batch of pioneers this Spring, from whom he has since received favourable reports. In this gentleman's hand this emigration will soon become a matter of satisfaction to this country, provided, however, that some attention and liberality is extended to them when they come here.

I have now been engaged in this work for something over eight years. Want of proper support has frequently interfered with my progress, for I first went to Europe without any support at all. I had to find the means of travel, correspondence, etc., as best I could. On two occasions the Ontario Government gave a modest contribution; on one or two occasions the Federal Government. The reason of this lack of encouragement was the general distrust as to a woman's capacity and judgment in public matters, I suppose. I commenced to show some fruits of my exertions, the Department assumed the responsibility of paying me, first, my expenses; after a while, half of the usual salary was given, and since about two years, I have been placed on a par with gentlemen engaged in similar work. The Allan Line of steamers (the head office in Liverpool) have at all times been kind and liberal, for of my six trips to Canada (twelve voyages altogether in the interest of this cause), only two trips have been reimbursed to me. My work for over five years was given for nothing, so to say. And even, when in receipt of full salary, the payment is inadequate to the position. I do not know whether it ever struck you that the Government pays no more to its agents than a second-rate mercantile house to its commercial traveller. How can agents take a position of influence?

Without these serious obstacles against me, I should have got on faster; even so, I think you may be satisfied with the results, which I may sum up briefly:—Swiss emigration has been started, and has proved satisfactory; that of Wurtemberg is started and will, without doubt,

prove even more so; next Spring we expect the first Saxon pioneers. Herewith I have opened Germany to you, which has appeared like an impregnable fortress. In Austria I have made a small beginning; the emigration of children, which are intended to be placed and trained on a kind of practical farm, is gaining favour; some gentlemen intend to lay out such farms for young men, so as to give them some training in Canadian farming before they hire out. Besides this, I have created very friendly relations with the Foreign Offices in Berne and in Berlin, and have paved the way for the Canadian Government to enter into direct relations with these two Governments. I have gathered the material to work out a policy by which these Governments could meet Canadian views and interests half way. I cannot publicly express myself clearer on this point; nor would it be right to mention here the unusually kind reception in Berlin, though I should feel but duly honoured if the Government would show sufficient interest to question me on the matter, and accept my advice as to future plans, which advice would be based upon the exchange of opinion with some of the leading statesmen in Europe. I can assure you, however, that the Government of Germany is well disposed towards this country.

This kind of work I have done partly because of my intense interest for all classes who need help—partly because by it I earned the necessary support to treat another kind of emigration as a “purely philanthropic work,” that of introducing a protective system of female emigration, needed too, though perhaps not deemed important enough to give it Government aid. Some people are so fortunately situated as to have both the good will to do useful work and the necessary means to do so combined; others have only the intense desire and the courage of sacrificing time, energy, talent, and life’s best comforts. I possess but the latter qualification, and, strange to say, I have been obliged to subject myself to very unkind misrepresentations. I hope that the fact of my having done the work for a long time without remuneration will once for all exempt me from the suspicion of pursuing mere personal and mercenary aims.

My late husband served the Canadian Government faithfully for nearly twenty years. As is usual in this country, the widow and the children of such public officers have to fight life’s hard battle alone when the father dies; the small salaries do not allow of savings being made. I had to fill the place of father to my children, and therefore I had to work

myself into a position which would ultimately bring me a salary. The Government was most anxious about that time to secure Continental emigration. For years I had followed attentively everything connected with this question. The Government seemed grateful for services rendered in that direction. I could expect that it would not be less grateful to me should I succeed.

In my address on female emigration, given last Spring in Ottawa, I mentioned different points which indicate that my visit in Berlin last Autumn has been successful. Just at that very moment came the notice of my discharge. Conscious that the advantages which I had just gained were too important not to be followed up, I proceeded to Canada at a week's notice, never doubting but that the news I brought or my advice would prove valuable to the Minister of Agriculture in working out his new policy, and that he would renew the appointment for the time necessary to bring the schemes to a completion. I thought myself entitled to the full recognition of my services and to the thanks of the public: for I succeeded where others have failed or would not venture to try.

And is it not worth while to make some effort to attract the Germans to this country? I do not believe that any one who has the development of this fine Colony at heart can deny this.

I do not believe that the business crisis, from which this as well as other countries suffered these years past, should influence your judgment in this matter, for the kind of emigration which I try to obtain is wanted to-day as much as six years ago. I venture to say especially now, when you are building all your great railways, you ought to people the country which you open. But let me assure you that any such valuable emigration scheme, which requires years of careful and discreet fostering, cannot be dropped and taken up at will.

The late Mr. Dixon, General Agent in London, worked hard for eight years, in the first place, to make Canada accessible to England—England, your mother country, where surely he did not meet with the same opposition and other difficulties with which I had to contend; in the second place, to cause the Canadians themselves to look to their most important interests. Mr. Dixon had means at his disposal of which I would not even dare to dream; and yet, I think, I have rendered you similar services in a much larger and much more difficult field. I said that the work itself could not be dropped at will, and so it is with those

who do the work. Allow me to draw a comparison between my colleagues and fellow-sufferers. By having removed lecturing agents in England, the course of emigration from there is not interfered with; you still have the London office with its chief and its staff, who ought to be quite sufficient, now that Canada is generally known there; but by removing me, the result and success of eight years' hard labor is lost, the money expended on it wasted, and a successor would have to go over the same ground again, but I question whether he would succeed in winning the same attention. If a man builds a house he necessarily must put a roof on it to preserve it; so do I require the time of another couple of years, seconded by the liberal support and warm encouragement of the Canadian people, to fully develop my schemes, and to put them in such form as to make them self-acting: after that I shall willingly give up my position to a more capable administrator.

I hope I have succeeded in showing you that I have filled my position creditably; you will then agree with me that the Government is justified in not allowing these advantages to be lost to the country.

Such conditions as the present ones may not present themselves again; circumstances change and policies change, and the propitious moment may be lost for ever. Gentlemen, some twenty-five years ago an immense emigration from Germany to the United States set out, to which that country owes much of her greatness. Canada was not then prepared to step in as competitor. I believe she was not quite sure whether such an emigration would be of any advantage, of which point, however, she has been re-assured, for some of my country people have, in spite of yourselves, found their way to Canada, and have proved themselves good citizens. The well-kept and orderly farms which one meets on one's way through the west of this Province, have given ample testimony as to the desirability of such an acquisition. They are manageable and loyal subjects, and have amalgamated very well with the Canadians.

We are now fast approaching a similar favourable moment. Let me tell you what has been told me at the Foreign Office in Berlin:—  
 "You are wise to take your measures while emigration is at a low ebb; it will increase in the near future, and once the stream is flowing it will be hard to direct it into another channel."

This cautionary remark alone seemed to me assurance sufficient to fully expect to return and work upon it. The statistical reports have

shown since that this remark was true, for already the emigration to the States has increased one-third to what it was last year, and if Canada will not again lose her chance, as she did twenty-five years ago, she must set to work without any delay whatever.

A feeling of shame overcomes me while I speak such words of self-assertion. I do it unwillingly, but necessity compels me. I owed this explanation to the advancement of the cause, and for the understanding of my true motives; I owe it to the Government which had accepted my services, and the one who may deem it advisable to continue them. To those who find it preposterous, perhaps, that a woman should dabble in such public matters, I reply, that nature is fickle sometimes in the distribution of her gifts and talents. The true and high-minded men of our time recognize in various ways that the gifts of self-devotion, energy, enthusiasm, and moral courage are to be despised in no one, and that the cases where women rendered considerable service, even to the State, are worthy of record and recognition. The English nation, governed by the most excellent of Queens, should be the last lacking of chivalry in acknowledging the services of women. In the field of emigration itself I mention one brilliant name, which may not be so familiar here as that of Miss Macpherson, Mrs. Caroline Chisholm, wife of Mayor Chisholm, who lived in Australia for a certain number of years, during which time she settled over 16,000 of her countrymen, and, on her return to England she was helpful to many others. Her experience has been invaluable to the Colonial office, and by doing this "rational charity," neither England nor Australia were any the worse for it. And altogether, I would suggest that you would not be quite so fastidious as to the money the people bring with them, and the letters of recommendation. The most flourishing colonies in Australia are the penal colonies, a proof how beneficially a transplantation of a sickly plant upon virgin ground and into God's pure air operates—a cause of rejoicing to all persons possessed of the milk of human sympathy and true charity.

As for myself, I had to do this work; it came to me as a mission. My previous life and aspirations seemed a preparation and an education for it. I would say with the Quaker, "the Spirit moved me." But I have done it in a very quiet, unassuming, and womanly way, and do not think that I have brought any ridicule upon the position of delegate of the Canadian Government.

You are aware that in the North and North-West of this Province

there are, with the addition of the newly-acquired territory, about 50,000,000 acres of unoccupied lands, of which probably half is arable, and another large portion is valuable on account of its mineral wealth. Would you not think that more should be done than has been the case hitherto to promote the settlement of these lands? It is true that the great North-West is attracting the attention of everybody just now, and that even from this Province a considerable number have gone there, but the establishment there is a much more serious money question than in Ontario. While of the whole mass of emigrants ten per cent. would perhaps have the means to reach and settle in Manitoba, fifty per cent. have the means to go on land in this Province, and to live until they get their first harvest. The expenses of a large family to go to the North-West, for instance, would be almost sufficient to start it well in this Province, and by thus classifying the settlers according to their means, we would reclaim a larger portion for the cultivation of the soil and prevent accumulation in towns.

Another aspect is this:—Take people from mountainous countries and transplant them on plains, and you will almost invariably find that they are not as contented and happy as they would be in at least hilly and well-wooded countries. This I have practically experienced with my Swiss. Wurtembergers with larger means, and Germans from the northern part of the Empire, would do very well in Manitoba. This selection of different nations for the different Provinces here is a part of the control which I desire to see exercised in Europe by Canadian authorities.

I see by the papers of these last two weeks that the English Government recommends emigrants from the British Isles to choose the English colonies for their future homes. We Germans have no colonies of our own; but when it becomes a matter of choice as to where we should go, then I think that we ought to settle with the English. All our national, all our natural tendencies and dispositions, lead to this point, and, as I said before, the German Government is well disposed towards Canada; it depends upon her only to make the best and most intelligent use of this kindly disposition. I hope that by what I have the honour of saying to you, I have made it clear why I desired to address the City of Toronto, as represented by you, gentlemen—Toronto, the key to this Province, and the seat of intelligence and of enlightened national aspirations.

Alderman Boswell said he had been desired by Madame Von Koerber to thank the members of the Council for the patient hearing they had given on this important subject of emigration. He moved, seconded by Alderman Hallam:—"That having heard Madame Von Koerber's entertaining address on the subject of emigration, and being fully aware of the importance to the City of Toronto that immigration to her large back territory and uninhabited regions should be encouraged, and knowing full well that the Germans and Swiss make excellent and prudent farmers and good subjects, and recognizing the past exertions of Madame Von Koerber towards this class of emigration, be it *Resolved*, That this Council desire to record their thanks to Madame Von Koerber for her past services, and for her address of this evening, and that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Minister of Agriculture at Ottawa, and to the Provincial Secretary at Toronto, with the wish expressed that the Government (one or both) will show every consideration possible to Madame Von Koerber, and encourage her in this great and important work."—Carried.