

The Hellenic-American League as an Agency of Americanization

SO ACCUSTOMED have we become in America to have the foreign nationalities organize themselves into nationality associations, in cities, towns and villages, for the purpose of maintaining the fatherland culture among the immigrant sons and daughters: their language, their religion, their hereditary characteristics, etc., that it might be a matter of doubt that anywhere in America, in the face of all these precedents, a great body of men of the same nationality would organize an association, for the specific purpose of inculcating American ideals and for the Americanization of their members.

Yet such an association is actually in existence in Portland, Oregon and making wonderful progress without national contact with any other like body of the same nationality—an essential element to

native land as any other immigrant who has ever transferred his allegiance in citizenship.

Perhaps it is a natural resentment against being classified by many as an inferior type of immigrants that has aroused the Greeks and caused them to set the pace for a new nationality objective in America: the complete Americanization of their people. Or, perhaps, it is a traditional urge in the heart of the Greek who has learned the story of the ancient Athenian democracy of which he finds a modern materialization in America.

It does not matter much. Whatever the hidden urge, the workings of this nationality association, known as The Hellenic-American League, is out in the open and is acceptable to America. The language of the League is the American language. It may

One of the Hellenic-American Citizenship Classes



(This cut is used through courtesy of the Oregon Journal.)

Those standing are soon to become citizens. They are: George Mardis, C. Silver, Sam Chresanthaks, George B. Poulos and George Vokas.

existence in all other nationality movements in America.

If we were left to guess the nationality it is ten to one that we would not think of the Greeks as leaders in this new field of nationality activities.

We have so often heard unkind criticisms of the Greeks that in our minds they would most likely be accorded the last place in the column of nationalities capable of taking such a firm stand for a thoroughgoing assimilation and education to citizenship through naturalization.

That the spirit of the Hellas of old is just as strong in the immigrants from that historic peninsula of the Ægean Sea as the spirit of the saga-pictured Northlands is in the breast of the immigrants from the northernmost part of Europe, of that there is no doubt, and the Greek is justly as proud of his

be imperfect in spots, but the ring is American and every member is on the job to line up for Uncle Sam.

The snobs and exclusive people who entertain funny ideas about "Greeks and other uncouth foreigners" are giving the Hellenic-American League no concern. They have tackled a big job—the job of fitting themselves for intelligent American citizenship and they are going over the top with nearly three hundred members in training from beginners' to citizenship preparation classes—all American citizens in the making.

Some day these young bright and intelligent Greeks will know the formula of good citizenship better than some of those hoity-toity high percentage-rated citizens who are profane enough to thank God—not for the privilege, but for the preference granted them in physical American birth.

Problematic though it may be, how this Hellenic-