

The Church at the NATION'S GATE

EXTRAORDINARY
DEVELOPMENT OF
ONE PHASE OF THE
IMMIGRATION QUESTION
AT ELLIS ISLAND

NEW YORK, Oct. 5.—(Special correspondence of the Sunday Oregonian.)—Call it hospitality, call it mission, call it patriotism, call it self-protection, or call it plain, ordinary, unspecialized religion; but by whatever name it is designated, the work of the Ellis Island representatives of the various religious bodies is one of the most interesting phases of contemporary Christianity.

It is the Church at the Nation's Gate, giving the clear evidence of kindly deeds that this is a Christian land. To be the first to touch the life of the incoming stranger, making him aware, in this supreme hour of his experience, that religion is an active, aggressive and hospitable force in the alien's land of Promise, is the newly-awakened and laudable ambition of organized Christianity.

The news of this lies not in the novelty of the missionary's presence at Ellis Island, for that is no novelty. The extraordinary aspect of the case is that just now all the large Christian bodies of America are showing an alert interest in the immigrant, and are bringing their powerful forces to bear upon him, so that they are becoming one of the most potent factors in the immigration problem. The recent report of Chief Powderly to the Secretary of Commerce and Labor, pointing out what industrial opportunities await the newcomers, and what, as naturally provoked wide discussion; yet what the churches propose, and have undertaken, is probably of far greater moment.

Crowding Out the Crooks.

Time was when the missionary at Ellis Island had a hard job of it, with all sorts of graft leagued against the unsophisticated newcomers whom he sought to serve.



THE
IMMIGRANT'S
NEW HOME
IN THE
GHETTO



AT THE
NATION'S GATE



A MAGYAR TYPE

There were crooked inspectors and other crooked officials; graft in the immigrants' restaurant, graft in the money-changing, graft in the steamship and railroad agencies, graft in the boarding-house runners, and worse than graft in the enterprising efforts of the white slave merchants. Long before religion awoke to anything like an adequate conception of the opportunities presented at Ellis Island, the forces of evil were reaping a rich harvest there. The years during which these harpies, almost unmolested, plucked the stranger at the gate do not make an attractive chapter of American history.

Now there are two-score missionaries at Ellis Island, and the Commissioner of Immigration, Robert Watchorn, "the Man at the Gate," is himself an earnest Methodist, and in close sympathy with every effort to serve the immigrant's material or spiritual needs. He relies strongly upon this newly-awakened religious consciousness of America to support him in his rigorous dealings with steamship and railway companies to compel them to give the alien a square deal. It has been the rule, rather than the exception, until very lately, for these transportation companies to treat immigrants worse than they treat four-footed cattle. In an address to the Ellis Island missionaries one day Commissioner Watchorn gave them these words of encouragement and admonition:

"Your work, as missionaries, has always commended itself to me. I know of no fellow mortal who stands more in need of such kindly ministrations than one who, having left his native home, finds himself barred at the threshold of the country in which he hopes to acquire a domicile. During the period of uncertainty as to whether he is to be admitted or deported, he certainly does stand in need of sympathetic aid. It is my purpose and my desire—consistent as Commissioner of Immigration—to see to it that such consolation as you may bring shall not be denied him; I shall, however, insist that each one of you will respect the law and conform to the regulations. The sworn officers of the law must be the sole judges as to who shall enter the United States, and as to those who may not enter; and their judgment and their actions must not be subjected to unofficial influences."

The Modern Good Samaritan.

The zeal of missionaries in behalf of cases in which they have become especially interested doubtless evoked those last words. There was the Greek priest, in his imposing robes and ponderous pendant cross, to whose skirts clung a boy and girl; doubtless he would do anything in his power to save them from the terror of deportation. And that cluster of Irish peasants who were following to the barge, with beaming faces, a Roman Catholic priest, had evidently been extricated from some difficulty by him. Fifteen minutes later I saw a Jewish rabbi with a company of solemn and cadaverous men who might have been exiles from some Kishinev; evidently he was their protector, if not their deliverer.

Ellis Island is a kaleidoscope of such pictures. Every immigrant is in need of the friendly word of assurance, if nothing more. But the tragedies which are daily enacted there give the warm-hearted missionary abundant opportunity to be an angel of mercy. These are pictures of a master's brush. Take that big-eyed, sweet-faced Swedish mother, whom I saw standing at the entrance to the woman's apartment. Her children clung about her dress,

but her husband was not near. Perhaps he had been sent to the detention den, for deportation; perhaps he had failed to arrive; probably, I judged it was that the great hour of motherhood had come to her again, in this time and place of tumult and uncertainty. Whatever the reason, terror filled her eyes, and her gentle face was drawn in agony, as she leaned upon the little Baptist woman who spoke her own tongue, and was to her God's own angel. In that busy spot, there was one with leisure and skill to befriend the friendless.

Services such as these fill the days of the Ellis Island missionaries. They speak most of the tongues in this modern Babel. Often they have opportunity for nothing but the giving of a greeting, a tract or a Bible, in the speech of the fatherland. Frequently, though, they can introduce the stranger to the friendly offices of some minister or church worker at the destination to which she is bound. The aim is not only to show kindness to the immigrant, and to give him a Christian welcome, but also, so far as possible, to keep the shaping, guiding hand of religion, and if possible, of his own church, upon him, in the new home which he is entering.

Stirring the Nation's Churches.

The smashing of immigration records—the year ending in June, 1907, brought nearly a million and a half—is in good part responsible for awakening of the churches of North America to a serious consideration of their part in the national assimilation of the immigrant. The theme is now to the fore in various religious gatherings, and in all the church papers. It has been made a special subject of study with text-books, by tens of thousands of members of young people's societies and Sunday schools and missionary organizations. This Fall all the "Rally Day" services, held in at least one great denomination, the Presbyterian, were directed to devote their collections to the one object of home missionary work among the immigrants. A number of important recent publications, including Professor Edward A. Steiner's "On the Trail of the Immigrant," John R. Common's "Races and Immigrants in America," and Dr. H. B. Grose's "The Incoming Millions," have been designed chiefly for circulation among church people.

Another tangible evidence of the widespread increase of interest in the immigrant is the growth of mission churches for foreign-speaking persons, and the great increase of colporteurs to distribute literature among such. At present this is the most accented feature of the



"HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL" THESE BOYS HAVE BEEN HELD FOR THREE MONTHS AWAITING THE RECOVERY OF THEIR MOTHER IN THE HOSPITAL

home mission work now being carried on by the great denominations. The extent the churches are being scared into this extraordinary activity. They are visions of the crowding out of the Christian institutions, such as Sunday, Y. M. C. A. This is a new departure for the association. It is only the beginning of a work from which a great deal will be heard later. Now these special secretaries busy themselves looking after the welfare of young men, citizens in embryo. They give them cards of introduction to the Y. M. C. A. in the towns to which they are going. Then they inform the secretary at the point of destination to be on the lookout. Ambitious plans, which contemplate the corralling of a large proportion of the immigrants through the new work of associations scattered over the land, are being considered.

The thousands of study classes in the churches of America which are now considering this question, are one of the important influences beneath the surface of National life which yet powerfully affect destiny. Because the Christian sentiment, which still dominates the country when it is exerted, is concerned over the moral betterment of the immigrant, there is bound to be a steady lifting up of all the standards affecting them.

Y. M. C. A. Experts at Work.

Among the men and women who personally Christianity's welcome to the strangers at Ellis Island, and the other principal ports of entry into America, may be found representatives of the Y. M. C. A. This is a new departure for the association. It is only the beginning of a work from which a great deal will be heard later. Now these special secretaries busy themselves looking after the welfare of young men, citizens in embryo. They give them cards of introduction to the Y. M. C. A. in the towns to which they are going. Then they inform the secretary at the point of destination to be on the lookout. Ambitious plans, which contemplate the corralling of a large proportion of the immigrants through the new work of associations scattered over the land, are being considered.

The Association has had the foremost authority upon the immigration



JUST LANDED. THESE POLAND GIRLS NEED THE MISSIONARY'S COUNSEL

question, Professor Edward A. Steiner, at work during the past Summer making a special investigation of the whole subject in respect to its possibilities as a Y. M. C. A. field. The international committee has within the past few months put another expert, Dr. Peter Roberts, personally in charge of a department of work among aliens.

In Canada similar efforts are being put forth in behalf of the immigrants bound northwest. Trains and boats are met at Quebec and elsewhere, and refreshments supplied to the strangers. During the rush of a few years ago, a Y. M. C. A. tent was established at Winnipeg, and it did a land-office business. In the coal regions of Pennsylvania associations have been opened for the foreign-speaking men, and because of their educational features these are regarded by the immigrants as an incalculable boon.

last the Christian agencies of America have awakened to their peculiar responsibility for educating and Americanizing the increasing myriads of foreigners who annually come to these shores. The 40 representatives of religion at Ellis Island typify a movement which will bear watching.

Skilled Dentists 2300 Years Ago.

Berlin Cable.
A German dentist named Galli has established the fact that the Etruscans were accomplished dentists. He has examined numerous Etruscan skulls and found in some teeth which had been filled with wonderful skill. Four are covered with gold capsules, two covering natural teeth, while the other two were artificial grinders, a real piece of bridge work. Galli remarks:
"The Etruscans, like the Americans, were not backward about showing their

teeth incased in gold. The Etruscans must also have been acquainted with our best modern fillings, as this piece of Etruscan dentistry lasted about 2300 years. Perhaps in details dentistry can show improvements, but dentists now know nothing the old Etruscan 'tooth doctors' did not."

Taken at His Word.

Harper's.
Master Walter, aged 5, had eaten the soft portions of his toast at breakfast, and piled the crusts on his plate.
"When I was a little boy," remarked his father, who sat opposite him, "I always ate the crusts of my toast."
"Did you like them?" inquired his offspring, cheerfully.
"Yes," replied the parent.
"You may have these," said Master Walter, pushing his plate across the table.