AMERICANISM AND THE FOREIGN-BORN

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It warms my heart that you should give me such a reception, but it is not of myself that I wish to think to-night, but of those who have just become citizens of the United States. This is the only country in the world which experiences this constant and repeated rebirth. Other countries depend upon the multiplication of their own native people. This country is constantly drinking strength out of new sources by the voluntary association with it of great bodies of strong men and forward-looking women. And so by the gift of the free will of independent people it is constantly being renewed from generation to generation by the same process by which it was originally created. It is as if humanity had determined to see to it that this great nation, founded for the benefit of humanity, should not lack for the allegiance of the people of the world.

You have just taken an oath of allegiance to the United States. Of allegiance to whom? Of allegiance to no one, unless it be God. Certainly not of allegiance to those who temporarily represent this great Government. You have taken an oath of allegiance to a great ideal, to a great body of principles, to a great hope of the human race. You have said, “We are going to America,” not only to earn a living, not only to seek the things which it was more difficult to obtain where you were born, but to help forward the great enterprises of the human spirit — to let man know that every-

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We came to America, either ourselves or in the persons of our ancestors, to better the ideals of men, to make them see finer things than they had seen before, to get rid of things that divide, and to make sure of the things that unite. It was but an historical accident no doubt that this great country was called the "United States," and yet I am very thankful that it has the word "united" in its title; and the man who seeks to divide man from man, group from group, interest from interest, in the United States is striking at its very heart.

It is a very interesting circumstance to me, in thinking of those of you who have just sworn allegiance to this great Government, that you were drawn across the ocean by some beckoning finger of hope, by some belief, by some vision of a new kind of justice, by some expectation of a better kind of life.

No doubt you have been disappointed in some of us; some of us are very disappointing. No doubt you have found that justice in the United States goes only with a pure heart and a right purpose, as it does everywhere else in the world. No doubt what you found here did n’t seem touched for you, after all, with the complete beauty of the ideal which you had conceived beforehand.

But remember this, if we had grown at all poor in the ideal, you brought some of it with you. A man does not go out to seek the thing that is not in him. A man does not hope for the thing that he does not believe in; and if some of us have forgotten what America believed in, you, at any rate, imported in your own hearts a renewal of the belief. That is the reason that I, for one, make you welcome.

If I have in any degree forgotten what America was intended for, I will thank God if you will remind me.

I was born in America. You dreamed dreams of what America was to be, and I hope you brought the dreams with you. No man that does not see visions will ever realize any high hope or undertake any high enterprise.

Just because you brought dreams with you, America is more likely to realize the dreams such as you brought. You are enriching us if you came expecting us to be better than we are.

See, my friends, what that means. It means that America must have a consciousness different from the consciousness of every other nation in the world. I am not saying this with even the slightest thought of criticism of other nations. You know how it is with a family. A family gets centered on itself if it is not careful and is less interested in the neighbors than it is in its own members.

So a nation that is not constantly renewed out of new sources is apt to have the narrowness and prejudice of a family. Whereas, America must have this consciousness, that on all sides it touches elbows and touches hearts with all the nations of mankind.

The example of America must be a special example. The example of America must be the example not merely of peace because it will not fight, but of peace because peace is the healing and elevating influence of the world and strife is not.

There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight. There is such a thing as a nation being so right that it does not need to convince others by force that it is right.

So, if you come into this great nation as you have come, voluntarily seeking something that we have to give, all that we have to give is this: We cannot exempt you from work. No man is exempt from work anywhere in the world. I sometimes think he is fortunate if he has to work only with his hands and not with his head. It is very easy to do what other people give you to do, but it is very difficult to give other people things to do. We cannot exempt you from
work; we cannot exempt you from the strife and the heart-breaking burden of the struggle of the day — that is common to mankind everywhere. We cannot exempt you from the loads you must carry; we can only make them light by the spirit in which they are carried. That is the spirit of hope, it is the spirit of liberty, it is the spirit of justice.

When I was asked, therefore, by the Mayor and the committee that accompanied him to come up from Washington to meet this great company of newly admitted citizens I could not decline the invitation. I ought not to be away from Washington, and yet I feel that it has renewed my spirit as an American.

In Washington men tell you so many things every day that are not so, and I like to come and stand in the presence of a great body of my fellow-citizens, whether they have been my fellow-citizens a long time or a short time, and drink, as it were, out of the common fountains with them and go back feeling that you have so generously given me the sense of your support and of the living vitality in your hearts, of its great ideals which made America the hope of the world.
PREFACE

"Before our war we were to Europe but a huge mob of adventurers and shopkeepers. Leigh Hunt expressed it well enough when he said that he could never think of America without seeing a gigantic counter stretched all along the seaboard."

It is the Civil War that James Russell Lowell referred to in this passage; it is the Civil War that revealed once more, as the War of Independence had also revealed, the idealism of those remote forbears of ours who came to this continent "not to seek gold, but God." But after the Civil War, our material prosperity grew apace, until our ideals seemed gradually to become dimmer and, in the view of many observers, both foreign and American, faded away altogether. And now, having accepted our responsibilities in world affairs, we believe that we shall reveal once again some of the ideals we have cherished in the past and some of the new ideals that the age calls for.

It is the function of this little book to bring together certain essays, addresses, and state papers that express, from the point of view of American statesmen and men of letters, these ideals, past and present. A final chapter of "Foreign Opinion of the United States" regards a few of the same subjects from an interestingly different angle.

One who reads these utterances reflectively will come to the conclusion that they exhibit a marked nobility of will and mind. For that the reader was amply prepared. But at the same time one cannot but confess that these expressions of the ideals that have guided us in the past and are animating our action in the present are somewhat deficient