Introduction

ONCE I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants *were* American history.

For almost fifteen years now, I have searched among the surviving records of the masses of men who peopled our country. As I worked, the conviction grew upon me that adequately to describe the course and effects of immigration involved no less a task than to set down the whole history of the United States. That is not a burden I can now assume.

My ambitions in this volume are more modest. I hope to seize upon a single strand woven into the fabric of our past, to understand that strand in its numerous ties and linkages with the rest; and perhaps, by revealing the nature of this part, to throw light upon the essence of the whole.

Choice of the strand about which this book was written had particular significance for me, for it called for a radical reversal of perspective. I had written, as others had written, of the impact of the immigrant upon the society which received him, of the effect upon political, social, and economic institutions of the addition of some thirty-five million newcomers to the population of the United States in the century after 1820. It was not surprising that these aspects of the subject should have received earliest treatment. Towns that suddenly grew into cities and found themselves engulfed in slums, overwhelmed with problems of pauperism and relief;

the governmental system that swiftly changed under the control of voters with new conceptions of politics – these drew immediate attention to the consequences of injecting alien elements into our society. These were practical problems in the face of which there was no forgetting the importance of immigration.

In retrospect too the effects of the movement of population upon the new continent were the most striking. The arrival of a labor force that permitted the expansion of industry without the pauperization of the native workers; the fact that costs of production could fall while the capacity to consume continued to grow; the remarkable fluidity of a social system in which each new group pushed upward the level of its predecessors – these were the phenomena that gave immigration a prominent role in the development of the United States.

In this work, however, I wished to regard the subject from an altogether different point of view. Immigration altered America. But it also altered the immigrants. And it is the effect upon the newcomers of their arduous transplantation that I have tried to study.

My theme is emigration as the central experience of a great many human beings. I shall touch upon broken homes, interruptions of a familiar life, separation from known surroundings, the becoming a foreigner and ceasing to belong. These are the aspects of alienation; and seen from the perspective of the individual received rather than of the receiving society, the history of immigration is a history of alienation and its consequences.

I have tried historically to trace the impact of separation, of the disruption in the lives and work of people who left

one world to adjust to a new. These are the bleaker pages of our history. For the effect of the transfer was harsher upon the people than upon the society they entered.

The experience of these men on the move was more complex than that of eighteenth-century Negroes or of seventeenth-century Englishmen or of eleventh-century Normans. The participants in the earlier mass migrations had either wandered to unoccupied places, where they had only to adjust to new conditions of the physical environment, or they had gone under the well-defined conditions of conquering invader or imported slave.

It was the unique quality of the nineteenth-century immigration that the people who moved entered the life of the United States at a status equal to that of the older residents. So far as law and the formal institutions of the nation were concerned, the newcomers were one with those long settled in the New World. The immigrants could not impose their own ways upon society; but neither were they constrained to conform to those already established. To a significant degree, the newest Americans had a wide realm of choice.

Therein lay the broader meaning of their experience. Emigration took these people out of traditional, accustomed environments and replanted them in strange ground, among strangers, where strange manners prevailed. The customary modes of behavior were no longer adequate, for the problems of life were new and different. With old ties snapped, men faced the enormous compulsion of working out new relationships, new meanings to their lives, often under harsh and hostile circumstances.

The responses of these folk could not be easy, automatic, for emigration had stripped away the veneer that in more stable situations concealed the underlying nature of the so-

cial structure. Without the whole complex of institutions and social patterns which formerly guided their actions, these people became incapable of masking or evading decisions.

Under such circumstances, every act was crucial, the product of conscious weighing of alternatives, never simple conformity to an habitual pattern. No man could escape choices that involved, day after day, an evaluation of his goals, of the meaning of his existence, and of the purpose of the social forms and institutions that surrounded him.

The immigrants lived in crisis because they were uprooted. In transplantation, while the old roots were sundered, before the new were established, the immigrants existed in an extreme situation. The shock, and the effects of the shock, persisted for many years; and their influence reached down to generations which themselves never paid the cost of crossing.

No one moves without sampling something of the immigrants' experience – mountaineers to Detroit, Okies to California, even men fixed in space but alienated from their culture by unpopular ideas or tastes. But the immigrants' alienation was more complete, more continuous, and more persistent. Understanding of their reactions in that exposed state may throw light on the problems of all those whom the modern world somehow uproots.

I
Peasant Origins

THE immigrant movement started in the peasant heart of Europe. Ponderously balanced in a solid equilibrium for centuries, the old structure of an old society began to crumble at the opening of the modern era. One by one, rude shocks weakened the aged foundations until some climactic blow suddenly tumbled the whole into ruins. The mighty collapse left without homes millions of helpless, bewildered people. These were the army of emigrants.

The impact was so much the greater because there had earlier been an enormous stability in peasant society. A granite-like quality in the ancient ways of life had yielded only slowly to the forces of time. From the westernmost reaches of Europe, in Ireland, to Russia in the east, the peasant masses had maintained an imperturbable sameness; for fifteen centuries they were the backbone of a continent, unchanging while all about them radical changes again and again recast the civilization in which they lived.

Stability, the deep, cushiony ability to take blows, and yet to keep things as they were, came from the special place of these people on the land. The peasants were agriculturists; their livelihood sprang from the earth. Americans they met later would have called them "farmers," but that word had a different meaning in Europe. The bonds that held these men to their acres were not simply the personal ones of the

husbandman who temporarily mixes his sweat with the soil. The ties were deeper, more intimate. For the peasant was part of a community and the community was held to the land as a whole.

Always, the start was the village. "I was born in such a village in such a parish" – so the peasant invariably began the account of himself. Thereby he indicated the importance of the village in his being; this was the fixed point by which he knew his position in the world and his relationship with all humanity.

The village was a place. It could be seen, it could be marked out in boundaries, pinned down on a map, described in all its physical attributes. Here was a road along which men and beasts would pass, reverence the saint's figure at the crossing. There was a church, larger or smaller, but larger than the other structures about it. The burial ground was not far away, and the smithy, the mill, perhaps an inn. There were so many houses of wood or thatch, and so built, scattered among the fields as in Ireland and Norway, or, as almost everywhere else, huddled together with their backs to the road. The fields were round about, located in terms of river, brook, rocks, or trees. All these could be perceived; the eye could grasp, the senses apprehend the feel, the sound, the smell, of them. These objects, real, authentic, true, could come back in memories, be summoned up to rouse the curiosity and stir the wonder of children born in distant lands.

Yet the village was still more. The aggregate of huts housed a community. Later, much later, and very far away, the Old Countrymen also had this in mind when they thought of the village. They spoke of relationships, of ties, of family, of kinship, of many rights and obligations. And

these duties, privileges, connections, links, had each their special flavor, somehow a unique value, a meaning in terms of the life of the whole.

They would say then, if they considered it in looking backward, that the village was so much of their lives because the village *was* a whole. There were no loose, disorderly ends; everything was knotted into a firm relationship with every other thing. And all things had meaning in terms of their relatedness to the whole community.

In their daily affairs, these people took account of the relationships among themselves through a reckoning of degrees of kinship. The villagers regarded themselves as a clan connected within itself by ties of blood, more or less remote. That they did so may have been in recollection of the fact that the village was anciently the form the nomadic tribe took when it settled down to a stable agricultural existence. Or it may have been a reflection of the extent of intermarriage in a place where contact with outsiders was rare. In any case, considerations of kinship had heavy weight in the village, were among the most important determinants of men's actions.

But the ties of blood that were knotted into all the relationships of communal life were not merely sentimental. They were also functional; they determined or reflected the role of individuals in the society.

No man, for instance, could live alone in the village. Marriage was the normal expected state of all but the physically deformed. If death deprived a person of his marriage partner, all the forces of community pressure came into play to supply a new helpmate. For it was right and proper that each should have his household, his place in a family.

The family, being functional, varied somewhat to suit

the order of local conditions. But always the unit revolved about the husband and wife. The man was head of the household and of its enterprises. He controlled all its goods, made the vital decisions that determined its well-being, had charge of the work in the fields, and was the source of authority and discipline within the home. His wife was mother, her domain the house and all that went on in and about it. She was concerned with the garden and the livestock, with domestic economy in its widest sense — the provision of food, shelter, and clothing for all. The children had each their task, as befitted their age and condition. Now they herded the cattle or assisted in the chores of cleaning and cookery; later they would labor by the side of mother and father, and prepare to set up families of their own. Other members too had their allotted and recognized roles. Grandparents, aunts and uncles, sometimes cousins up to the fourth degree with no establishments of their own, found a place and a job. The family felt the obligation of caring for all, but also knew that no one could expect food and a corner in which to sleep while doing nothing to earn it. In this respect such collateral relatives did not differ in condition from the hired servants, where they existed, who were also counted members of the family.

The family was then the operating economic unit. In a sense that was always recognized and respected, the land on which it worked was its own. The head of the household, it was true, held and controlled it; legally, no doubt, he had certain powers to waste or dispose of it. But he was subject to an overwhelming moral compulsion to keep it intact, in trust for those who lived from it and for their descendants who would take a place upon it.

The family's land was rarely marked out in a well-defined

plot. The house, the garden, and the barnyard with its buildings were its own, but the bulk of agricultural lands were enmeshed in a wide net of relationships that comprehended the whole community.

Once, it seems, the village had held and used all the land communally; until very recent times recognizable vestiges of that condition persisted. The pastures and meadows, the waste, the bogs and woodlands, existed for the use of all. It hardly mattered at first that the nobility or other interlopers asserted a claim to ownership. The peasants' rights to graze their cattle, to gather wood for building and peat for fire, in practice remained undisturbed. In some parts of Europe, even the arable lands rested in the hands of the whole village, redivided on occasions among its families according to their rights and condition.

Even where particular pieces of land were permanently held, it was rarely in such consolidated plots as the peasants might later see on American farms. A holding consisted rather of numerous tiny strips that patched the slopes of the countryside in a bewildering, variegated design. A Polish peasant, rich in land, could work his nine acres in forty different places.

Agriculture conformed to the pattern of landholding. By long usage, the fields almost everywhere were divided into thirds, a part for winter crops — wheat, rye; another for summer crops — barley, oats, and potatoes; and another to lie fallow. Since no man's lands were completely apart from his neighbor's, there was no room for individuality in working the soil. Every family labored on its own and kept the fruit of its own labors. Yet all labor had to be directed toward the same ends, in the same way, at the same time.

Many important aspects of agriculture, moreover, were altogether communal. The pastures were open to all villagers; in the common fields, the boys tended the cattle together or a hired herdsman had their oversight. Women, working in groups at the wearisome indoor tasks, spinning or plucking cabbage leaves, could turn chores into festive occasions, lighten their labors with sociable gossip. The men were accustomed to give aid to each other, to lend or exchange as an expression of solidarity. After all, folk must live with each other.

So the peasants held together, lived together, together drew the stuff of life from an unwilling earth. Simple neighborliness, mutual assistance, were obligations inherent in the conditions of things, obligations which none could shirk without fear of cutting himself off from the whole. And that was the community, that the village – the capacity to do these things together, the relationships that regulated all.

Their all-embracing quality gave peasant ways a persistent quality, forced each generation to retrace the steps of its predecessors. Family and land in the village were locked in an unyielding knot. And the heart of the bond was the marriage system.

Marriage affected not only the two individuals most directly involved; it affected deeply the lives and the lands of all those related to them. Marriage destroyed the integrity of two old productive units and created a new one. The consummation of the union could be successful only with provisions for the prosperity of both the new and the old families, and that involved allocation of the land among the contracting parties in a proper and fitting manner.

Long-standing custom that had the respect and usually the

effect of law regulated these arrangements, and also determined the modes of inheritance. Almost everywhere the land descended within the family through the male line, with the holding passing as a whole to a single son. But provision was also made for the other children. The brothers had portions in money or goods, while substantial amounts were set aside as dowries for the sisters.

The marriage of the oldest son was the critical point in the history of the family. The bride came to live in her father-in-law's home in anticipation of the time when the old man would retire and her husband become the head of the household. In a proper marriage, she brought with her a dowry profitable enough to set up the younger brothers in the style to which they were accustomed and to add to the dowries of the daughters of the family.

No marriage was therefore isolated; the property and the future welfare of the whole family hung in the balance each time an alliance was negotiated. And not only the family's; the whole community was directly concerned. Naturally matters of such importance could not be left to the whim of individuals; they rested instead in the hands of experienced, often of professional, matchmakers who could conduct negotiations with decorum and ceremony, who could guarantee the fitness of the contracting families and the compatibility in rank of the individuals involved.

The whole family structure rested on the premise of stability, on the assumption that there would be no radical change in the amount of available land, in the size of the population, or in the net of relationships that held the village together. Were there daughters without dowries or sons without portions, were no lands made vacant to be bought with dowry and portion, then a part of the com-

munity would face the prospect of economic degradation and perhaps, even more important, of serious loss in status.

Not within the village, but beside it, were mushrooming treacherous growths that would jeopardize all that assumed stability.

The village loomed so large in the peasants' consciousness that they were tempted to think it the whole of their society, to behave as if it were entirely self-sufficient and self-contained. The family worked to cover its own needs and expected to subsist by consuming what it produced. But the actual functioning of village life contradicted that assumption and the strain of that contradiction weakened the peasants' whole place on the land.

It was true that the peasant could adjust his consumption to the level of his productivity, eat more in good times, less in poor. But in practice he found himself compelled to produce a disquieting surplus upon which he could not reckon and which regularly upset his scheme of life. To create that surplus he had either to raise his productivity or to divert a part of his produce away from his own consumption. Neither alternative was easy or pleasant.

After all, much as he disliked to consider the fact, the peasant was not alone in his society. Superimposed upon the ranks of the husbandmen was a formidable array of groups that lived by his labors. Beside the village and the village lands were the manor house and the manor lands. That imposing structure, those extensive tracts bespoke the power and wealth of the landlords, nobility or gentry, in peasant eyes equally lords. He who lived within the manor gates was not a part of the village; but his will had a profound effect upon it. The lord owned all about him, land and water

and even wind (for only he could build a mill). The lord was strong. On horse, with sword, he wielded power.

The sword of the lord protected the peasant, gave him peace against hostile strangers. The sword of the lord did justice among peasants, interceded in quarrels, and supported right against wrong. But the sword of the lord also took days' work from the peasant, collected rents and dues from the tillers of the soil. These payments constituted a first charge against the income of every household in the village; failure to pay entailed the danger of losing the land. The peasant could meet these charges only by deductions from his own consumption or by producing a surplus.

Apart from the village was also the priest's house. Its occupant, the church over which he presided, and the essential services he performed, were also supported by the peasant. Almost everywhere compulsory dues of some sort recurred year after year and special contributions marked the critical points of every man's life. In kind or in cash there were gifts to bring at holidays and festivals and fees at birth, marriage, and death. It was the good peasant's duty to pay as well for memorials for his dead, for thanksgiving at special good fortune, or for prayers against particular calamities. Those who labored in the fields sometimes grumbled that it was easier to grow rich by plowing with a pen, but they dutifully provided such unavoidable expenses out of a surplus laid by for the purpose.

Yet these were not all the peasant bore on his back. Some tasks he could not perform for himself or even with the aid of his fellows. His work often brought him to the point at which he needed the paid services of a specialist endowed with unusual skill or possessed of unusual equipment; such were the smith's work, the miller's work, and the weaver's.

Or there were things – butchery, for instance – not reckoned proper for a man to do, obnoxious, loathsome tasks undertaken by someone else for a fee.

There were also services the peasants were obligated to perform for each other without charge, but services so expensive that fulfillment of the obligation would be ruinous to the conscientious individual. Conventionally such services were transferred to an outsider who could take payment. Peasant solidarity thus demanded that loans be without interest and hospitality without cost; "Am I a Jewess or a trader, to take money for a little fire and water?" asked the goodwife.

Yet nothing in this world, she knew, was given for nothing and the burden of the obligation could only rarely be suffered by any man. Hence the resort to moneylenders and innkeepers, neutral outsiders not expected to conform to the peasant requirements of solidarity. These too drew support from the peasant's surplus.

Furthermore, the village ideal of self-sufficiency could not protect it against the temptation of dealing in the markets of the outside world. Some things it had to buy: always salt, but later also some luxuries become necessities, as tea. From time to time peddlers passed the peasant's door, tantalized his women with offerings of cloth and ribbons, teased away coin, egg, or fowl. Peddlers of another sort bought and sold horses, bartered livestock. Wandering tinkers periodically made the circuit of the villages, willing for a consideration to sell or repair utensils of kitchen or field. All brought to his very threshold wares tempting enough to induce the peasant to accumulate a surplus.

And that was not all. Seasonally there were fairs, booths crammed into the market place, spilling over with attrac-

tions. Who was so dull as to stay away from these festive occasions, or to leave at home the pig, cow, and handful of accumulated silver? And who was so stern, once there, to resist the pleas of women and children, of his own longings for some indulgence away from the necessities of his everyday life?

In the sober reckonings of the morrow, there was a double significance to all these demands upon the peasant's surplus. In the first place, they tempted him to expand his production in the hope that the ever-growing populations of the towns would take off his hands ever larger quantities of agricultural goods. At the same time, the dealing in surpluses made room for many strangers, people who were not peasants, yet who lived side by side with the peasants and played an important part in the peasant world. The nobility and clergy had long been there. But there were, as well, Jews to carry on the functions of trade, to act as innkeepers and moneylenders, to serve as middlemen between lords and peasants. Gypsies dealt in horses and livestock, worked as blacksmiths and tinsmiths. There were places where outlandish Italian masons, Slovak besombinders, Hungarian bricklayers, made each their appointed appearance to do their appointed tasks. Of these groups, some were of necessity itinerant; no single village could support them the year round. Others settled in the village, though not part of it, or lived in the little towns in close proximity to it. And not distant in miles, though worlds removed, were the cities, regions of total strangeness into which the peasant never ventured, where not the people alone, but the very aspect of the earth was unfamiliar.

The peasant, as an individual, welcomed the strangers. These were not wild men of the woods, but for generations

planted in his midst, and in an immediate way, they made his life easier. But as a member of the community the peasant disapproved, knowing that these outsiders were a threat to the stability of the village. The myth of the gypsies who ran off with the child had a literal and a figurative meaning. The wanderers brought with them the heady smell of wonderful distances, now and then lured to city or to the open road those impatient with family burdens or with the stolid peasant ways.

The figurative snatching was more dangerous. More often than the gypsy stole the child, he stole the birthright. For in these strangers was incarnated the temptation to acquire a surplus beyond the needs of the peasants' livelihood and that temptation was feared lest it some day destroy the delicate balances by which the village held together.

The drive for a surplus was dangerous because it was difficult to expand the volume of production without an enormous strain upon the whole village. Only with difficulty could the peasant, later in America, describe the smallness of his holdings, not only because size varied so much in time and place, but because the scale of things was so inconceivably different. Anywhere at any time, in the Old World, a family that held twelve acres was incredibly well off. In areas particularly poor, in nineteenth-century Galicia for instance, a plot as large as five acres was not usual; and nowhere would that have been reckoned too small. From such tiny acreage the peasant had to draw the sustenance of all the souls dependent upon him. It was certainly difficult to draw from it also enough to leave a surplus.

Furthermore, the techniques of production were inefficient and it was difficult to make changes. Since so much

of the work of the fields was communal, innovations had to wait upon the conversion to the new idea of the whole village, and that meant indefinite postponement. Radical departures from traditional, that is, from safe, ways of acting were not introduced without long, acrimonious debate. Naturally there was no room for risky experimentation. The gamble was too great, for failure meant starvation, not for an individual alone, but for his whole family, and perhaps for the whole village.

A large part of the productive land lay idle; who would give up the fallow year on the guess that there were other means of restoring fertility? Who would venture to turn woodland and pasture into arable land for the possibility of gains necessarily remote? The scrawny peasant animals could never grow fat. There were neither enough acres in the fields nor enough hands in the family to raise fodder to feed them. The beasts were allowed to fare for themselves as best they could in the meadows and, in winter, were either slaughtered or grew lean — visible evidence of the peasants' inability to lay aside a surplus.

In every phase of their labor the peasants ran headlong into the same difficulty. They could never get together capital, turn accumulations into further production. Every fragment of income, long before they had it, was dedicated to some specific end and was not to be used for any other purpose. Indeed money, when they laid hands on it, was never regarded as capital. It made no peasant sense to think of gold and silver, even of tools, as themselves productive. The precious metals could be hoarded up against the expected needs, against the recurrent disasters that were not long absent in their lives; they had no other use, were merely provisional substitutes for the goods or services

they would ultimately buy – rent money, shoe money, salt money, funeral money. So many previous immediate claims ate up the little extras good fortune occasionally left that nothing could be laid aside. These people could not plan for the proximate future; it would be foolish to give the grass time to grow while the steed starved. This was their plight, always to be eating up their seed corn.

It was against these rigid limits of production that the demands for a surplus pushed. There was the danger. Squeezed by the pressure of rising charges and fixed income, the peasant could see in the offing the greatest disaster of all, loss of his land, the sole measure of his worth in the community.

For the peasant loss of the land was a total calamity. The land was not an isolated thing in his life. It was a part of the family and of the village, pivot of a complex circle of relationships, the primary index of his own, his family's status. What was a man without land? He was like a man without legs who crawls about and cannot get anywhere. Land was the only natural, productive good in this society.

Within the village economy there was little the landless could do. Paid labor was degrading. The demand for any kind of work for others was slight. Those who sought such labor had to enter service – in a measure, they surrendered their freedom, their individuality, the hope of establishing families of their own. They lost thereby the quality and rank of peasants. That was why the peasant feared to encumber his land with mortgages, preferred to pay high interest for personal loans. That was why he hesitated to divide his holding, felt threatened by every new charge against it.

Yet time in its changes had made it difficult for some men

to assume the position and maintain the station of peasants. Son after son found that modifications in the pattern of land ownership prevented him from taking the place his father had held.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the effects were noticeable in almost every part of Europe. As landlords, eager to consolidate holdings, combined the old strips into contiguous plots, the peasant suffered. Whether he emerged with the same or lesser acreage, the creation of larger productive units put him at a competitive disadvantage in the market place. He could thrive only if he managed to become a farmer, that is, managed to rent a large plot under a long-term lease, perhaps for life, or for several lifetimes, or without limit of term. (Some indeed were fortunate enough to become proprietors.)

Consolidation widened the differences among peasants. A few grew wealthy as they rose to the status of farmers (*gospodarze*, the Poles called them; *bøndar*, the Norwegians). Many more became poor, were completely edged off the land, and sank helplessly into the growing class of landless peasants, ironic contradiction in terms. Cottiers they were named where English was spoken, *husmaend* in Norwegian, *Häusler* in German, *komorniki* in Polish. The designation described their condition. Their only right was to rent the cottage in which they lived. By sufferance they used the common fields. But their livelihood they earned by day labor for others or by renting small plots under short-term leases or from year to year.

Their livelihood! Such huts they lived in as they themselves in a few days could build. Such clothes they wore as their wives alone could make. Food was what the paid rent

left. In Ireland the annual expenditures of a family of cottiers ran not above thirty-two shillings a year. Calculate a shilling how you will, that is still a grim standard of living.

Could anything be worse? Indeed it could — the times disaster struck, broke in upon the even tenor of these plowmen's ways. Within the rigid, improvident system of production, no reserve absorbed the shock of crop failures. No savings tided him over whose roots rotted in the hostile ground. The very idea was a mockery; if he had had those coins, to what market would he turn? Trade took food from the village, never brought it back. When the parched earth yielded only the withered leaves of famine, then, alas, conditions were somewhat equalized. Farmer and cottier looked to their larders, already depleted since the last year's harvest, and, reconciled, delayed the day the last measured morsel would disappear. Many then reached in vain, found starvation in the empty barrels. No power could help them.

Calamity was familiar. If not the ill-favor of nature, then the caprice of human beings could give her entree to the peasant household. The whims, the incomprehensible needs and interests of landlords created crises for whole villages. Wars came, taxes, laws. The roll of drums desolated fields. Resentful, silent eyes watched the men in uniform drive off the beasts, enlist sons who might never come back, pour out the winter's stored-up grain in heedless waste.

Disaster chained the peasant to his place. The harshness of these burdens immobilized those upon whom they fell, made the poor also poor in spirit. Revolt, escape, were not the stuff their dreams were made of as they paused in the sickle's swing or leaned back in the shadows of the long

winter evening. It was for an end to all striving that their tired hearts longed.

While there was no surcease, they would hold on. Peasant wisdom knew well the fate of the rolling stone, knew that if it remained fixed, even a rock might share in growth. The unwillingness to move reflected, in part, a stubborn attachment to that fierce mistress, the land. It expressed also a lethargic passivity in which each man acquiesced in the condition of his life as it was.

Long habit, the seeming changelessness of things, stifled the impulse to self-improvement. In the country round (the parish, *okolica*) each village had a reputation, a pack of thieves, a crew of liars, a lot of drunkards, fools, or good husbandmen, thrifty, prosperous. Within the village, each family had its place, and in the family each individual. Precisely because the peasant thought only in terms of the whole, he defined his own station always by his status within the larger units. The virtue of one brought benefits, his sin, shame to the whole.

The efforts of man were directed not toward individual improvement but toward maintenance of status. It was fitting and proper to exact one's due rights, to fulfill one's due obligations. It was not fitting to thrust oneself ahead, to aspire to a life above one's rank, to rebel against one's status; that was to argue against the whole order of things.

The deep differences among peasants and between the peasants and the other groups were not a cause for envy. This was the accepted configuration of society. The lord was expected to be proud and luxurious, but humane and generous, just as the peasant was expected to be thrifty and respectful. Even bitterly burdensome privileges were not open to dispute. All knew that to him that can pay, the

musicians play. The peasant did not begrudge the magnates the pleasures of their manor houses; let *them* at least draw enjoyment from life.

Acceptance of status stifled any inclination toward rebelliousness. There were occasional peasant outbursts when the nobility deviated from their expected role or when they tried to alter traditional modes of action. The Jacquerie then or Whiteboys, the followers of Wat Tyler or of Pugachev, savagely redressed their own grievances. But apart from such spasmodic acts of vengeance there were no uprisings against the order within which peasant and noble lived. The same docility blocked off the alternative of secession through emigration. If disaster befell the individual, that was not itself a cause for breaking away. It did not become so until some external blow destroyed the whole peasant order.

The seeds of ultimate change were not native to this stable society. They were implanted from without. For centuries the size of the population, the amount of available land, the quantity of productive surplus, and the pressure of family stability, achieved together a steady balance that preserved the village way of life. Only slowly and in a few places were there signs of unsteadiness in the seventeenth century; then more distinctly and in more places in the eighteenth. After 1800, everywhere, the elements of the old equilibrium disintegrated. The old social structure tottered; gathering momentum from its own fall, it was unable to right itself, and under the impact of successive shocks collapsed. Then the peasants could no longer hang on; when even to stay meant to change, they had to leave.

Earliest harbinger of the transformations to come was a

radical new trend in the population of Europe. For a thousand years, the number of people on the continent had remained constant. From time to time there had been shifts in the areas of heaviest density. In some centuries famine, plague, and war had temporarily lowered the total; in others, freedom from famine, plague, and war had temporarily raised it. But taken all in all these fluctuations canceled each other out.

Then in the eighteenth century came a precipitous rise, unprecedented and, as it proved, cataclysmic. For a hundred years growth continued unabated, if anything at an accelerating rate. Between 1750 and 1850 the population of the continent leaped from about one hundred and forty million to about two hundred and sixty, and by the time of the First World War to almost four hundred million. In addition, by 1915 some two hundred and fifty million Europeans and their descendants lived outside the continent. Even taking account of the relief from emigration, the pressure on social institutions of this increase was enormous. The reckoning is simple: where one man stood in 1750, one hundred and sixty-five years later there were three.

This revolutionary change came under the beneficent guise of a gradual decline in the death rate, particularly in that of children under the age of two. Why infants, everywhere in Europe, should now more often survive is not altogether clear. But the consequences were unmistakable; the happy facility with which the newborn lived to maturity put a totally unexpected strain upon the whole family system and upon the village organization. The new situation called into question the old peasant assumption that all sons would be able to find farms capable of maintaining them at the status their fathers had held. As events demonstrated

the falsity of that assumption, stability disappeared from peasant life.

The eldest sons waited for their inheritance. They married, brought children into the world, and still had only a place in the parental home. Until the old men died the middle-aged heirs could not assume the station of householders. Impatient, weary of being commanded, the sons saw the years of their best powers go by and themselves, with no land of their own, deprived of the dignity and authority of the head of a family. Tense in the fear of unfulfillment, they urged the fathers to retire, to surrender possession, to make room.

Against the claims of a crowding new generation, the elders stubbornly held to their own. If they were to yield, move off to a corner, learn to take orders, cease to be productive, could they count on respect to leave them more than the crumbs of family income when already the grandchildren were there to be provided for? Turn over the property, and to what rights could they lay claim — to a rope with which to hang themselves, to a stone to tie around their necks!

Then too, a father's obligations were more onerous now. It was more difficult to provide for the younger sons and for the daughters. An ironic providence had, in the old days, made sure that not too many boys would reach an age to claim a man's estate. The same kind fate that kept more children alive complicated the problem of their settlement. Few holdings fell vacant through want of heirs; few peasants had so much land they would willingly part with some of it. Dowries were increasingly inadequate to settle the young bridegrooms. A class of men grew up for whom there was no longer room within the constricted acreage of the

village. Dissatisfied and unhappy, peasants' sons looked ahead to a bleak degradation, to a final loss of status in the community.

The available expedients were pitifully inadequate to meet the needs of the desperate situation. Only a few found hired work or learned to draw an income from other than agricultural pursuits. More delayed marriage to an unseasonable age, not having the means to undertake it properly.

But the presence in the village of unmarried adults was itself a danger. Most often, the seeming solution was subdivision of the old plots, the creation of two holdings from one to serve the more numerous families. Within a single man's lifetime, in Poland, the fifteen farms of one village grew to twoscore; in another place two hundred and ninety-four households came to work the land that had fifty years earlier held forty-two. Land was then indeed scarce, divided again and again; its price rose steadily whether for purchase or rent, and each rise diminished further the margin left for the peasant's subsistence. Now, whether the harvest be rich or poor, the folk found themselves always poorer.

So the peasants learned that poverty was a dog whose teeth sank deep. The struggle for existence grew fiercer; yet there was no halt to the steady recession in standard of living. The mark of that deterioration was the uninterrupted advance across Europe of the cultivation of the potato, the cheapest of foods, the slimmest sustenance to keep bodies alive. In place after place, the tillers of the soil came to rely for their own nourishment upon this one crop, while their more valuable products went to markets to pay rents, to maintain the hold upon the soil. The peasant diet became monotonously the same — potatoes and milk. Meat was a rare luxury, and even tea. The housewife found there was

never enough for the mouths to be fed; and those whom the constricted acreage condemned to idleness were not likely to be left a share. Often the old folk were sent out in winter to beg for the bread of God's giving, only to come home like the birds to their nests in the spring.

To hold to the land, those strong in arm would also sometimes venture away, roam the countryside in search of a hirer, move in ever-wider circles away from the home, for which they still labored and to which they seasonally returned. In time these migratory workers became familiar to every part of Europe.

The Irish spalpeen made somehow his way to the sea, crossed to Liverpool, to toil for a spell in the fertile English Midlands. On the same errand, Italian peasants drifted across the border to Austria, France, and Switzerland, then moved still deeper into Germany. Polish peasants became known in the wheat fields of Prussia, in the beet fields of the Ukraine, or as drivers on the barges that moved down the river to Danzig. Thus they bent their backs over alien soil, tended the crops of strangers, to the end that enough would be paid them, while the family got on at home, to hold their own dear land which alone could no longer sustain them and meet as well the other charges against it.

Of these migrants, some sought refuge in the growing cities, perhaps like the others, with the intention of making the stay temporary. For to accept permanent residence there was truly the last resort; only those thought of it who gave up entirely the struggle for the land, who surrendered ancestral ways and the hope of maintaining status. Every instinct spoke against that course; the peasant knew well that he "who rides away from his lands on a stallion will come back on foot a tatterdemalion."

Much safer at any cost to hold on! So the whole peasant order came to live under the sense of a desperate tension to retain a grip on the land. As against that predominant consideration all other problems receded in importance. With every energy mobilized against this one overwhelming strain, men regarded every other attendant difficulty with apathy – the wretched diet, occasional periods of starvation, squalid quarters, blank future. Within the closed horizons of this perspective was not much scope for aggressive venturesome action, only a plodding determination to resist further changes; for all that changed changed for the worse.

But already a far-reaching transformation in the organization of European agriculture and industry was beginning to turn these strains into the causes for emigration.

The calls on the land for its produce grew more insistent as the eighteenth century drew to a close and continued as the nineteenth century advanced toward its middle. It was not only that the population as a whole grew, but particularly that the urban population grew. The peasants could not know it, but those who went to the cities, in effect, increased the pressures on those who stayed behind. Townsfolk could not raise their own food; more numerous at the market place, they multiplied the demands upon agriculture.

You cannot make the land to stretch, the peasants said; and that was true enough in their own experience. But others witnessed with impatience the multitude of buyers, calculated the advance in prices and the prospect of profit, and disagreed. What if the land could be made to stretch under a more efficient organization of production? In the

more advanced, that is, the more densely settled, areas of the continent there were significant attempts to answer that question. In the Netherlands and in England experiments tested the utility of new crops. Perhaps there were ways of eliminating the fallow year that had kept one third of the land annually out of production. Perhaps it was possible to bring more meat to the butcher not only by increasing the number of beasts, but also by increasing the weight of each through scientific breeding.

Landlords everywhere were quick to sense the potentialities. In region after region, England, Ireland, France, the Rhineland, Italy, Prussia, Hungary, Poland, Russia, there were excited speculations, eager efforts to apply the new developments.

But everywhere the old wasteful peasant village stood in the way. In these minuscule plots too many men followed stubbornly their traditional communal ways. As long as they remained, there could be no innovations. Sometimes the landlords tried to introduce the changes on their own lands, using outsiders as intermediaries, English farmers in Ireland, for instance, or Germans in Poland. But such compromises left untouched the great common meadows and forests, to say nothing of the arable lands in the grip of the peasants themselves. The ultimate solution, from the viewpoint of efficient exploitation, was consolidation of all the tiny plots into unified holdings and the liquidation of the common fields.

Only the power of government could effect the transition, for the dissolution of vested rights, centuries old, called for the sanctions of law. From England to Russia, in the century or so after 1750, a series of enactments destroyed

the old agricultural order. The forms were varied; there were statutes by parliament, decrees from the Crown. The terms varied – enclosure, reform, liberation. But the effect did not vary.

Men drove into the village. They had the appearance of officers and the support of law. They were heavy with documents and quick in reckoning. They asked questions, wished to see papers, tried to learn what had been in time beyond the memory of man. There came with them also surveyors to measure the land. Then the peasants were told: they were now to be landowners, each to have his own farm proportionate to his former share and in one piece. The communal holdings were to disappear; every plot would be individual property, could be fenced around and dealt with by each as he liked.

Whether or not strict justice was done the peasant depended upon local circumstances and the conscience of the executing officials; it was not always possible to supply precise legal proof for property traditionally held. But in every case, the change undermined the whole peasant position. They were indeed now owners of their own farms; but they were less able than ever to maintain their self-sufficiency. The cost of the proceedings, in some places the requirement of fencing, left them in debt; they would have to find cash to pay. When the wastes disappeared there disappeared also the free wood for fire or building; there would have to be cash now to buy. If there were no longer common meadows, where would the cows graze?

All now found themselves compelled to raise crops that could be offered for sale. Confined to their own few acres and burdened with obligations, the peasants had no other recourse. The necessity was cruel for these were in no

position to compete on the traders' market with the old landlords whose great holdings operated with the efficiency of the new methods and ultimately of the new machinery. Steadily the chill of mounting debt blanketed the village. Like the chill of winter, it extinguished growth and hope, only worse, for there seemed no prospect of a spring ahead.

The change, which weakened all, desolated those whose situation was already marginal. The cottiers, the crop-sharers, the tenants on short-term leases of any kind could be edged out at any time. They had left only the slimmest hopes of remaining where they were.

Some early gave up and joined the drift to the towns, where, as in England, they supplied the proletariat that manned the factories of the Industrial Revolution. Others swelled the ranks of the agricultural labor force that wandered seasonally to the great estates in search of hire. Still others remained, working the land on less and less favorable terms, slaving to hold on.

A few emigrated. Those who still had some resources but feared a loss of status learned with hope of the New World where land, so scarce in the Old, was abundantly available. Younger sons learned with hope that the portions which at home would not buy them the space for a garden, in America would make them owners of hundreds of acres. Tempted by the prospect of princely rewards for their efforts, they ventured to tear themselves away from the ancestral village, to undertake the unknown risks of transplantation. The movement of such men was the first phase of what would be a cataclysmic transfer of population.

But this phase was limited, involved few peasants. A far greater number were still determined to hold on; mounting adversities only deepened that determination. In addition, the costs of emigration were high, the difficulties ominous;

few had the energy and power of will to surmount such obstacles. And though the landlords were anxious to evict as many as possible, there was no point in doing so without the assurance that the evicted would depart. Otherwise the destitute would simply remain, supported by parish charity, in one way or another continue to be a drain upon the landlords' incomes.

Soon enough disaster resolved the dilemma. There was no slack to the peasant situation. Without reserves of any kind these people were helpless in the face of the first crisis. The year the crops failed there was famine. Then the alternative to flight was death by starvation. In awe the peasant saw his fields barren, yielding nothing to sell, nothing to eat. He looked up and saw the emptiness of his neighbors' lands, of the whole village. In all the country round his startled eyes fell upon the same desolation. Who would now help? The empty weeks went by, marked by the burial of the first victims; at the workhouse door the gentry began to ladle out the thin soup of charity; and a heartsick weariness settled down over the stricken cottages. So much striving had come to no end.

Now the count was mounting. The endless tolling of the sexton's bell, the narrowing family circle, were shaping an edge of resolution. The tumbled huts, no longer home to anyone, were urging it. The empty road was pointing out its form. It was time.

He would leave now, escape; give up this abusive land his fathers had never really mastered. He would take up what remained and never see the sight of home again. He would become a stranger on the way, pack on back, lead wife and children toward some other destiny. For all about was evidence of the consequences of staying. Any alternative was better.

What sum the sale of goods and land would bring would pay the cost. And if nothing remained, then aid would come from the gentry or the parish, now compassionate in the eagerness to rid the place of extra hands, now generous in the desire to ease the burden on local charity. So, in the hundreds of thousands, peasants came to migrate. This was the second phase in the transfer of a continent's population.

It was not the end. Years of discontent followed. The burdens of those who stayed grew no lighter with the going of those who went. Grievances fed on the letters from America of the departed. From outposts in the New World came advice and assistance. Across the Atlantic the accumulation of immigrants created a magnetic pole that would for decades continue to draw relatives and friends in a mighty procession. This was the third phase.

With the peasants went a host of other people who found their own lives disrupted by the dislocation of the village. The empty inn now rarely heard the joy of wedding celebrations. The lonely church ministered to a handful of communicants. The tavernkeeper and priest, and with them smith and miller, followed in the train of those they once had served. There was less need now for the petty trade of Jews, for the labor of wandering artisans, for the tinkering of gypsies. These too joined the migration.

And toward the end, the flow of peoples received additions as well from the factories and mines. Often these were peasants or the sons of peasants whose first remove had been to the nearby city, men who had not yet found security or stability and who, at last, thought it better to go the way their cousins had earlier gone.

So Europe watched them go – in less than a century and a half, well over thirty-five million of them from every part of the continent. In this common flow were gathered up people of the most diverse qualities, people whose rulers had for centuries been enemies, people who had not even known of each other's existence. Now they would share each other's future.

Westward from Ireland went four and a half million. On that crowded island a remorselessly rising population, avaricious absentee landlords, and English policy that discouraged the growth of industry early stimulated emigration. Until 1846 this had been largely a movement of younger sons, of ambitious farmers and artisans. In that year rot destroyed the potato crop and left the cottiers without the means of subsistence. Half a million died and three million more lived on only with the aid of charity. No thought then of paying rent, of holding on to the land; the evicted saw their huts pulled down and with bitter gratitude accepted from calculating poor-law officials the price of passage away from home. For decades after, till the end of the nineteenth century and beyond, these peasants continued to leave, some victims of later agricultural disasters, some sent for by relatives already across, some simply unable to continue a way of life already thoroughly disrupted.

Westward from Great Britain went well over four million. There enclosure and displacement had begun back in the eighteenth century, although the first to move generally drifted to the factories of the expanding cities. By 1815, however, farmers and artisans in substantial numbers had emigration in mind; and after midcentury they were joined by a great mass of landless peasants, by operatives

from the textile mills, by laborers from the potteries, and by miners from the coal fields. In this number were Scots, Welsh, and Englishmen, and also the sons of some Irishmen, sons whose parents had earlier moved across the Irish Sea.

From the heart of the continent, from the lands that in 1870 became the German Empire, went fully six million. First to leave were the free husbandmen of the southwest, then the emancipated peasants of the north and east. With them moved, in the earlier years, artisans dislocated by the rise of industry, and later some industrial workers.

From the north went two million Scandinavians. Crop failures, as in 1847 in Norway, impelled some to leave. Others found their lots made harsher by the decline in the fisheries and by the loss of the maritime market for timber. And for many more, the growth of commercial agriculture, as in Sweden, was the indication no room would remain for free peasants.

From the south went almost five million Italians. A terrible cholera epidemic in 1887 set them moving. But here, as elsewhere, the stream was fed by the deeper displacement of the peasantry.

From the east went some eight million others — Poles and Jews, Hungarians, Bohemians, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Ruthenians — as agriculture took new forms in the Austrian and Russian Empires after 1880.

And before the century was out perhaps three million more were on the way from the Balkans and Asia Minor: Greeks and Macedonians, Croatians and Albanians, Syrians and Armenians.

In all, thirty-five million for whom home had no place fled to Europe's shores and looked across the Atlantic.

What manner of refuge lay there?

II

The Crossing

EMIGRATION was the end of peasant life in Europe; it was also the beginning of life in America. But what a way there was yet to go before the displaced would come to rest again, what a distance between the old homes and the new! Only the fact that these harried people could not pause to measure the gulf saved them from dismay at the dizzy width of it.

Perhaps it is fortunate that, going onward, their sights are fixed backward rather than forward. From the crossroad, the man, alone or with his wife and children, turns to look upon the place of his birth. Once fixed, completely settled, he is now a wanderer. Remorseless circumstances, events beyond his control, have brought him to this last familiar spot. Passing it by, he becomes a stranger.

Sometimes, the emigrants at that moment considered the nature of the forces that had uprooted them. All the new conditions had conspired to depress the peasants into a hopeless mass, to take away their distinguishing differences and to deprive them, to an ever-greater extent, of the capacity for making willful decisions. The pressure of the changing economy had steadily narrowed every person's range of choices. Year by year, there were fewer alternatives until the critical day when only a single choice remained to be made — to emigrate or to die. Those who had the will to make that final decision departed.

That man at the crossroads knew then that this was a

mass movement. Scores of his fellows in the village, hundreds in other villages, were being swept along with him. Yet he moved alone. He went as an individual. Although entire communities were uprooted at the same time, although the whole life of the Old World had been communal, the act of migration was individual. The very fact that the peasants were leaving was a sign of the disintegration of the old village ways. What happened beyond the crossroads, each would determine by himself. It was immensely significant that the first step to the New World, despite all the hazards it involved, was the outcome of a desperate individual choice.

He who turned his back upon the village at the crossroads began a long journey that his mind would forever mark as its most momentous experience. The crossing immediately subjected the emigrant to a succession of shattering shocks and decisively conditioned the life of every man that survived it. This was the initial contact with life as it was to be. For many peasants it was the first time away from home, away from the safety of the circumscribed little villages in which they had passed all their years. Now they would learn to have dealings with people essentially different from themselves. Now they would collide with unaccustomed problems, learn to understand alien ways and alien languages, manage to survive in a grossly foreign environment.

Later, the memories of old men would blur all that had happened between departure and arrival, make it difficult to remember the proper sequence of events. Recollection would bring back the numbing uncertainty of the way, confuse all the incidents of the journey into a single nightmare of hostile encounters. Yet the crossing was not one, but a

combination of five traumatic experiences, each with the dangers of its own strangeness, each with the consequences of its own pitfalls.

Coming away from the village, the emigrant pushed toward a seaport. Surely in the beginning it was a task sufficiently difficult just to know the road. For guides there were only the remembered tales of pilgrims, of beggars, and of peddlers, the habitual wanderers of the peasant world. After a time there would be letters from America or guidebooks that gave foreknowledge of the route, but these, when available, were only the dimmest marks for those who, uncertainly, sought the proper paths.

Conveyances varied with conditions. On the continent, travel was most commodious by river or canal; but few poor folk could pay the heavy tolls with which such streams were charged. In some places there were public stages. These too were out of reach, prohibitively expensive, meant for the gentry who alone, in more normal times, had occasion to use them. Here and there was a fortunate fellow with a cart. More rare was a beast to pull it; both would be sold at the destination. But not many peasants had been able to hold on to horse and wagon when all else in their world disappeared from around them. Mostly the emigrants relied on the power of their own legs and began the crossing with a long journey on foot.

In the 1830's they become familiar figures on Europe's highways; in the 1840's and 1850's and long thereafter they are still a common sight: little groups of tired men and women, with their children, raising puffs of dust from the dry summer roads. Sometimes, the trek would cover three hundred miles or more; it might consume a precious month,

two. And all the while, every turn in the way ahead concealed its own peculiar dangers – misinformation, blunders, cheats, exposure to the elements, assaults by humans and by beasts.

On the move, existence is ever precarious. Cash is scarce, so the emigrant must find shelter where he may, try to subsist on what he brings with him. If that fails he has no recourse but to live off the land, only not as a conqueror who takes what he needs, rather as a supplicant who works for what he can get.

The miles took heavy payment in human energy, a payment not all the peasants could make. Many were left at the wayside who had resolutely set forth in the spring but could not carry on and succumbed to hunger, illness, and incapacitating mischance. The others, at whatever cost, held to the uncertain way, passed through other men's fields where other men's crops thrived, passed through strange villages where other fathers' children laughed at play. And in whose fellowship did the wanderers now find themselves? They were now of the company of pilgrims, beggars, peddlers, itinerant tinkers, and laborers; and there was cold comfort in the bitter thought that all were now alike, outcasts in the world of settled men.

With such the journey, who would linger on it? Better, at whatever risk, to get to any harbor as soon as possible. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the difficulty of moving about on land induced the emigrants to make for the nearest point on the coast – which port was secondary; the need for reaching any destination was too great.

In England one could move to London, Plymouth, Liverpool, Bristol; in Scotland, to Greenock or Glasgow; in Ireland, to Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Limerick, Sligo, or the

smaller harbors on the Shannon. On the continent the places of departure were yet more numerous. The valley of the Rhine was a great open channel through which a flow of Germans from many states drifted to the ocean, to Rotterdam and Antwerp and other Low Country cities. Other Central Europeans sought the sea at Hamburg and Le Havre, and Scandinavians at Stavanger, Bergen, and the many tiny havens of their indented shore.

By midcentury, however, the focal points toward which the emigrants moved became fewer and larger. Everywhere transatlantic trade slipped out of the hands of the old individual merchant shipowner and fell into those of great companies, which confined their operations to a single port. So, in England, commerce with America concentrated more and more heavily in Liverpool; indeed that city more and more engrossed the carrying business even of Ireland, to which it was linked by regular cheap packet lines. On the continent, transatlantic business drew irresistibly to Bremen and Le Havre, to a much lesser extent to Antwerp and Hamburg, as wheat and cotton from the United States determined what course shipping would take. As the activity of the few great ports snowballed, the emigrants increasingly found it advantageous, even at the cost of a longer trip by land, to make their way to a place where they would be sure of accommodations. Increasingly they converged upon the major cities from which vessels sailed frequently, preferring thus to minimize the risk of being stranded in smaller, nearer harbors from which departures were infrequent and unpredictable.

The shipping lines had also the means and the interest to spread information. In distant villages the placards went up at the chapel gate or by the side of the inn; and Liverpool

and Bremen somehow became familiar places, drew nearer, in anticipation at least, to the homes of many peasants from Ireland to Germany.

The emigrants who left other parts of the continent after 1870 fell heir to the same routes. Only the Italians and some of the Balkan peoples, who could take advantage of Mediterranean trade, helped to develop new ports in this traffic at Naples, Genoa, and Trieste. But some of these too, and the great mass of Russians, Poles, and Austrians of diverse nationalities, found more attractive the facilities that already existed in England and Germany. By this time, of course, the midcentury expansion of the railroad network all over Europe eliminated some of the harsher physical difficulties of the journey by land. For the first time, transportation was available at a price the emigrants could pay and that undoubtedly made them more willing to travel long distances to the great ports.

But, as if to make sure that the crossing would never become too easy, new problems arose to harass the wanderers. Distance was less frightening. Time spent in travel fell to a few days. Physical hardships were less likely to be disastrous. But man-made hardships now became imposing.

National boundaries, at first of very slight importance, suddenly were substantial obstacles. All sorts of complicated border regulations developed. It became difficult to secure the right of transit through intermediate foreign countries. There were checks of identity and of citizenship, examinations to discover whether taxes had been paid or military service evaded, inspections for disease and disability. Soon the traveler was loaded down with mysterious bits of paper, stamped cards, precious official documents he must clutch to get by the hazards of the course. At every border station

came the risk of being stranded in a strange place, of separation from family, and of disastrous interruptions in the journey. They were fortunate who had funds enough to enlist the aid of the knowing characters one met by the way, sly people who, for a price, would reveal the unguarded spots, the secret ways of slipping by the control points. That is, mostly they were fortunate; but sometimes, caught, they would find their destinations sadly altered. What emigrant had the money for bribes enough?

Eventually those who survived got through. The early comers passed wearily into the straggling suburbs. Cautiously, they saw the now familiar road turn into a crowded street. Between the houses, the green spaces grew smaller, then disappeared. Multitudes of men appeared around them. Carts and coaches ran all about. Tall buildings consecrated to unknown uses hemmed them in. The sun was darkened. The noises of nature were stilled. All direction was gone. This was the city.

This is a place full of wonders for those who never have seen a city before. Amazement, the shadow of so much newness, covers them. Their minds rush to find a known comparison. But this is like nothing else in the world; no town, no fair, no market place was ever like it. And the new men, who very likely will spend the rest of their lives in a city, pause. They look at the life of the city, take in the myriad of impressions, and begin to shape their attitudes toward urban society through residence in the seaport.

Already in 1800 the seaport was a large place; and it swelled thereafter with the growth of trade. As the harbor deepened and the wharves spread out about it, as the ware-

houses shot up and the numerous countingrooms that managed the flow of goods through them, scores of new men were drawn in to buy and sell, to reckon and carry, to make and repair. This permanent population, mounting in numbers, found room for itself only with difficulty. What resources of space then would await the hordes of transient emigrants whose means were limited and who, to boot, were often foreigners?

Where should the peasant go in the city but to the redeeming sea from which new life will come? He makes his way to the crowded quays, among the lowered casks to the ships tied by. Here will be captains, agents; here he will negotiate for passage. And until he sails, here he will stay, or close nearby. Now he belongs with those whose home is on the ocean, for the ocean will lead him to the unknown home he hopes to have.

Meanwhile his home is of another sort. In the harbor district are temporary lodgings that will serve while he waits. Side by side with the boardinghouses that cater to the sailors there emerge special quarters devoted to the emigrants. Here a man can sleep for a penny a night. True, it is straw he will sleep on, and as many as forty in a room twelve feet by fifteen. But if low price is the only virtue of these lodgings, that is still virtue enough.

So the peasants began their urban careers. Living in this manner was difficult. Isolated in complete strangeness, they could scarcely accommodate themselves to the quick succession of new situations; even the simple matter of victualing a family out of the dwindling supply of remaining cash was exasperatingly hard. If, in addition, the areas in which these people lived were also slums, were also centers of vice and gambling, that only introduced the emigrants the

sooner to problems they would continue to face for the rest of their lives. Not that they could be philosophical about the prospect; on the contrary, the only consolation was that the stay was not permanent.

But permanence and impermanence were only relative. Sometimes these temporary stays stretched out for weeks or months. In the early nineteenth century the craft on which the emigrants traveled did not operate on schedule. Passengers had no way of knowing in advance when a ship would sail. They could only come to port, trust that chance would bring them to a captain ready to depart and willing to take them. Even then, when passage was arranged, there could still be weary spells of waiting while the cargo was completed. Meanwhile the earnestly hoarded resources ran out to the last penny.

The desire to limit this uncertainty and to get out of the city as quickly as possible helped account for the concentration of emigrants, as time went on, into the few large ports where the routes of trade converged. But that concentration only put additional strains on the housing facilities of cities already full to overcrowding.

The experience of the later traveler was, therefore, not essentially different from that of his predecessors. The crowded train expelled him in a cavernous station amidst thousands of rushing people. Surrounded by his baggage and his family, he was very likely approached by a glib stranger, free with offers of help. But how could a man tell whether this was an official, a representative of one of the philanthropic societies that were reputed to ease the emigrants' way, or one of that dread tribe of cheats that was known to trick away the last coin with false counsel? It was better to go alone, alone find the way through the maze

of streets and accept the lodgings to which fortune led.

Only toward the end was the strenuous quality of life in the ports alleviated. Then regular sailing schedules announced well in advance ended the need for lengthy stays in the city, and government intervention protected the emigrants in quarters specially set aside for them. Some, in that happier period, would still find unpleasant the barrack-like structures in which they were then housed. But these could have no inkling of the misery of life in the early boardinghouses.

The difficulty of residence in the ports complicated the problems of securing passage. The overpowering desire to get away as soon as possible took precedence over every other consideration. The temptation was to regard the ship quickest found, the best. Haste often led to unexpected and tragic consequences.

Until after the middle of the nineteenth century, the emigrants were carried in sailing vessels, few in number, irregular in the routes they followed, and uncertain as to their destination. Often the masters of these craft did not know for which port they would head until the sails were set; generally the cargo dictated the course. But there was no assurance, even after the ship was under way, that wind or weather would not induce a change. Only rarely could the passengers protest or, as on the *Mary Ann* in 1817, actually revolt. The generality did not expect to be able to choose a precise place of landing in the New World; if they reached shore somewhere in America that was enough.

Nor could they be overly fastidious about the character of their conveyance. Reckoning up the sum of guarded coins, the emigrants knew how little power they had to

command favorable terms. The fare could, of course, be haggled over; there were no established rates and those who shared the same steerage would later discover that the charge varied from two to five pounds, depending upon the bargaining power of the various parties. But in the long run the shipmasters held the more favorable situation and could push the rate nearer the higher than the lower limit.

Indeed, as the volume of traffic mounted, the captains no longer had to trouble with these negotiations themselves. The business fell into the hands of middlemen. Enterprising brokers contracted for the steerage space of whole ships and then resold accommodations to prospective travelers. As might be expected, avarice magnified the fancied capacity of the vessels to an unbearable degree, in fact, to a degree that provoked government intervention. But even when the American and British governments began to regulate the number of passengers and, after 1850, even began to enforce those regulations, the emigrant was but poorly protected. The brokers continued to sell as many tickets as they could; and the purchasers above the legal limit, denied permission to board, could only hope to hunt up the swindler who had misled them and seek the return of their funds.

In time, at last, the day approached. On the morning the fortunate ones whose turn it was worriedly gathered their possessions, hastened from lodginghouse to ship's side. The children dragged along the trusses of straw on which they would sleep while the men wrestled onward with the cumbrous barrels that would hold their water, with the battered chests crammed with belongings. Not into the ship yet, but into a thronging expectant crowd they pushed their way, shoving to keep sight of each other, deafened by their own impatient noises and by the cries of peddlers who

thrust at them now nuts and taffy for the moment, now pots and provisions for the way.

Some, having waited so long, would wait no more and tried to clamber up the dangling ropes. The most stayed anxiously still and when the moment came jostled along until they stood then upon the ship. And when they stood then upon the ship, when the Old Land was no longer beneath them, they sensed the sea in uneasy motion and knew they were committed to a new destiny. As they lined up for the roll call, their curious gaze sought out the features of this their unfamiliar home – the rising masts, the great folds of sail, the web of rigging, and the bold, pointing bowsprit. Silenced and as if immobilized by the decisiveness of the moment, they remained for a while on deck; and some, raising their eyes from examination of the ship itself, noticed the shores of the Mersey or Weser move slowly by. There was time, before they passed through the estuary to the empty ocean, to reflect on the long way they had come, to mingle with the hope and gratitude of escape the sadness and resentment of flight.

In the early days there was leisure enough for reflection on these matters. The journey was long, the average from Liverpool to New York about forty days. Favorable weather might lower the figure to a month, unfavorable raise it to two or three. The span was uncertain, for the ship was at the mercy of the winds and tides, of the primitive navigation of its masters, and of the ignorance of its barely skilled sailors.

These unsubstantial craft sailed always at the edge of danger from the elements. Wrecks were disastrous and frequent. A single year in the 1830's saw seventeen vessels

founder on the run from Liverpool to Quebec alone. Occasional mutinies put the fate of all in dubious hands. Fire, caused by the carelessness of passengers or crew, added another hazard to the trials of the journey. At a blow, such catastrophes swept away scores of lives, ended without further ado many minor histories in the peopling of the new continent.

Other perils too, less dramatic but more pervasive, insidiously made shipwreck of hopes. In the slow-elapsing crossing, the boat became a circumscribed universe of its own, with its own harsh little way of life determined by the absence of space. Down to midcentury the vessels were pitifully small; three hundred tons was a good size. Yet into these tiny craft were crammed anywhere from four hundred to a thousand passengers.

These numbers set the terms of shipboard life. If they talked of it later, the emigrants almost forgot that there had also been cabins for the other sort of men who could pay out twenty to forty pounds for passage. Their own world was the steerage.

Below decks is the place, its usual dimensions seventy-five feet long, twenty-five wide, five and a half high. Descend. In the fitful light your eye will discover a middle aisle five feet wide. It will be a while before you can make out the separate shapes within it, the water closets at either end (for the women; the men must go above deck), one or several cooking stoves, the tables. The aisle itself, you will see, is formed by two rows of bunks that run to the side of the ship.

Examine a bunk. One wooden partition reaches from floor to ceiling to divide it from the aisle, another stretches horizontally from wall to aisle to create two decks. Within

the partitions are the boxlike spaces, ten feet wide, five long, less than three high. For the months of the voyage, each is home for six to ten beings.

This was the steerage setting. Here the emigrants lived their lives, day and night. The more generous masters gave them access to a portion of the deck at certain hours. But bad weather often deprived the passengers of that privilege, kept them below for days on end.

Life was hard here. Each family received its daily ration of water, adding to it larger and larger doses of vinegar to conceal the odor. From the limited hoard of provisions brought along, the mother struggled to eke out food for the whole journey. She knew that if the potatoes ran out there would be only the captain to turn to, who could be counted on mercilessly to extort every last possession in return; some masters, in fact, deliberately deceived the emigrants as to the length of the journey, to be able to profit from the sale of food and grog. Later, at midcentury, the government would specify the supplies that had to be taken for each passenger. But there remained ways of avoiding such regulations; tenders followed the ships out of the harbor and carried back the casks checked on for the inspector.

It was no surprise that disease should be a familiar visitor. The only ventilation was through the hatches battened down in rough weather. When the close air was not stifling hot, it was bitter cold in the absence of fire. Rats were at home in the dirt and disorder. The result: cholera, dysentery, yellow fever, smallpox, measles, and the generic "ship fever" that might be anything. It was not always as bad as on the *April*, on which five hundred of eleven hundred Germans perished in the crossing; the normal mortality was about 10 per cent, although in the great year, 1847, it was closer to 20.

It was perhaps no consolation to these emigrants, but they were not the worst off. Among the Irish before 1850 there were some who had not the paltry price of a steerage passage, yet for whom there was no return from Liverpool. They had to find the means of a still cheaper crossing.

From Canada came awkward ships built expressly to bring eastward the tall timbers of American forests, lumbering vessels with great open holds not suited for the carriage of any west-bound cargo. From Nova Scotia and Newfoundland came fishing boats laden with the catch of the Grand Bank; these craft also could be entrusted with no cargo of value on their return. Formerly both types went back in ballast. Now they would bring the New World to Irishmen. The pittance these poor creatures could pay — ten to twenty shillings — was pure gain. As for the passengers, they would camp out in the empty stinking space below decks, spend an uneasy purgatory preparatory to the redemption by America.

From the harshness, the monotony, the misery of the journey, there was no effective relief. Government protection came late, was minimal, and lacked effective means of enforcement. After all, as the shipping agents argued, the emigrant had never known what it was to sleep in a bed. Give him pork and flour and you make the man sick. Let him lie on a good firm deck, eat salt herring, and he'll be hale and hearty.

Against the open brutalities, against the seamen who reckoned the women fair game, against the danger from

within of petty theft and quarrels, the passengers formed spontaneous organizations of their own. The voluntary little associations were governed by codes of agreement, enforced by watchmen appointed from among themselves. But there was no power in these groups, on major matters, to resist the all-powerful captain and crew.

So they'd lie there, seafaring adventurers out to discover new continents, amidst the retching, noisome stench, the stomach-turning filth of hundreds of bodies confined to close quarters. Many nights, and many days that were indistinguishable from nights, they could see, by the sickly light of swinging lanterns, the creaking ugly timbers crowding in about them; they could hear the sounds of men in uneasy silence, of children in fitful rest; everywhere they could sense the menace of hostile winds and waves, of indifferent companions, of repressed passions.

There are times when a man can take no more. Incidents occur: ugly noises of childbirth; sopping disorder when the sea seeps in in a storm; unsuccessful rat-hunts; the splash of burials under a dark sky and without the consolation of a priest. *Ah, we thought we couldn't be worse off than we war; but now to our sorrow we know the differ; for supposin we war dyin of starvation, it would still not be dyin like rotten sheep thrown into a pit, and the minit the breath is out of our bodies, flung into the sea to be eaten up by them horrid sharks.* And a red rage takes hold of the sufferers, of their survivors. They pace about in the warm sticky passage. They clench fists. But against whom shall they raise them? Indeed they are helpless, and they fall into meaningless arguments among themselves. Furious blows are given by the wrestling mass of men in the narrow spaces; until, exhausted, they stand back, angry, ashamed, pick up

the pitiful belongings kicked loose, broken, wet from the bilge water oozing up through the spaces of the floor boards. They laugh only at the greater misery of others.

Substantial improvements in the conditions of the crossing came only as indirect results of changes in the techniques of ocean travel. The introduction of steam in the transatlantic service in the 1840's was the first step. The Cunard Line and its imitators pre-empted the high-class passenger business and drove the sailing ships back upon the immigrant trade. Competition for that trade lowered the costs and improved the accommodations. By 1860 it was possible to buy reasonably priced prepaid tickets and to travel on a reliable schedule.

After 1870 the situation was even better. The new era in international relations emphasized navalism and drew the major European nations into a warship building race. Great merchant fleets seemed the necessary complements. England, France, Germany, and Italy hurried to build up their tonnage. Toward that end they were willing to grant heavy subsidies to the operators of the lines bearing their flags. Under those circumstances the price of steerage passage on a steamship fell to as little as twelve dollars, and included food. By the end of that decade, steam had displaced sail in the emigrant-carrying business.

Now the duration of the journey fell until it took ten days or less. Comfort and safety increased also. By 1900, the traveler could count on a crossing of little more than a week in vessels of ten to twenty thousand tons.

It was still no easy trip, however. There remained the discomfort of crowded quarters, the lack of privacy, the isolation among dense masses of human beings, and the pangs of

seasickness. The incongruous mixture, in these latter years, of emigrants of diverse nationalities created perplexing problems of communication: Jews and Greeks, Finns and Poles, Irishmen and Italians had difficulty sharing the same steerage. Yet the enormous lightening of the physical difficulties and the shortening of the time span by the end of the century enabled the later comers to survive the journey in much better condition than had their forerunners.

Earlier or later, all emigrants entered upon a fourth stage of the crossing – a residence of some duration in the American port of arrival. Now were repeated, in reverse, the conditions of the stay in the European port of departure. Now the sea led in, not out; the road away, not toward. Now too the voyagers were the weaker for the effects of the ocean journey; to compensate for the loss of energies and of resources on the way they had only the advantage of wisdom earned in the first urban experience.

Still, many a new arrival who thought simply to pause in the place where he landed was entrapped and never escaped. Some had exhausted all their funds in the coming and were already paupers when they came off the ship; these were unlikely ever to earn enough to take them away. Others simply stumbled in the unsuccessful struggle to overleap the hurdles of city life.

The low-hilled harbors seemed friendly enough to men and women who had spent the weeks before aboard the emigrant ships. The long American coast dawned unnoticed by those who had waited weary days for it; like the gift delayed in coming which arrives when hope is almost gone, as the travelers came on deck this unexpected vision gladdened all hearts, not only with the pleasure intrinsic to it,

but also with the reassurance that no hostile element had intervened to snatch it away.

There is still an interval before the final landing; often the little vessels may spend days beating down the rocky shore to their destined harbors. Sometimes there are heartrending shipwrecks in the treacherous and foggy waters. But the sense of sight, at least, can fasten on to the New World, bring expectation into some contact with reality.

A feverish bustle of preparations sweeps the steerage as the ship clears the headlands of the bay, as land appears on both sides and narrows toward the port, as the pilot comes on board. Clothes are washed and children put in order. All is arranged. Anxious eyes already make out the approaching cluster of spires that marks the place, when everything comes to a halt. This is quarantine.

Although, in the beginning, the pause was usually perfunctory, there was always the possibility of some dangerous new obstacle. The authorities surveyed the assembled passengers, asked if they were well, examined the record of the vessel, and allowed it to dock if there were no signs of contagion. If there were? In 1847, eighty-four ships were held at Grosse Isle below Quebec. Of the Irish immigrants who sought shelter beneath the flimsy exposed sheds, ten thousand died, three thousand so alone that their names were never known. *I have seen them lyin on the beach, crawlin on the mud, and dyin like fish out of water.*

Facilities in the United States were somewhat better and improved with time. On Staten Island, outside New York, was a marine hospital – supported by a tax on the immigrants themselves – which held out at least the hope of recovery. But with time also regulation of the process of

landing became more precise and more exacting. The states demanded guarantees lest they be burdened with the support of paupers; many immigrants were asked to give bond, as a condition of admission, that they would not become dependent upon charity. In practice, this requirement, obviously impossible of literal fulfillment, was satisfied by the payment of a fee to a professional bondsman and ultimately was converted into a commutation tax levied by the state.

As the century advanced, the items of inspection grew more numerous. To the old questions of health and the capacity to labor were added new ones that probed into the newcomer's morals and character (Did he believe in polygamy? Had he committed a crime?); into his political convictions (Did he advocate anarchism or the overthrow of government by force?), and into the possibility that he had agreed in advance to take some job in violation of the contract-labor law. By then the Federal government had taken over the whole machinery of admission and control, employing for the purpose the services of a large corps of functionaries, but a corps never adequate enough to handle the ever-increasing masses of men who stood at the gates.

As the volume of traffic rose and as the process of admission grew more elaborate and more complicated, it became less possible to release the immigrants directly after the end of the quarantine period. They were instead directed to new receiving stations created for them. There the final act of admission was consummated. In 1855 Castle Garden, at the tip of Manhattan Island, lost its operatic glitter; the drama of the stage gave way to that of selection, for here the fortunate would now be sorted from the unfortunate. Three decades later the old building could not hold the throngs the steamers brought it. In 1891 a whole island in New York

Harbor was given over to their reception; millions here would look from the red brick buildings across the bay for a first glimpse of the promised land. Along the coast from Portland to New Orleans were dotted similar, smaller stations. The immigrants would debark here, not at the piers with the favored occupants of cabins.

Men, women, and children come off their floating homes. They are arranged in lines cut off from each other by wooden barriers, and they begin wearily to tread an incomprehensible maze. Officials in uniform survey them, look at the already large collection of papers, peer at eyes, down throats, thump chests, make notes on cards, and affix tags of various colors to the hesitant bodies that pass uneasily along before them. Now and again one of the fellow travelers is separated out from the rest – to go who knows where.

After a while, and it can be a long, eventful while, there come questions. How can a simple man understand the language? The clever gentleman, smooth-shaven and freshly washed, conducts the interrogation, but speaks down only through the aid of an interpreter. (One knows the type, a fellow who gains the good graces of the authorities by trapping his unfortunate countrymen.) One must answer cautiously, reveal not too much, lie if need be. Keep in mind: *destination, funds on hand, relatives, work.* These are tricky matters. The law says you must not have contracted for your job, also that you must be not likely to become a public charge. How can you demonstrate that you will not become a public charge? It is said a show of money, say ten dollars, will do it. But caution.

Where did you get this money you have just shown us?
In Liverpool.

Who gave it to you?
The man in the office.
What office?
I don't know the name, where I took the boat.
What did you give him for it?
Two English pounds.
Where did you get those?
In Cork.
From whom?
In the bank.
How did you get them in the bank?
I gave them some sovereigns.
Where did you get these from?
I earned them. . . .

There are the right words at last. Magically you are through.

Anyway, most are lucky and do get through. The handful of inspectors are too few to permit more than a perfunctory examination. They look for surface disabilities (trachoma, an infection of the eyelids, is one; favus, a skin disease, is another), for obvious deformities, and for signs of idiocy or insanity. On the hot summer days which see the peak load, the impatient officials, starched collars wilting under the heavy serge, now and then single out for more than casual study a case from the long rows that move stolidly before them. The rest get by. They escape to the free American air and leave behind the luckless who must still face medical boards of review, hearings, and appeals, perhaps soon to be sent back from whence they came or to spend more months in the confinement rooms of the station while distant powers thumb through the dossiers that pile up on Washington desks.

Not here, though, where the ferry left them from Ellis

Island or East Boston, was the end of the journey. There was still a way to go. In the earlier years, it was not uncommon that the exhausted newcomer, weak and penniless, sometimes one survivor of a numerous family, should stagger away and wander about till some kindly passer-by directed him to the almshouse. Later, trouble took another form, perplexity in the face of the simple tasks of unloading baggage, of finding temporary lodgings, of transporting trunks and boxes to the boardinghouse, of getting to the railroad station, of purchasing tickets to the interior. All about indeed were obliging men, eager to assist, men who offered a bit of whisky to mark the elation of the landing, men who snatched at the immigrants' baggage and pointed out the places to stop. Sometimes these runners were fellow countrymen who spoke the old language and sprung the treacherous trap in the accents of friendship. Thousands were thus lost toward the end who had survived the more obvious perils, who had walked days by land, braved the dangers of the sea but were vulnerable to those of the city. They were stranded in the seaport and never reached their destinations. Only toward the end, when runners were barred from the vicinity of the receiving stations and when most immigrants were met by friends or relatives, could the newcomers relax their vigilance, cease to fear the danger of being fleeced at the threshold.

By comparison with what had come earlier, the difficulties of the journey into the interior were comparatively simple. For some there were strenuous days of travel on foot; by this means the Irish made their way southward from Canada and the Maritime Provinces to New England and New York. By foot or by wagon, too, immigrants of many

nationalities joined the general movement of Americans westward. But even in the earlier days, it was not expensive to go by water, sloops up the Hudson, barges on the lakes and canals, boats carrying plaster of Paris down from New Brunswick. And after 1830, the railroads that webbed the map of the nation helped to ease the hardship of this phase of the crossing.

After the Civil War the efforts of the transcontinental railroads further improved the condition of the immigrant travelers. Financed in good part by government land grants, these corporations were less concerned with collecting fares than with settling their holdings with industrious farmers who would turn out a constant supply of products to keep the freight cars full. Some roads arranged for special low-rate immigrant trains; others sold through tickets in Europe that carried the voyager all the way from his native village to his future home and that eliminated the hazards and uncertainties of bad connections and arrangements made on the spot. By the twentieth century, the general improvement in transportation in America had done much to relieve the physical tensions of the journey.

The greatest obstacle then was a pervasive, biting fatigue. That existed from the start and persisted to the end, despite the advances in means of communication. Having come thus far, there was often no energy to go any farther. This was America; there was the temptation to stop off by the way, perhaps for a time, they thought, to recuperate, to take some temporary job and earn some money. For these, the stay was usually permanent. Many remained at the junction points on the route to which, but not beyond which, their tickets carried them. In Buffalo, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Chicago, St. Louis, and Milwaukee there were thousands of im-

migrants whose destinations were elsewhere, but who each found some final insurmountable hurdle that kept him immobilized where he was.

The crossing in all its phases was a harsh and brutal filter. On land in Europe, in the port of embarkation, on the ocean, in the port of arrival, and on land in America, it introduced a decisive range of selective factors that operated to let through only a few of those who left the Old World. In part these factors were physical; the hardier survived the dangers and the difficulties, the weaker and more dependent fell by the side. In part, however, these factors were more than physical, for they measured also the power of adaptation: only those who were capable of adjusting from peasant ways to the needs of new conditions and new challenges were able to absorb the successive shocks of migration.

For the crossing involved a startling reversal of roles, a radical shift in attitudes. The qualities that were desirable in the good peasant were not those conducive to success in the transition. Neighborliness, obedience, respect, and status were valueless among the masses that struggled for space on the way. They succeeded who put aside the old preconceptions, pushed in, and took care of themselves. This experience would certainly bring into question the validity of the old standards of conduct, of the old guides to action.

Perhaps that was the most luminous lesson of the crossing, that a totally new kind of life lay ahead. Therein was the significance of the unwillingness of the peasants to undertake the journey in the old traditional communal units. Despite the risks entailed, they preferred to act as individuals, each for himself. Somehow they had been convinced that the village way which had been inadequate to save them at

home would certainly prove inadequate away from home.

Not that they derived much joy or comfort from the conviction. In any case they suffered. The separation itself had been hard. The peasants had been cut off from homes and villages, homes and villages which were not simply places, but communities in which was deeply enmeshed a whole pattern of life. They had left the familiar fields and hills, the cemetery in which their fathers rested, the church, the people, the animals, the trees they had known as the intimate context of their being.

Thus uprooted, they found themselves in a prolonged state of crisis – crisis in the sense that they were, and remained, unsettled. For weeks, and often for months, they were in suspense between the old and the new, literally in transit. Every adjustment was temporary and therefore in its nature bore the seeds of maladjustment, for the conditions to which the immigrants were adjusting were strange and ever changing.

As a result they reached their new homes exhausted – worn out physically by lack of rest, by poor food, by the constant strain of close, cramped quarters, worn out emotionally by the succession of new situations that had crowded in upon them. At the end was only the dead weariness of an excess of novel sensations.

Yet once arrived, the immigrants would not take time to recuperate. They would face instead the immediate, pressing necessity of finding a livelihood and of adjusting to conditions that were still more novel, unimaginably so. They would find then that the crossing had left its mark, had significantly affected their capacity to cope with the problems of the New World they faced.

III

Daily Bread

LET the peasant, now in America, confront his first problem; time enough if ever this is solved to turn to other matters.

How shall a man feed himself, find bread for his family? The condition of man is to till the soil; there is no other wholeness to his existence. True, in retrospect, life on the soil in the old home had not yielded a livelihood. But that was because there was not there soil enough. In consequence, the husbandmen, in their hundreds of thousands, have left their meager plots. They have now come to a New World where open land reaches away in acre after acre of inexhaustible plenty. Arrived, they are ready to work.

Yet only a few, a fortunate few, of these eager hands were destined ever to break the surface of the waiting earth. Among the multitudes that survived the crossing, there were now and then some who survived it intact enough in body and resources to get beyond the port of landing and through the interior cities of transit. Those who were finally able to establish themselves as the independent proprietors of farms of their own made up an even smaller number.

All the others were unable to escape from the cities. Decade after decade, as the Federal government made its count, the census revealed a substantial majority of the immigrants in the urban places; and the margin of that majority grew steadily larger. Always the percentage of the foreign-born