

THE SCANDINAVIANS IN THE NORTHWEST.

EVERY class of immigrants must be judged by its manifest ability to become American speedily, willingly, and thoroughly, in all that that term implies. The more generations there are of ignorance, superstition, thriftlessness, and political passivity stretching out behind him, the more undesirable from every point of view the immigrant becomes. On the other hand, the immigrant whose homeland shows a minimum percentage of illiteracy, whose life has been saturated with ideas of thrift and small economies, who holds himself the slave of neither priest, landlord, nor king, and whose history, past and passing, is a story of sturdy struggling for independence—such an immigrant should find welcome and encouragement instead of barriers to his coming.

While agitating for much-needed additional restriction upon undesirable immigration, we should not forget the obligation we owe the hundreds of thousands of immigrants who in the last forty years have surged across our land, settled in the great West, and brought prosperity to themselves and the state. But not this alone. They are no longer pilgrims and strangers. They are not simply in the better country: they are of it and of its people. It is to the immigrants of this class, and especially to the Scandinavian immigrants from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, that the Northwest is largely indebted for its marvellous development.

While in most of the Eastern States a Norwegian or a Swede is a curiosity, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and the Dakotas have about seven hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants of Scandinavian birth. To this should be added those of the second generation, enumerated as native born, which should raise their numbers nearly to a million. The story of the coming of this great host of peaceful conquerors of prairie and forest, by the side of which the early Teutonic migrations were but small marauding picnics, is an uneventful, but not an unimportant chapter in our history. The first company of Scandinavian immigrants reached New York from Norway in 1825, and made a settlement near Rochester, N. Y. A few hundreds

came in the next ten years; but not until 1836 was the first permanent Western settlement made in Illinois. Later, settlements were made in Wisconsin and Iowa; Swedes and Danes, as well as Norwegians, began to come; and by 1843 the stream was flowing with some regularity. The census of 1850 showed eighteen thousand Scandinavian population. But these were only the vanguard of the host that was to follow. In 1860 there were seventy-two thousand. During the Civil War very few came; but in the later sixties the movement began again with redoubled vigor, and finally reached its climax in 1882, when one hundred and five thousand three hundred and twenty-six Scandinavians were landed at our ports. In the five years ending with 1885, three hundred and fifty-two thousand three hundred and thirty-four arrived; in the next five years, three hundred and four thousand one hundred and sixty.

With a few minor exceptions, the whole movement has been unorganized, though agents of steamship and railway companies, and even some of the States, have systematically worked up immigration sentiment in the Northlands. Famine, burdensome taxation, and overpopulation have been not inconsiderable factors in promoting Scandinavian immigration; religious and political persecution and military service have driven out only a very small fraction. The natural love of adventure, the prospect of ownership of land, which is practically impossible to the great majority in the old home, and the desire for greater personal independence—in a word, material betterment—these have been the motives of Scandinavian immigration. Letters from the New World, winter visits of prosperous immigrants to their old friends, and innumerable low-priced prepaid passage tickets have been the most powerful preachers of the gospel of the New World's advantages. The broad, rich prairies of the Northwest have had from the first an Eden-like attractiveness to these North folk, coming as they have from a land where mountains, marshes, thin soil, and short summers made life a continual struggle for existence. It was the vision of level fields of marvellous fertility that could be had almost for the asking that cheered their tedious way across the Atlantic, up the Erie Canal, and around the Great Lakes in the early days. Minnesota, Iowa, Dakota, are still the watchwords as they come and are household words in almost every cranny from Hammerfest to Gjedser.

The passion for the possession of land and for the independence that goes with it have characterized the Scandinavians from the earliest

times, and it is that which has made them so valuable as citizens of the Northwest. Had they preferred to huddle together in villages or, still worse, to crowd into the large cities, the progress of this section would have been materially slower. Until within the last eight years the towns have claimed only a small percentage, and now probably not more than ten per cent come to settle in towns. Scanty means, a spirit of economy, and a fearlessness for hard work and temporary privation have made them frequently pioneers in settling new territory. With the extension of new railroads into northwestern Minnesota and the Dakotas and the opening up of Government and railroad land, great numbers of Scandinavian immigrants and Scandinavian settlers from older portions of the West have settled there. All of the eighty counties of Minnesota, save possibly two, have representatives of all three Scandinavian peoples; whole townships and almost whole counties are tilled by them. In the newer counties of Minnesota and the Dakotas thirty and even forty per cent are of Scandinavian parentage. In the older portions it is said to be possible to travel three hundred miles across Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota without once leaving Scandinavian-owned land. Though in every large city and town in the Northwest there are Scandinavians engaged in commercial enterprises and the professions with marked success, it yet remains true that the great majority are farmers.

One of the most important indirect results of the love for land-ownership is the hastening of naturalization. To take up homestead claims, one of the first conditions for a foreigner is "a declaration of intention" to become a citizen; so the prospective farmer at once takes out his "first papers," and the first step in naturalization is made. This done, natural inclination leads him to perfect his title to full citizenship. But the Scandinavian immigrant hardly needs any great material incentive to citizenship. In politics he is as much in his element as an Irishman in New York City. His aptitude for politics and his interest in public affairs are natural. Be he Norwegian, Swede, or Dane, he has lived and moved in an atmosphere electric with independence and individualism. The Norwegian celebrates the Fourth of July all the more loyally, because on the seventeenth of May he commemorated in the same way the establishment, in defiance of all Europe, of the Norwegian constitution in 1814. The Dane is fresh from the constitutional struggle begun in 1849; the Swede has had popular representation since 1867: consequently the Scandinavian immigrants have had some considerable political educa-

tion when they arrive. The ballot and independence are not meaningless terms to them; the exercise of them is their right, not merely their privilege. Certainly no class makes greater effort than the Scandinavian to become naturalized; none enters upon the rights and duties of American citizenship with more enthusiasm or honest, intelligent appreciation of its high privileges. Statistics from Minnesota show some interesting facts bearing upon this question, comparison being made with the Germans, who rank among our best immigrants. By the census of 1885 the Scandinavian population was 43.2 per cent and the German 30.1 per cent of the total foreign-born population. Of the increase of foreign-born population for five years ending with 1885, the Scandinavian was 48.2 per cent, the German 30.9 per cent. For the same period, of the total naturalizations (first papers) the Scandinavians took out 56.3 per cent and the Germans 23.2 per cent. Or, looking at the matter in another way, for the same half-decade the Scandinavians who were naturalized were 35.4 per cent of the increase of Scandinavian population for the same time, the Germans 22.9 per cent. Similar statistics for other half-decades give approximately the same results.

The political affiliations of the Scandinavian voters till about 1886 were almost invariably with the Republican party. The opposition to slavery rallied every son of the Northland, and no soldiers were braver or more patriotic than the Scandinavian Fifteenth Wisconsin regiment and Scandinavian companies in other Wisconsin and Iowa regiments. The suppression of the Rebellion, the abolition of slavery, the passage of the homestead law to which they owed so much—all appealed powerfully to their political senses. New-comers found their predecessors in the Republican party; they found it the party in power in the State and generally in the Nation; its principles were acceptable, and so they too became Republicans. Since 1886, however, less reliance can be placed upon a solid Scandinavian vote, though this element has never been the ready tool of "bosses." It has ever been a ruling rather than a ruled element. The immigration of the last eight years has had a larger percentage from the cities, and a larger percentage has settled in the cities, so that "labor questions" have affected them; local political issues have, to their credit, sometimes shaken their old allegiance more or less, as, for example, prohibition in Iowa and North Dakota, high license in Minnesota; the Bennett law in Wisconsin temporarily drove them out of the Republican party; the Farmers' Alliance, People's party, etc., have drawn

Scandinavian recruits from both of the old parties; the tariff and other National questions have divided them as well as other thinking men in both great political parties. However, the majority of them are still and will continue to be Republicans, though no party can mortgage their vote for any election.

Each of the great parties in Minnesota and the Dakotas usually "recognizes" the value of the Scandinavian vote by placing one or two candidates of Scandinavian birth upon its State ticket, though the vote for such candidates does not differ much from the vote for the rest of the ticket. In Minnesota the present secretary of state (a Republican and recently nominated) and the auditor (a Democrat and Alliance candidate) are Norwegians, while the preceding secretary was a Swede, serving for a third term. In the same State the last three legislatures had respectively twenty-six, twenty-one, and twenty-six Scandinavian members out of one hundred and sixty-eight; of the elective county officers throughout the State other than county commissioners, more than one hundred and fifty are of Scandinavian parentage. It is not as Scandinavians laboring for any class or nationality, but as American citizens, that these men are elected, and their administration is no less honest, no less efficient, than that of native-born citizens. Several have served in diplomatic missions and in Congress; in the past Congress there were four Scandinavian members. The highly honorable careers of such men, among others, as the Hon. Hans Mattson, colonel of the Third Minnesota, editor, consul-general to India, and three times secretary of state in Minnesota; the Hon. R. B. Anderwon, a writer of some note and Mr. Cleveland's minister to Denmark; the Hon. Knute Nelson, soldier, attorney, member of the legislatures of Wisconsin and Minnesota, member of Congress from 1883 to 1889, being seated the third time by the largest majority of any member of that House, and recently nominated by acclamation by the Republicans for governor of Minnesota—all would do credit to any men. Who asks if John Ericsson was born in Sweden or H. H. Boyesen in Norway? These men are none the less American because born in Norway or Sweden or of Scandinavian parentage.

Society has little to fear from Scandinavian immigrants; certainly not from illiteracy, for Norway, Sweden, and Denmark are among the five states of Europe "nearly free from illiteracy." By the most conservative estimate, the percentage of illiteracy in Russia is eighty, in Hungary fifty, in Italy forty-eight, while "among the Swedish recruits of 1888 only one per cent were unlettered." In addition to this uni-

versally fair education, many of the immigrants are highly educated. Because of the similarity of structure of the English and Scandinavian languages and an aptitude for acquiring languages, they readily learn English. The use of newspapers and books, both in their tongues and in English, is large; in Minnesota alone thirty-seven Scandinavian newspapers are published.

Coupled with the love for politics among them is the love for religion and the Church. The vast majority are Lutherans of one branch or another. At any rate, they are Protestant enough to satisfy the most fastidious Catholic-hater, for a Catholic in Norway or Sweden is a rare, suspicious object. The dissenting movement among the Scandinavian Lutherans in America is comparatively strong. At one time there were six divisions of the Norwegians alone, though recently three of them united. The rigid adherence to the forms and practices of the mother-state Church is weakened, while, on the other hand, the liberal and atheistic movements have made slow progress, even among the dissenters. The churches, with a few exceptions, have not maintained regular elementary schools. Poverty, isolation of the families of the great farming class, and the desire to conform to American customs have all led to a very general patronage of the common schools. The church school is usually open during public-school vacations, if at all, and instruction confined to religious teaching and the use of the mother-tongue. All this has contributed to the rapid Americanization of the second generation. For higher education, the church maintains numerous and well-patronized seminaries and colleges, while the high-schools and the State universities throughout the Northwest have a large Scandinavian attendance, auguring well for the future. In the University of Minnesota, for example, located in the same city with two Scandinavian colleges, during the past year one hundred and seventy-five students, out of thirteen hundred and seventy-four, were of Scandinavian parentage.

The statistics for crime, pauperism, etc., show a percentage for the Scandinavian below the average of foreign population, while for insanity the percentage is higher. Minnesota, again, will serve as a fair example. In 1885 the Scandinavians were 16.5 per cent of the population, the Germans 11.5 per cent. In 1886, of those confined in prisons 8.7 per cent were Scandinavians, 7.4 per cent Germans. In 1890 7.1 per cent were Scandinavians, though the Scandinavian population had increased nearly twice as fast as the native. For insanity the figures are quite the reverse. The completely changed aspect of nature,

the isolation of the farmers, and the severity of the struggle for all at the first, together with the ordinary causes, produce an unusually large number of cases of insanity. In 1886, of the inmates of the insane hospitals 28.3 per cent were Scandinavians; in 1890, 30.7 per cent. Statistics for illegitimacy are not easily obtainable or reliable, but an inspection of the crimes for which criminals in the State prisons have been sentenced suggests the conclusion that so large an immigration from a country showing annually ten per cent of illegitimate births, as in the case of Sweden (for the city of Stockholm for 1884 it was twenty-nine per cent), must have some effect in lowering the standard of morals in the community.

The Scandinavians, with all their virtues, are not without faults. They are often narrow-minded, in the city sometimes clannish and given to making demands, political and social, as Scandinavian-Americans. The Swede is frequently jealous of the Norwegian, and *vice versa*. But as a class they are sober, earnest, industrious, and frugal. They are not driven here; they come of their own accord and come to stay, not to get a few hundred dollars and return to a life of idleness. They come not to destroy our institutions, but to build them up by adopting them. They come from countries not potent or glorious in European affairs, and therefore the more readily denationalize themselves, that they may become entirely American. The most of them are plain, common people, strong, sturdy, and independent, required to unlearn little, ready and able to learn much and learn it well. They have the same still powers of adaptability and assimilation that made Rollo and his Northmen such good Frenchmen and Guthrun and his Danes such excellent Englishmen; and using these powers among us to-day, they are, or are rapidly becoming, irreproachably and unimpeachably American.

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THE MINE LABORERS IN PENNSYLVANIA.

At the present time the public prints are filled with statistics of immigration and of the area of unsettled lands and with discussions of the laws relating thereto. The Government printing-presses are furnishing the results of work performed by agents who were sent abroad to inquire into the condition at home of the prospective emigrant. All these articles are interesting and important; but the public demands better and more detailed information. The American people have a right to know what are the results upon the communities wherein large numbers of Southern Europeans settle: how they live, the wages they earn, the money they spend, their proportion of crime, their superstitions, and the prospect of having them assimilated among the native population.

It is taken for granted that the public accepts one fact in advance: that east of the Mississippi we have to fear, at present, immigration only from Russia, Poland, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Sicily. But the laws of immigration are fixed. The transfer of population from the Old World to the New moves from west to east. Our first immigrants naturally came from countries bordering the Atlantic coast; but if proper laws are not administered, there is no possible doubt that in the future hordes of immigrants from India will enter our ports. Religious beliefs do much to hold back these people now, but little is needed to break this check. In fact, while in 1890 we received 4,448 immigrants from Asia, in 1891 this number rose to 7,678.

Already the stream of immigration from Southern Europe is sweeping toward the Northwest and the South; but it began to pour into the mining regions of Pennsylvania over a dozen years ago. It is a matter of great importance, therefore, that the Nation know how this stream has become a deluge in one decade, and what are its results even in so short a time. One who desires to study the vital phase of the immigration problem should go to the anthracite fields of the Keystone State. There he will find one of the richest regions of the earth overrun with a horde of Hungarians, Slavs, Poles, Bohemians, Arabs, Italians, Sicilians, Russians, and Tyrolese of the