

The Rising Tide of Immigration



Sketched at Ellis Island.

By ISHBEL ROSS

ELLIS ISLAND is again a bedlam of strange tongues. Its momentarily lulled voices have gained in volume within the last year. There is the old aura of nostalgia about it, mingled with a new and irresistibly flamboyant hope. For America is not merely the land of freedom now. It is the land of peace.

The war, it would seem, has made little difference in the foreign inva-

they are in finer shape than we have ever found them," observed Mr. Wallis. "We have not had a higher type of immigrant since the days of Columbus. They have better clothes, more luggage and more money than ever before. The reason is obvious. It is not Europe's dejected and poverty-stricken we are getting now, but those who have something to go on. Otherwise they couldn't reach us, for getting across the Atlantic is a costly undertaking now. Before the

Dutch Immigration Bureau has been established at Hoboken to meet the situation. Jews and Italians are coming in the greatest numbers. Czechoslovaks and Greeks are drifting in steadily and Britishers are arriving in increasing numbers.

A few Bolsheviks try to squeeze in, but the searching examination that every one has to undergo usually identifies them and they are relegated to a detention pen, along with the stowaways, whose ultimate

watching this amorphous mass of humanity stepping off the gangplank of a liner at Ellis Island, following them through the labyrinth of red tape and classification to which they are subjected and speculating on results as they enter, plastic, into the mold of a new environment.

The famous Kissing Post in the Government buildings was never more deserving of its title. It is now the scene of many war reunions. In a cold country where emotion is shame-facedly suppressed, it is a revelation to witness the passionate squandering of affection at Ellis Island—a bit brutish, perhaps, but splendid in its abandonment. The withered lips of a faded mother cling to those of her stalwart son back from the warm land that nurtured them both. An Americanized wife clutches rapturously at a husband home from the war. Ardent faces peer through the gratings that separate the waiting from the arriving. Sounds of recognition come gurgling forth in sundry tongues.

The first stage in the melting-pot process is where the immigrants gather around the hand stand for the afternoon concert.

It is a calico crowd with a regal grace that passes. There is an enviable dignity about the free, unhampered carriage of the uncorseted Latin woman with her long, athletic stride and well-poised head. If the horrors of war have had a cowering effect on the peasant woman of Europe it is by no means visible in the type which is finding its way across the Atlantic.

A Neapolitan girl as vivid as a poppy flits by in the procession with a gay shawl draped Carmen-wise across her shoulder. She looks at a short-skirted American girl with the frank, incredulous stare of a child. There are more hats and fewer clogs in evidence than in the days before the war. But the shawl is still the most popular form of head-gear. More improvement is apparent in the get-up of the men than of the

women, probably because numbers of them have lived in this country and are now merely returning. Warm, fur-lined coats are commonly seen on the male immigrant, and except for an occasional velvet jacket or exotic headpiece, most of the men would pass unnoticed on the streets. Suitcases and portmanteaus are largely in evidence in place of the quondam bundles that cluttered up the landing wharves. In fact, indications of increased prosperity are visible on all sides.

The contrast between the younger and older generation of immigrant is sharp. The most pathetic part of the endless procession is the woman of years who is coming here in spite of herself. She has no desire to be uprooted now that the best part of her life is over. There is none of the savor of adventure for her in the long journey—only a great weariness and a sense of broken association.

One wonders what this country holds for them—a shabby little room in a gray tenement on the east side, perhaps, with the foxglove potion of bitter memories. But not for all of them. There is one little mother who is joining a son who has been a big success in this country. He turns up at the wharf—prosperous looking, immaculately dressed. The mother is old, wizened and gray. No hat. A black shawl envelops her head. She has made some childish attempts at self-decoration—very transparent, very pathetic.

On the ferryboat she takes from her bosom a small box with a string of beads and a crucifix. She tells her son a story with many gesticulations. He swoops suddenly on the beads and kisses them. One wonders what the story is—perhaps the tale of a little dead sister. His arm steals gently around the old mother who sent him forth to find his fortune in this country, and one is glad to know that it is not a shabby room in a gray east side tenement that is awaiting this sweet-faced woman with the kind, sad eyes.



Polish Peasants and Jews.

sion, except to accelerate it. Immigrants are coming in tens and hundreds and thousands, bringing with them their goods and chattels as well as all their old problems and ideals. There is no stopping them. They are pouring in as they have not done since 1914. And it is only the beginning. Were it not for the lack of shipping accommodations, ten million foreigners would be battering at our doors. This is the estimate of Frederick A. Wallis, Commissioner of Immigration. Between two and three million Italians are waiting now for passages. In Poland three hundred thousand are begging to leave their country for America. The formal declaration of peace is anxiously awaited by would-be emigrants in enemy countries. As it is, nearly thirty thousand immigrants are being handled at Ellis Island every week. More are coming through the gates in one month now than during the entire war period.

The type, on the whole, is better than in pre-war days. The deleterious effects of war are not as apparent as might be supposed. There is a certain amount of physical disability, but it is not unduly marked. All the officials at Ellis Island—from the gatekeeper who for years has barked at the non-comprehending, gesticulating foreigner, to Commissioner Wallis—declare that they never saw a better type of immigrant.

"Mentally, morally and physically

war a steerage passage could be had for \$25. During the war it was possible to cross for \$10. Now the rate from Hamburg to New York ranges from \$120 to \$160, and, in addition, there is a head tax of \$18. This is a considerable sum for the European peasant.

"Even if passage can be secured, our regulations make it hard for the undesirable to get in, and we expect to make things still harder. Immigrants must be of sound mind, body and morals. And they must assure us that they have sufficient funds to keep them from becoming public charges. We are not going to allow the rising tide of immigration clamoring to get through the gates at Ellis Island to be made an excuse for letting somebody slip through who is not entitled to domicile in this country. On the contrary, we must draw the nets tighter and tighter across the Narrows, so that no doubtful case can enter. I would rather send back a thousand good immigrants than admit one man or woman who by word or deed would threaten the country's institutions."

In place of the flotsam and jetsam that frequently drifted in on the immigrant tide in the past, a sturdy type of Dutch farmer is coming to make his home in the West. His own country has been overrun with Reds from Southern and Eastern Europe. One of the latest ships to arrive brought 200 Dutchmen. This is an unusual departure, and a

fate is deportation. It is noteworthy that all the immigrants want to settle in the large cities and that New York, Chicago and Philadelphia are their favorite camping grounds. There is a marked youthfulness about the incoming tide. Hundreds of the Italians are reservists, glad to return to the country which has already given them a warm welcome, and which in many cases harbors their wives and children.

It would be difficult to imagine a more fascinating occupation than



Jewish and Irish Types.