

AMEICANIZING THE HOME

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stability of the homes of native-born Americans becomes a far greater danger where it touches the foreign-born.

- I. No course is quite so uncharted as that of foreign-born youth.
- II. No life at its fruition can be quite so blighted as that of mature foreign-born who are not rooted in the soil of their adopted land.
- III. No old age is so pitifully alone as that which must sit dumbly by while the currents of thought and emotion of dear ones pass, but never touch, feebly groping senses.

The American woman sees and hears on all sides the warnings about the pitfalls in modern life. How much of all this penetrates to the foreign-born mother. Yes, she is always on guard, that is true. But what happens to her children when they are out in the strange life all about her, she can know nothing. She senses the dangers, of course, but she is helpless to avert disaster. If she can be convinced that safety for herself and her flock lies in knowledge of conditions and the maintenance of her natural position in the life of her children, she will meet educational agencies half way. However, no experienced worker has any illusion as to the obstacles to be overcome in making clear to the prospective student, even the most intelligent, the vital significance of training in American ideas and ideals.

As a rule, definite requests of foreign-born for instruction meet with what is, by the average person who has not studied the matter, considered adequate response on part of school officials. The school building is opened for two or more meetings a week and one of the teachers — any one of them — is secured for these hours of work, in addition to her regular school duties. Surely, that is doing handsomely by the foreign-born, comments the average patron of the school, if he gives the matter any thought at all.

The trained worker knows that this perfectly natural method of meeting a demand, the real nature of which no one of those concerned has had any opportunity to ascertain, not only checks the demand, very close to its source, but, more than that, builds up a barrier that succeeding efforts of like nature only serve to increase. The stages in this damming-up process are much the same, everywhere and every time: It is announced that a class for foreign-born women, we'll say, is to meet at a certain time and place, in response to what is understood to be a demand for such instruction. The women come, some fifteen in number. As we consider these fifteen human beings, the important thing, for our present purpose, is their differences. In order to get some realization of what the possibilities of variations are, one would have to sit down with pencil and paper and enumerate differences as noted. Noting differences in previous training, only, there would be the women who were illiterate in their own language; those who could read their native tongue some, but had never tried to make a language symbol; those who could speak English a little, but could neither read nor write; those who

could speak very well, read a little, but not write at all; and so on.

Well, they are at school now, seated, more or less uncomfortably in seats built for children. The teacher looks over the class and, thinking in terms of her day-school pupils, decides this number will make a nice class. And "a" class they become, the first act of the tragedy. That group is likely to have the material for at least five groups; for certain part, of the instruction larger numbers might work together profitably. The attempt to give mass instruction to the fifteen marks the beginning of the end of the undertaking which has cost such effort. "What is the basis of classification," one might ask, concerning such a group. "Oh, they are all grown up, you know, and it will be so interesting for them to work together; they will learn to understand each other so much better, and to forget the foolish dislikes they brought with them." Quite true. If I should have my three-year old niece begin the study of Spanish, it would no doubt help her to develop a tolerant attitude toward people of other nationalities if she were to have as a classmate a college-trained Frenchman, but it would require considerable training on the part of the teacher to maintain the interest of fifteen pupils of such different types. The women in the class under discussion, largely ignorant, as well as indifferent, to the socializing value of their work, want to make reasonable, or even unreasonable, progress in learning the language. This they cannot do, under such conditions.

The development of language instruction for adults must be toward classification on the basis of mental capacity, primarily, involving, usually, smaller groups, with shorter recitation periods for each group; or, if periods of instruction are to remain the same, more teachers will be required, which, in turn, will mean greater expenditure, necessitating, perhaps, some contribution on the part of the student to the cost of maintaining the work. Surely it is childish short-sighted to insist that unless education can be offered the adult on the same liberal terms as the child, it shall not be offered at all.

FOR SUCH IS THE GOVERNMENT OF AMERICA

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pleased, so long as their actions should not interfere with the equal rights of others. Such is the government of America.

We welcome you to full partnership in that government. We give you freely of all we have. We share with you gladly the heritage that is ours. We ask only that you cherish it, that you protect it against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that you keep it secure from all encroachments that tend even remotely to make its purpose other than to secure the natural rights of man. We ask only that you be eternally and intelligently vigilant that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.

There is no penalty to virtue; no penalty to wisdom; they are proper additions of being. In a virtuous action I properly am; in a virtuous act I add to the world; I plant into deserts conquered from chaos and nothing and see the darkness receding on the limits of the horizon.

— Emerson.