

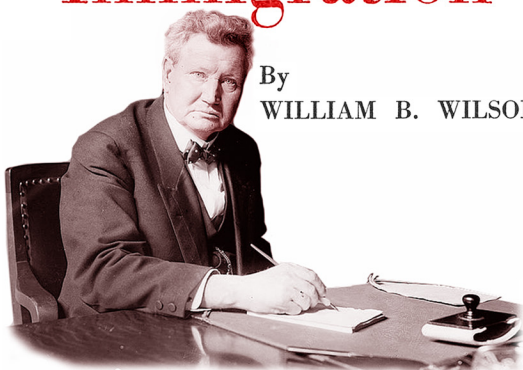
HARPER'S WEEKLY

April 24, 1915

The War and Immigration

By

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ONE of the most marked effects of the European War upon the United States has been the falling off in the number of immigrant aliens admitted since the war began. From the first of August to the ninth of February for the years 1913 and 1914 the comparative figures are as follows:

1913-14	1914-15
761,187	243,782

These figures are further modified by the number of emigrant aliens departing from our shores, 167,908 for the period July 1, 1914, to January 1, 1915. There sailed to Italy alone 87,775 emigrants in the six months from July 1st to January 1st, as compared with 85,430 for the year ending June 30, 1914.

The question of the amount of immigration which we may count upon under the operation of our present immigration laws, when the European War is over and peace has been declared, is a doubtful one. Some have predicted that there would be immediately an enormous tide of immigration from European countries affected by the war flowing into the United States in order to obtain the benefits of its presumable immunity from war. On the other hand, it is contended that the very spirit of patriotism that has been invoked by the war will operate in compelling the citizens of European countries to remain at home and engage in the process of rebuilding their institutions. I am somewhat inclined to this view. It may be recalled that following the Civil War, in which the southern section of our country had borne the hardships of invasion and defeat, there were strong appeals made, during the era of reconstruction, to the Southern people to emigrate to other lands. There was an insignificant response to this appeal, a few states almost unanimously decided that it was their duty to remain in the south and help to build up its shattered civilization, although its labor system had been changed as a result of the war, its transportation system and banking system destroyed, and the flower of its manhood was under the sod.

It seems to me that the same appeal to patriotism will be the compelling motive for the people of European countries; and when we think of them by name it seems plausible at least that the British citizen will remain in Great Britain, the Frenchman in France, the German



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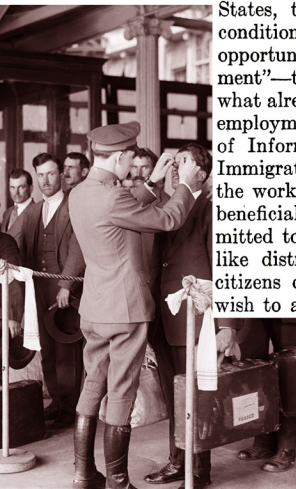
in Germany, the Austrian in his empire that the spirit of unity that has pervaded the Russian people will develop in them the determination to solve the problems of peace; and that the Belgians, unless by the fortunes of war they should find their country annexed to one of the great powers, will begin again to restore their lands and cities to their former estate. If this be true, most of our immigrants will come from the European nations that have been neutral in the war. At the same time, because this is a problem all the factors of which no man can take into account—one of which to be considered of course is the greater burden of taxation due to the war debts which are piling up so many millions a day and to the necessity of providing for the families of the soldiers who have fallen—the United States should be prepared for either a decrease or an increase in European immigration. It should be remembered that according to our immigration laws a good many of the victims of the war will not be allowed entrance to the United States—those who are maimed to the extent of inability to make a living, those who are diseased, and those whose poverty will not enable them to pay the cost of passage to this country or to comply with the other regulations.

President Wilson, in his recent address in Indianapolis, commended the general plan of a national employment agency. As I have pointed out in my report, Congress has already provided in the organic act creating the Department of Labor and prescribing its purpose—namely, “to foster, promote and develop the welfare of

the wage earners of the United States, to improve their working conditions and to advance their opportunities for profitable employment”—the means of organizing what already amounts to a national employment agency. The Division of Information of the Bureau of Immigration has been engaged in the work of promoting, not only a beneficial distribution of aliens admitted to the United States, but a like distribution of residents and citizens of the United States who wish to avail themselves of oppor-

tunities for labor afforded through its instrumentality. Through the coöperation of the Departments of Post Office and of Agriculture, this Bureau of Information is now doing the

work of a national employment agency. The country has been divided into 18 zones for distribution offices, with officers in charge of the various stations. The purpose of this arrangement is to promote profitable employment by means of publicity, to relieve the congestion of industrial centers and to awaken interest in farm work and other rural vocations. Notices of local demands for workers are put up in the post offices and also notices when these demands have been supplied. With this bureau as a nucleus, the need for further legislation can be clearly ascertained, so that finally, through the coöperation of the state and municipal as well as the national employment agencies, it should be possible that those who are employable can be employed. It will be the effort of the Department to guard against both undue scarcity and excessive supply of wage earners, in so far as that can be done under existing laws. For excess in the supply of labor over the demand for it is a cause of labor disputes which ranks high in importance, if indeed it does not rank as the cause. If there were a profitable manless job for every jobless man, the complete remedy for industrial disputes would be to bring the two together. I have recommended that all employment agencies and labor ex-



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changes engaged in interstate business should be placed under the supervision of this Department under broad and general powers which would enable the Department to prevent some of the well-known abuses of unofficial labor exchanges.



Still another matter which seems to me of vast importance is the duty of maintaining, and wherever possible elevating, American standards of living and labor. We in America have gained much from the experience of those who have been trying to solve the problems of labor in the countries of the Old World. In some respects we have not reached the standards set by the nations of the Old World which are now engaged in armed conflict. Whatever may be the outcome of the war, we cannot fail to recognize the fact that these standards, erected little by little with so much of patience and perseverance through many decades, must, temporarily at least, be lowered to meet the exigencies of the new conditions when peace is finally declared. So America, in its turn, must be the standard-bearer and any attempt here to lower the standards, whether to secure greater profits in industry because of a suddenly increased demand for our products, or to lower the wage-scale because of the pressure of the problem of the unemployed, would be a calamity not only to our own country but to the world. Our children must be protected from the consequences of too early toil. The shorter working day for women, which so many states and the District of Columbia have enacted, must not be lengthened; nor the eight-hour-day for all wage-earners which has been made the standard for Government employment and which has been established for many industries through collective bargaining. The act granting certain employees of the United States compensation for injuries sustained in the course of their employment should be amended so as to minimize the hardship its terms now impose upon the employees intended to be protected by it. And the friends of humane legislation, in state and nation, should stand for the progress of their work along humane lines and resist any attempt, even temporarily, to stay that progress.

Such a policy, to revert for a moment to the former problem, will itself have its effect upon immigration. When the Department of Labor, through the census of



the unemployed can show that it might be better for the European immigrant not to make the attempt of securing employment here, undoubtedly this would tend to prevent his coming. On the other hand, when there is a real need for laborers and it is evident that the European laborer can improve his condition, without bringing down the hardly won standards of American labor, immigration will thereby be encouraged. And I am especially interested in the task of diverting from already overcrowded industries to the farm those laborers of Europe who may wish to come to America, who can obey the regulations of our immigration laws, and whose experience in the Old World has been on the farm rather than in the factory. When we consider the factors of the increasing cost of food, the increasing demand that America shall do a larger share of the work of feeding the world, the tremendous proportion of arable but uncultivated land within our borders, and the fact that intensive cultivation of the soil is a science that

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has hardly begun, certainly laborers who have been trained to till the soil in the crowded lands of Europe should be successful here in following their wonted occupation.

And all such laborers should know in advance, through the publicity work which the Department is trying to do, the real facts concerning their opportunities in America, and should not be forced to rely as heretofore upon the misleading statements made by those who are interested either in the profits of their transportation to America or the profits derived from their exploitation after they have arrived.

