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MS-53: Moses J. Gries Papers, 1850-1934 (bulk 1890-1930).

Series D: Sermons and Addresses, 1893-1917, undated.

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“The Immigrant,” 1906 January 21.

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Sunday, January 21, 1906.

THE IMMIGRANT.

More than a million immigrants came to the United States during the year ending June 30, 1905. | Some are affrighted by the volume of immigration. Others are emphasizing the change in the character of the immigrants - their geographical origin in the countries of Southern and Eastern Europe.

All are agreed that America should shut out the diseased and the defective, the paupers and the criminals. We favor the sifting of immigration, but are opposed to any restrictions that would hinder the poor and the able-bodied. The head tax, and especially an increase of the head tax, is an injustice to the honest immigrant. The dollar is not the real test of the man. America needs the brain and brawn of the immigrant. Not all the degenerates and the undesirables come in the steerage. The door of hope should stand ever open. It is the established American principle. It is the best sentiment of the millions who themselves were immigrants, or are the children of immigrants. The gates of the land of refuge should never be shut in the face of the victims of persecution. | Says the Poet Longfellow:

"How came they here? What burst of Christian hate,
What persecution, merciless and blind,
Drove o'er the sea - that desert desolate -
These Ishmaels and Hagers of mankind?"

Mr. Sargent, the Ex-Commissioner of Immigration, has urged repeatedly that the greatest peril of immigration is the congestion in the large cities. He has also pointed out the remedy, viz: an intelligent distribution of immigrants to the states and sections which need them most. /

I am chiefly interested in the Jewish immigrant. / Mr. Sargent says, safety lies in Americanization. The public school and the press are the great educating, assimilating and Americanizing forces. / I rejoice that our Jewish immigrants are so eager to learn. Almost immediately they find the way to the night school, at the Alliance or in the Public Schools. It is an impressive sight to see bearded men learning their alphabet like little children. The quick advance and development of the

Jewish immigrant is determined by his eagerness to learn, his all powerful passion for knowledge. Needless to say anything concerning the children of Jewish immigrants, and their almost inborn love for learning.

The recent conference on immigration, held under the auspices of the National Civic Federation, expressed the best opinion of the country concerning this country. Andrew Carnegie had but one test - "Has the man the ambition to enjoy the rights of an American citizen?" "What would this country have been without the immigrant," he exclaims, "and who is there here who is not either an immigrant himself or has immigrants' blood in his veins?" Valuing the immigrant at the price of a slave - \$1000 - Carnegie believes every immigrant increases the riches of the nation one thousand dollars. President Eliot of Harvard said emphatically, "We need all the brain and sinew we can import to develop our resources." The resolutions of the Conference made clear that no restrictions could now possibly be placed upon the coming here of any immigrant who could not be qualified as undesirable.

Says Dr. Frankel, the head of the New York Charities--

"The immigrant Jew who arrives on these shores is simply impoverished. In the main he has all the virtues and all the good qualities of his more fortunate brother, and the only thing that he asks for, and the only thing in fact that he should be given, in the majority of instances, is opportunity to strike out for himself. This he has the right to ask, and this it is that we should give to him freely, openly, with the hand of friendship stretched out to help him over the rugged and difficult paths."

Rabbi Gries made an appeal for personal workers to give themselves in personal service to facilitate the adjustment and to hasten the Americanization of the Jewish immigrant. He closed his address with Emma Lazarus' poem "The New Colossus," dedicated to the Bartholdi Statue of Liberty:

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the aimless, tempest-tost, to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."