

# Immigration After War Will Break All Records

Prof. Foerster of Harvard Expects More than a Million a Year and Thinks United States Should Adopt Restrictive Measures

UNPRECEDENTED burdens of taxation and excessive prices for all necessities of life are so much more sure to come to Europe after the war than are ample employment of labor with good or even living wages, according to Professor R. F. Foerster of the Department of Economics of Harvard University, that he takes it for granted that, simultaneously with the restoration of peace, emigration from the countries now at war to the United States will be resumed in large volume. He will not be surprised if the record of approximately a million immigrants a year during the period of 1906 to 1913 is materially exceeded as soon as the working people of Europe are free to seek the highest market for their labor.

"That highest market," continued Professor Foerster, "will be undoubtedly in the United States. Prices will be high here, too, no doubt, and wages probably will not be so high as they are now. Nevertheless, the United States will be the best country in which to make a living and the European countries will be the worst. So immigration at the rate of something more than a million a year is a reasonable thing to expect.

"This flow will come to us principally from Italy and Eastern Europe, where the work of reconstruction is not going to be a material factor in holding the laborers. It is a mistake to think of the upbuilding of San Francisco after her earthquake, or of the reconstruction of Baltimore after her fire, as a sample of the things that are going to happen in Europe. San Francisco and Baltimore were rich cities in a rich country, and reconstruction of something better than that which had been destroyed came quickly and as a matter of course.

"For a symbol of what is coming in Europe it is better to look to Messina, which was destroyed eight years ago, and is still in ruins because of the comparative poverty of the people of that city and of Italy. They will be much poorer at the end of the war than they were at the time of the Sicilian earthquakes, and the same will be true of Poland and Galicia and, to a large extent, of Serbia and the rest of the Balkans.

"When we come to the west of Europe I doubt if Belgium will be in a position to rebuild herself immediately and on a large scale. In Northern France things will be different. France is a rich country. It will end the war with a smaller population, no doubt, than it had

at the beginning. There the work of reconstruction will be a big economic factor so far as the remunerative employment of labor is concerned, so there will be no French emigration to speak of. But there never has been to this country, so the exceptional conditions in France will have no bearing on the question of emigration to this country.

"I think we may expect the arrival of many Belgians. Their country was so crowded before the war that it could not support its own population, even under normal conditions.

"As to Italy, a brand-new factor enters



Robert F. Foerster.

into the problem. Before the war as many Italians emigrated to Germany and other countries of Europe as came to the United States. That will not be so in the future; at least, not for a long time to come. So Italian emigration which formerly went to the several countries of Central Europe will be diverted to the United States in a large measure, and to a lesser extent to Argentina and other South American countries.

"It goes without saying that the Poles will resume their emigration to the United States as soon as they are free to leave. If the establishment of a free Poland, as recently proclaimed by Germany, should prove to be a permanent and a genuine thing, sustained after the re-establishment of peace, that might prove an inducement for the people of the new State to stay at home in the enjoyment of the new freedom for which they have been fighting for more than a century. But, as only a part of the original Poland is involved, and as there

is grave doubt as to the permanence of the new autonomy, this is practically a negligible factor in any consideration of European emigration.

"I do not understand the theory of Immigration Commissioner Howe of Ellis Island, that the travel after the war will be from this country to Europe rather than the other way. There will surely be no economic justification for emigration of labor from the United States to the countries which will be able to offer them so much less in the way of wages and impose upon them so much more in the way of taxes and the cost of living.

"It may be that Germans in considerable numbers will go back to their Fatherland as a matter of sentiment and because of their resentment of the attitude of the United States toward Germany in this war. The fact that the so-called hyphen vote did not materialize in the recent Presidential election does not indicate that there is no such resentment on the part of German-Americans.

"The failure of the German-Americans to vote solidly one way or another was due, I think, partly to their bewilderment as to which candidate was the more friendly, or the less hostile, to Germany. There were some who were afraid of what Hughes might do and others who resented what Wilson had done. But with many there must have been a genuine subordination of the war issue at the polls.

"While the return of some to Germany will be a very interesting movement, it will not be a large one, and will have no particular bearing on the future proportion of the foreign-born and foreign-parentage population of this country. Aside from this possible outgo of Germans, which is not unlikely in a few years to be compensated by an immigration of Germans, I do not think the United States will suffer any numerical loss.

"Of course, any increase in immigration is going to put emphasis once more on the question of whether or no the United States should adopt restrictive measures. Personally, I believe that we should. That may sound selfish. But, in a broad way, we can not do anything in the United States to raise the tone of our citizenship without its reacting favorably on the other countries of the world. People would simply stay at home until they were better prepared to come, and be the sort of citizens that we ought to have, and their home

countries would see to it that they were so prepared. With permanent improvement in Europe, they would be less likely to want to come.

"There is a good illustration, and also proof, of that in the agitation in Italy for better education whenever this country seriously considers the imposing of a literacy test. When such a test seemed likely to become law some years ago there was a strong movement in Italy to make adequate appropriation and provision for better public education in the southern and illiterate provinces of that country. When the measure failed to become law, this movement for an educational appropriation in Italy came to an end.

"The suggestion was again advanced under the Wilson Administration. I think such episodes show that something more than the mere selfish protection of our own countries would be accomplished by wise and reasonable restrictive measures.

"We should tell the rest of the world what kind of raw material we want for the making of American citizens and then we will get it. When the emigrant is once admitted to this country I do not approve of rushing his naturalization too fast or attempting to convert him into an American by artificial means. When so converted or transformed he is much less apt to remain an American when the real test comes; such a test, for example, as offered by the present war.

"Somebody has suggested that a head tax be imposed on every alien for every year that he remains an alien beyond the period within which he might become a citizen as provided by the present naturalization laws; the purpose of the proposed tax being to accelerate him into citizenship.

"I doubt if that would be advisable. It would be artificial. There is no test of a foreigner's fitness for citizenship so good as his genuine desire to acquire it. That desire does not come very soon after leaving his fatherland. You cannot expect a man to go back on his boyhood. He is not willing to forget the old country, no matter how eager he has been to come to the new, and the adopted country may be to a man very much what a second wife is.

"Another device still worse for hastening a man into citizenship is the rule that prevails in some countries that no alien who is eligible for citizenship, but who does not qualify, shall have a job. That serves to place pecuniary and often sordid considerations above a purely civic matter."