

THE MASSACHUSETTS TEACHER

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IMMIGRATION.

The poor, the oppressed, and, worse than all, the *ignorant* of the old world, have found a rapid and almost a free passage to the new. So great is the pressure upon the masses in the old countries, especially in Ireland, and so rapid and cheap is the ocean path to a better land, that every possible inducement is held out to the degraded and ignorant abroad to leave the land of their nativity and seek a new home upon our shores. The constantly increasing influx of foreigners during the last ten years has been, and continues to be, a cause of serious alarm to the most intelligent of our own people. What will be the ultimate effect of this vast and unexampled immigration, is a problem which has engaged the most anxious thought of our best and wisest men. Will it, like the muddy Missouri, as it pours its waters into the clear Mississippi and contaminates the whole united mass, spread ignorance and vice, crime and disease, through our native population? or can we, by any process, not only preserve ourselves from the threatened demoralization, but improve and purify and make valuable this new element which is thus forced upon us, and which we cannot shut out if we would?

The waters of the Mississippi and Missouri when they first meet do not mingle, but run along side by side for miles — the one, sparkling and bright, in all its native purity, the other muddy and impure as it left its own valley. But the scene soon changes; the bright and the pure disappear, and the whole united mass rolls on, a great and a mighty river, bearing navies on its broad bosom to and from the ocean, but without the beauty and transparency of the parent stream. Its volume and power are wonderfully increased, but its purity has disappeared forever.

If such is to be our fate — if the immense aggregation made to our population by immigration, is only to increase our strength while it essentially impairs our character; — if the gradual mixture of the foreigner with the native is to tinge the latter with the ignorance, vice and crime which pervade other lands, then it had been better for us and for our children to the latest generations, that when our

fathers declared these United States free and independent, they had, at the same time, established a rigid non-intercourse with the rest of the world.

But if, on the other hand, we can by any means purify this foreign people, enlighten their ignorance, and bring them up to our own level, we shall perform a work of true and perfect charity, blessing the giver and the receiver in equal measure.

30 AND THIS IS OUR MISSION, — a mission in which every Christian, every patriot, every philanthropist is bound to work; a mission of far greater importance to the universal welfare and improvement of the whole human race than all others save one. The task is difficult; let us be thankful that it is not an impossible one.

Our chief difficulty is with the Irish. The Germans, who are the next in numbers, will give us no trouble. They are more obstinate, more strongly wedded to their own notions and customs than the Irish; but they have, inherently, the redeeming qualities of industry, frugality and pride, which will save them from vice and pauperism, and they may be safely left to take care of themselves. But the poor Irish, the down-trodden, priest-ridden of centuries, come to us in another shape. So cheaply have they been held at home — so closely have they been pressed down in the social scale — that for the most part the simple virtues of industry, temperance, and frugality are unknown to them; and that
40 the smallest wages rather than seek or accept charitable aid, has been literally crushed out of them. We speak now of the masses. There are many and brilliant exceptions among our Irish immigrants — thousands of industrious, frugal, temperate men, who, in common with us, see and deplore the defects we have spoken of in the general character of their countrymen, and who are ready to lend a willing hand for their eradication.

To understand an evil perfectly, is a great point gained towards a remedy. In this case the principal remedial measure stands out so clearly that there is no mistaking it. With the old not much can be done; but with their children, the great remedy is EDUCATION. The rising generation must be taught as our own grown children are taught. We say *must be*, because in many cases this can only be accomplished by coercion. In too many instances the parents are unfit guardians of their own children.
50 If left to their direction the young will be brought up in idle, dissolute, vagrant habits, which will make them worse members of society than their parents are; instead of filling our public schools, they will find their way into our prisons, houses of correction and almshouses. Nothing can operate effectually here but stringent legislation, thoroughly carried out by an efficient police; — the children must be

gathered up and forced into school, and those who resist or impede this plan, whether parents or *priests*, must be held accountable and punished.

60 A second remedial measure may be found in a strict execution of the laws against intemperance; and if these laws are not sufficiently stringent they must be made more so, even if we go to the length which Maine has gone.¹ In our large towns, where the most of our Irish population resort, a sufficient body of police should be employed to eradicate every grog hole and bring before the magistrates every drunkard. Make it impossible for these people to obtain rum — compel them to be temperate, and the battle is more than half won; for with temperance come industry and frugality.

70 A third remedial measure is to put an entire stop to street begging; and in order to do this effectually we must every one of us steel our hearts against all sorts of importunities. Give work if we have it to give, but give nothing else. There is danger that anyone will starve — the really needy will find their way to the proper officers who will give the proper relief, and every cent given to others than these, is a reward to idleness. Let every beggar be sent to the almshouse, and when there, if able to work, let him be made to work. If this course were adopted and thoroughly carried out, not only should we rid ourselves of street beggars, but we should decrease the number of paupers. Thousands would get their own living by labor, who now prefer begging, and even being immured in an almshouse, rather than to work for their bread.

Did our limits permit, we should be glad to go farther and deeper into this subject, for it is one of pressing weight while we must overcome, or it will conquer us and contaminate our children.

EMIGRATION.

We have already discussed, very briefly and imperfectly, the great movement of immigration, and pointed out some of our duties as connected herewith.

80 Our country has become the refuge of the poor and the oppressed of the white race from all lands; and we are content that it should be so if we can devise means to prevent this influx of foreigners from exercising a deteriorating effect upon ourselves and our children. But while the white race from Europe are seeking homes amongst us and filling all the avenues of labor, and we are

¹ Earlier in 1851, Maine had banned the manufacture and sale of liquor (the first state to do so). The law remained in effect until national prohibition ended with the 21st Amendment in 1934.

anxiously considering how we shall dispose of them, another question of no less vital importance is urging itself upon our attention with daily increasing force: — What is to be done with the millions of the black race who are already here?

90 The time is approaching when slave labor will cease to yield a profit, and as that result begins to make itself felt the bands of slavery will gradually relax. There will be a disposition, — commencing all the border States, — to let the bondman go free if he can be provided for. Broad as our country is, every thinking mind must come to the conclusion that it is not broad enough to contain in peace and harmony two antagonistic races, whose marked peculiarities prevent the possibility of amalgamation, and who must ever remain distinct and antagonistic. No territory on this continent can be assigned to the sole use of the black race on which they will be allowed to rest in peace. A strong disposition — which will continue to increase in strength — is already manifested in the free States, to prevent the further immigration of free blacks within their borders. And it is better that this determination should exist, and that it should be manifested with a resolute and determined spirit, thereby throwing upon the States who cherish the institution of slavery the whole burden of that institution, and obliging them to seek a remedy for its evils: a course they will be in no haste to adopt while the free States absorb all their surplus black population.

100 The only resource for this portion of our population is emigration, and it lies with us to stay in what manner it shall be brought about. They may be educated, or starved into the conviction of this truth. They may be *taught* that their destiny calls them to other lands, and thus be sent forth willingly — the founders of a splendid Republic — civilized, Christianized, before they depart, and carrying with them, and spreading over other lands, which have been covered for centuries with thickest clouds of ignorance and superstition, the bright and cheering lights of civil virtues and Christian philanthropy: or they may be neglected, degraded, and finally compelled by want, to seek, as the Irish now seek, relief in foreign lands, carrying with them nothing but ignorance and vice.

110 Shadowed out in the dim obscurity of the future, we may see the black race in possession of the most fertile countries of the world. Driven from this continent some will find homes in the land of their fathers, but others will possess themselves of Jamaica, Cuba, Porto Rico, and other islands, and remain there, acknowledged masters and lords of the soil. These lands are theirs by nature. Beautiful and fertile as they are, their climate is fatal to the white, but salubrious to the black race, and the day will come when the white race will cease to contend against nature, and leave the black in peaceful possession of that which he alone is fitted to occupy and enjoy.

120 It is one of the missions of our day to prepare for this forthcoming change — to bring about this exodus in that manner which shall be most beneficial to the blacks, and most honorable to ourselves. It is to be done by *education*—by preparing the children of this race to assume a high position in their new homes — by instilling in to the minds of them all, old and young, the necessity and the great advantages of this change; and if we thoroughly discharge this duty, not only shall we in time be freed from slavery, but even slavery itself will be converted into a blessing which will civilize and Christianize a quarter of the world extending knowledge and happiness to countless millions yet to be born.

The little which has been done in Africa is a sure index to how much may be done. The glimmering star which shines feebly upon one small spot of its vast shore, may be kindled into a bright sun which shall extend its vivifying and life-giving rays over every portion of a benighted continent. Its is ours — and not a burden, but a privilege we should deem it — to help on this great revolution, to give our hearts and our hands with cheerful vigor to a work which promises greater blessings to the world than any other ever undertaken by man.