

THE MAKING OF AMERICAN CITIZENS

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from Denmark, and Norwegians and Swedes who had lived for awhile in the north of France, came over in large numbers. Whoever they were, though, they were brave, independent and self reliant men who were masters of self. We could hardly expect such a people to be other than lovers of free government. And free governments they made for themselves. Although some of the little countries had kings, yet these kings never dared rule in a tyrannical way.

And now we must come down three or four hundred years more. In 1215, we find these Englishmen ruled by a harsh king called John. We find, too, that there were then many serfs in England, that is, men who belonged to the land and who could not leave the manor, or the lord's estate, without his consent. There were also many freemen, some of whom were very rich and very powerful. Over these freemen, John wanted to rule as the lords ruled over the serfs. That is, he wanted to take from them their money as he pleased, he wanted to throw them into prison and keep them there as long as he wished, and he tried to order them to do his wishes as he did his servants. But the liberty loving people of England, descendants of those liberty loving early immigrants would not consent to that. So they put on their armor and shouldered their lances, a large number of them, and rode down to a place called Runnymede where they met the king. There they forced him to give them an agreement that they should have for all time certain rights, such as the right to vote their own taxes, the right to a trial by a jury of their peers before they could be thrown into prison, and the right to a share in the government, through a parliament of their own choosing. This agreement was the first great statement of the rights of free men. It is called the Magna Charta or the Great Charter. It was one of the greatest steps ever taken in the direction of free government.

We Americans rightfully think of the Magna Charta as ours as much as it is England's. Hence, we should learn about it and all that it meant to the freedom loving people of England of that day. In this Charter and in the Parliament that King John unwillingly gave those men, we find the foundation of the English government of today.

The story is of great interest to us because the men who made our government were largely Englishmen who had learned what they knew about government through their history, a history that is spanning hundreds of years of hard struggle.

My next letter will tell more of this long contest by means of which the rights we enjoy today were finally gained not only for the people of England and later for the people of America, but also for many other men in many other countries.

The long struggle for free government is found in many nations other than England and America. It has been slow because men have been very, very slow in learning to fit themselves for free government. Even in America we still have many men who have not yet learned to govern themselves; hence are not yet fit for American citizenship. Let us think about these things. The greatest lesson each of us should

learn is this: **how can I best fit myself to be a citizen of a free, self governing nation?**

When all think about this lesson and all try to learn it, America will be safe for all time.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES IN AMERICANIZATION

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night school as a group with the request for an organization. This occurred after the efforts of the home teacher in the district had changed them from a troublesome neighborhood gang to a group eager for club activities. The Mission Athletic Club was the result. This club supports a winning baseball team, produces plays written by members with the aid of some expert assistance. There are frequent community social evenings with dancing, other evenings feature initiations, which occasions are honored by the presence of girl friends and completed by a banquet. The club supports a jazz orchestra, promotes a weekly meeting for the study of parliamentary law, works for and contributes to the Community Chest each year. The club has been an instrument of good will between neighborhood and school, between day and evening school. "Even the day school janitor," writes Miss Marion Adams, "shook hands with us." The example of the young men led boys of the day school to the organization of a Boy Scout troop meeting in the night school. Young women in the neighborhood became interested in organized activities and now have a club of their own meeting in the school. On this point Miss Adams tells us:

The men and women in the English classes have taken an interest in the club and its activities. There is no formal relation as yet between the club and the rest of the school, but there is a fine informal relation. * * * Through the Mission Athletic Club we have solved our outside and inside hoodlum problem and no longer do men refuse to come to night school because they will be laughed at by the younger group.

These are brave and sturdy beginnings. The problem of self-directed, purposeful social activities in Americanization work requires both intelligence and finesse for its solution. Our work with new Americans in school and neighborhood is, as far as we can or have known how, the development of helpful attitudes of mind, by the promotion of activities and contacts that further worth-while loyalties. To follow this idea would mean that there is a social program, that behind the social program is a constructive social idea, and thus it would come about that the merely festive, while it has its function, is relegated to a less prominent place than it might otherwise occupy, and the social responsibility is thrown where it will result in the best civic good. To invite the passive acceptance of a pleasant evening bestowed upon a group is to invite a mere passive exploitation of the occasion and is, further, to lose the opportunity to stimulate the spirit of service and loyalty. Teachers plan with, not for, their students in the better social program. Perhaps, indeed, this social program is a neighborhood plan, agreed upon by students and neighborhood alike, not something imposed from above or without, and furthering the training in democratic coöperation, civic responsibility, and leadership with ever enlarging social vision.