

because men that I know are doing it to-day. And they say it pays.

Is it a far cry from this to a general consideration of the life of the alien as he actually leads it here in America? The language that affords him power or communication is one thing. And American "don'ts" is another. Both are essentials in the sum of the new knowledge that is making an American of him. But the life that he leads—at work, at play, at home—is the most important consideration of all.

The life that he leads! Well, that is an easy thing to say, but a hard thing to cover. It would take volumes to cover a tenth part of its varied aspects, and then we could never be sure we had really gone a tenth of the distance! Who is there who yet knows the tenth of the actual, unsaid life of another? Which of us has yet so finger-gripped this business of the life of others that he can say, "that much is sure—that much I know!" We may all guess. We do guess constantly. From anxious friendship to common gossip, we run the whole gamut of guessing, every day of our lives. But who of us really knows? And, least of all, who of us knows the life of the stranger within our gates? Strange to us in his life, stranger still in his unaccustomed new life, what manner of man is he, this new-comer from afar, in the inner effects of our American life upon his foreign sensibilities, joys and sufferings? And his women and his children? Just how do they all "get it"—this new American game? Away inside, behind and beyond the surface ripples of their laughter and tears, how do they "get" us?

We may only peck at it here and there, to be sure. We shall never really know very much of the inside of it. But we may be dead certain of one thing, and that is—whatever the inside story be—it is, nine parts in ten, a matter of our own making—dead, necessary tools—but American life is exactly what we ourselves have made it; and it is American life and none other that the alien leads when he lives in America.

Of course, it is not all American, all at once, this life of the newly arrived alien. There are the strings of red peppers; the songs, stories and dances of other lands; the diminishing echoes of foreign customs, foreign habits good and bad, foreign loyalties and foreign affections, foreign dress that is "different," foreign food that is oily or fishy or "funny." And there are whole foreign colonies here among us, with foreign talk, papers and points of view. We have enough and too much of that last sort of thing right now, for the good of our national unity and future self-preservation. But, after all, the injury of these coagulated colonies to the American blood-stream is still under control and, let us hope, will gradually diminish. When it comes to the lesser and more pleasing incidents of our continuing foreign influx, these more innocent echoes of peoples who are "different" need no control at all. They grow fainter, die away, disappear—often unfortunately, I think—with the march of the minutes themselves. Puff! They are gone! And we are squarely back on the board ground of a distinctly American life that envelops, effaces and survives any and all of these firefly glints of foreign life that come dancing in from Ellis Island every day in the year. Sooner or

later, inevitably and inexorably, it is American life as we have developed it that the alien must lead, as long as he lives in America.

Take first a typical New York tenement. We did that—not the alien. Or a tenement in any other American town. We did that too. But it is the alien who mostly lives in those tenements, because we failed to equip ourselves with city-governing personnel that was able and inclined to make impossible such housing abortions as these rookeries that disgrace every populous spot in America. We did all that. We even let in so many aliens in a rush—instead of regulating this overseas recruiting—that it paid American landlords to rear those tenements and then sweat the last cent out of the aliens who must preforce pack into them just because there were no other American roofs to be had. We did all that. Today those tenements still stand, packed with aliens and punctuated with rent raises. And yet we insist upon immediate American loyalty from the arrived alien! What must he think of us!

Or let us go farther afield—actually into the fields. I know of a gravel pit in a prairie state that is owned by an American farmer. That farmer is honest with the kind of honesty that will lose a fortune and grin, rather than lose one per cent of the self-respect that enables him to look the world square in the eye and tell it to go to the devil. And this farmer was poor. But his gravel pit was rich, waiting only to be worked. And the county supervisors wanted the gravel out of that pit for a needed nearby county road. So there was shortly an offer, and a bargain, and then—a hitch. Something had halted the transaction. There were hints, then insinuations, then guarded intimations—from a "friend" of the supervisors, to the farmer. Then the farmer put on his hat one night and walked, unexpected, into a meeting of the county supervisors.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I know that if I say the word, you will pay me more for that gravel than it is worth. I know that the difference between the value of the gravel and what you pay me is the graft that I have got to pay back to you. And I know that if you don't get that graft, you won't buy the gravel in my pit. Instead of that you'll go to the foreigner who owns a pit ten miles away, who has poorer gravel, but who will do business. With the haul and all, you'll pay for his gravel twice what you'd pay for mine. That comes out of the pockets of the tax-paying farmers of this county. You'll take it out, too, to get yours. And you're all Americans—everybody in the transaction except the foreigner who takes this tip from you on the American brand of honesty."

The supervisors, silent till now, began to hem and haw and shift, and the supervising faces were something more than ugly.

"Now, wait till I'm through!" shouted the farmer, as he banged his hat on the table. "Wait a minute! I know what you're going to say, for one of you has said it already. You're going to tell me that if I don't shut up and come across you'll turn your whole rotten political machine against me, ruin me, and run me out of the county, yes? Am I right? All right. Now here's what I came over here tonight to tell you. And that's this: I won't sell you my gravel