

The Western American's Americanization Forum

Is Open to Brief Discussion of Americanization, Citizenship, Naturalization, Problems of the Foreign Born in America, and All Personal Narratives and Experiences of Life and Progress in the New World, Which May Prove Helpful to Others Who Have Lacked the Courage to Take up the Fight for Their Own Advancement and Success

IN OPENING The Western American Americanization Forum we find so many interesting thoughts and forms of expression before us that we cannot place it all in the space allotted for this issue. We therefore believe that we will serve the forum best by taking up the matter having the greatest bearing upon the Americanization subject from the standpoint of helpfulness to the foreign born.

Along this line the individual narratives of progress made by the foreign born in America necessarily take first place because of the possible help and aid they may give those who are discouraged over the handicaps and impediments that they have encountered in advancing toward the goal of their ambition—intelligent citizenship, a place of equality in educational requirements and a station in life, equal with the average native born American.

Among the contributions to our Forum on hand we have one from Miss Anna Helena Anderson who at the present time conducts a Women's Home School of English in the City of Minneapolis. Her contribution is in two parts. The first contains the story of her own life since she came as a child from Sweden. It is told in a simple fashion, yet pointing the way to the possible achievement in America for which altogether too few foreign people with excellent talents try for. The second contains a review of her experience in the Americanization work, such as only one of the people to whom America seem so far away and so difficult to grasp can tell the story and review the subject.

Native born Americans, or those who have never had the experience of living among people of foreign birth in this country trying vainly to retain and establish the old country community contact in America, may grasp the spirit of the Americanization movement, but in its application to the foreign born, it is safe to say that only Americans of foreign birth, and of people whose native lan-

guage is different than the language of America, can fully understand and deal intimately with these people and their many problems which is so essential in order to properly aid them in their Americanization.

Foreign born with an ambitious turn of mind should especially find interest in reading the following story of Miss Anderson's life, noting particularly some of her observations of the handicaps furnished by the foreign language colony and group centers where the foreign born live the foreign country life and customs in continuation, carefully excluding all that which is of the country in which they have made their homes:

I WAS born in Sweden. At the age of six years, I came to America, my family settling in a small town in southwestern Minnesota. Although we were in the midst of a Norwegian settlement, with other foreign groups, Danes, Swedes and Germans, around us, our Americanization must have been both rapid and "painless" since I have no recollection of a time when I did not speak English readily, nor did a single incident of the process of acquiring the new language and customs leave an unpleasant impression upon my mind. As I remember the early period of my life in America, the members of my own family and all our associates took it for granted that the proper thing to do was to adapt themselves to the new environment as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. The fact that some of the business men in our little village were Americans no doubt was helpful. The older people of the community spoke English imperfectly or not at all. My own mother has never learned to speak the language, my father spoke it well

enough to "get along." The Norwegian language was used a great deal even by the young people, with the result that many of the latter, most of whom are native-born, speak English with as much of an accent as many who have reached mature years in a foreign country. This fact can not, however, be attributed to any desire to resist the Americanization process. It is simply the result of lack of opportunity for training in correct speech. As a reaction against these conditions, many of this younger generation, conscious of their own handicap,

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