KENDRIC BABCOCK

THE SCANDINAVIAN ELEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Kendric Babcock

The Scandinavian Element in the United States

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24167420
The Scandinavian Element in the United States / University of Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences, Vol. 111, No. 3, September, 1914:

Содержание

CHAPTER I.	4
CHAPTER II.	15
CHAPTER III.	24
CHAPTER IV.	42
CHAPTER V.	62
CHAPTER VI.	78
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	79

Kendric Charles Babcock The Scandinavian Element in the United States / University of Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences, Vol. 111, No. 3, September, 1914

CHAPTER I. Introduction

The history of the United States, according to newer views which have largely supplanted, or progressed beyond, those of the New England school of great historians, is the history of the march of a civilization, chiefly English, across the vast North American continent, within the short period of three hundred years. It is the story of the transformation of a wide-stretching wilderness – of an ever-advancing frontier – into great cities, diversified industries, varying social interests, and an intensely complex life. Wave upon wave of races of mankind has flowed over the developing and enlarging West, and each has left its

impress on that area. Across the trail of the Indian and the trapper, the highway of the pioneer on his westward journey, have spread the tilled fields of the farmer, or along it has run the railroad. The farm has become a town-site and then a manufacturing city; the trading post at St. Paul and the village by the Falls of St. Anthony have expanded into the Twin Cities of the Northwest; the marshy prairie by the side of Lake Michigan, where the Indians fought around old Fort Dearborn, has come to be one of the world's mighty centers of urban population – and all this transformation within the memory of men now living.

The progress of this rapid, titanic evolution of an empire was greatly accelerated by the desires, the strength, and the energy of multitudes of immigrants from Europe; and in at least six great commonwealths of the Northwest the Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes have been among the chief contributors to State-building. During the eighty years ending in June, 1906, among the 24,000,000 immigrants who came to the United States, the Scandinavians numbered more than 1,700,000. Whether viewed as emigrations on the eastern shores of the Atlantic, or as immigrations on the western shores, these modern *Völkerwanderungen* constitute one of the wonders of the social world, in comparison with which most of the other migrations in history are numerically insignificant. The Israelites marching out of Egypt were but a mass of released bond-men; the invasions of the Goths, Vandals, and Huns were conquering expeditions, full of boisterous, thoughtless, unforecasting energy. Even the

immigration from Europe to America in the whole of the seventeenth century scarcely equalled in number the columns which moved westward in any one year from 1880 to 1890.

In this flux of humanity, mobile almost to fluidity, various in promise of utility, shifting in proportions of the good and bad, of pauper, refugee, and fanatic, or "bird of passage", sweatshop man, and home-builder, there has been such an interplay of subtle and vast forces that no just and final appreciation can as yet be reached. But some sort of tentative conclusions may be arrived at by intensive study of each immigrant group, following it through years and generations, searching for its ramifications in the body politic and social.

The student of this phase of American history must attempt the scientific method, and exercise the patience, of the student of physical nature. No geologist, for example, would think for a moment of generalizing as to the history and the future of a continent of complicated structure after a few examinations here and there of cross-sections of its strata. He must know from thoro-going observation the trend, thickness, and composition of each stratum; he must trace, if possible, the sources of the material which he finds metamorphosed; he must be familiar with the physical and the chemical forces at work in and on this material, – heat, pressure, movement, affinities, gases, water, wind, and sun. In like manner, the student of immigration as a whole, or of a section as large as that of the Scandinavians or Italians, must make careful discriminations as to previous

conditions and influences, and also must notice carefully the differentiation of peoples, places, and times.

Too much stress, however, should never be laid on the character of any one group of immigrants, lest it warp the judgment upon the immigration movement as a factor in American progress. The ardent political reformer in New York City, seeing the political activity of the Irish, and the easy, fraudulent enfranchisement of newly-arrived aliens, cries in a loud voice for restriction or prohibition of immigration. The California labor agitator, feeling chiefly the effect of Chinese efficiency in the labor market, would close the gates of the country to all the eastern nations. The social worker, knowing mainly and best the degradation of the Hungarians in the mines, or of the Hebrews in the sweatshops, prophesies naught but evil from foreign immigration. From an opposite point of view, when a man travels in leisurely fashion up and down Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, and the Dakotas, and finds a dozen race elements – English, German, Norwegian, or Russian – he begins to understand the real benefit to the nation of the coming of this vast, varied, peaceful army.[1] The scale of immigrants runs from the pauper or the diseased alien, awaiting deportation on Ellis Island in New York Harbor, to the rich Norwegian or German owning a thousand-acre farm in North Dakota, and to the millionaire Swedish lumberman or manufacturer of Wisconsin or Minnesota.

---

[1] Whelpley, *The Problem of the Immigrant*, I.

For more than half a century, the United States has been almost a nation of immigrants, a mixture of races in the process of combination; upon the exact nature of this combination, whether it take the form of absorption, amalgamation, fusion, or assimilation, depends future political and social progress.

The writer has for years felt a profound conviction of the vital importance of this whole problem of the alien, and a corresponding belief in the value of the investigation of each cohort in the national forces. Hence this attempt at a sympathetic study of the Scandinavian element in American life and of its contributions to the evolution of the Northern Mississippi Valley during the last sixty years.

In such a study, the Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes, like all other citizens of foreign birth, must be judged by the character and preparation which best fit men to contribute to the permanent progress of a self-governing people. What are the signs of readiness for full Americanization? The fundamentals are manliness – Roman virility – , intelligence, and the capacity for co-operation, ennobled by "dignified self-respect, self-control, and that self-assertion and jealousy of encroachment which marks those who know their rights and dare maintain them";[2] devotion to law, order, and justice; and a ready acquiescence in the will of the majority duly expressed.[3]

---

[2] J. R. Commons, "Racial Composition of the American People," *Chautauquan*, XXXVIII, 35.

[3] R. Mayo-Smith, *Emigration and Immigration*.

Such qualities in America have been the especial possession of that sub-race of the Caucasian stock which the later ethnologists call the Baltic, in contradistinction to the co-ordinate sub-races, the Alpine, and the Mediterranean or Ligurian. This Baltic race has for centuries occupied the British Isles, the northern plains of Germany, and the North European peninsulas, being found in its purest state in Norway, Sweden, and Scotland. The people of this sub-race, asserts the writer of an admirable article on racial characteristics, are mentally "enterprising and persevering, and cheerfully dedicate most of their time and thought to work… They are liberally gifted with those moral instincts which are highly favorable to the creation and growth of communities, altho not always so favorable to the individual who possesses them; they are altruistic, fearless, honest, sincere. They love order and cleanliness, and attach considerable importance to the dress and personal appearance of individuals."[4] While the other Caucasian sub-races do not lack these qualities, their most dominating characteristics are different; for example, one may exemplify the artistic or the idealistic side of human nature.

As related to the progress of civilization in America, all immigrants fall into three classes: those who powerfully re-enforce the strength and virtue of the nation, those who supplement its defects with desirable elements, and those who lower its standards and retard its advancement. Hence, those immigrants will be presumably the most desirable to America

---

[4] G. Michaud, "What shall we be?", *Century*, LXV, 685.

who come from the regions where the purest Baltic stock now exists, that is, north of a line running east and west through Brussels, and especially in north-central Germany and the Scandinavian peninsula.

Measured by character and training, the Baltic race in America stands up well to the test, not only in the foreign-born alone, but in the second and third generation born on American soil. If generations of ignorance, mental inertia, social depression, political passivity, shiftlessness, and improvidence stretch behind the immigrant, if his religion be chiefly a superstition or strongly antagonistic to the principles of the Republic, and if he be physically inferior and long inured to the hardships of a low standard of living, just so far is he an undesirable addition to American population. But, on the other hand, if his homeland show a very low percentage of illiteracy; if his life has been saturated with the ideas of thrift and small economies; if he hold himself free from domination by priest, landlord, or king; and if his history be the story of a sturdy struggle for independence, he should be rated high and welcomed accordingly, for it is of such stuff that mighty nations are made.

The student of Scandinavian immigration in the nineteenth century is not left to conjecture in his endeavor to estimate the probable result of the injection into American society of this foreign-born element. Before the second generation of English and Dutch settlers in America in the seventeenth century had grown to manhood, the Swedes began a colony upon the

Delaware River; and their descendants are still a distinguishable part of the population of the lower Delaware valley. This beginning of Swedish immigration to America is particularly instructive because the settlements undertaken in the period of the Thirty Years War drew their recruits from the same classes of Swedish society as the movements of the nineteenth century, and developed under substantially similar conditions and along much the same lines.

The Swede of the seventeenth century and the Swede of the nineteenth century are essentially one in character, for two hundred years have wrought less change in him than in his cousins of Germany and England. The accounts of Stockholm, its people and its surroundings, written in the early seventeenth century, might serve, with very little modification, to describe the large features of the Sweden and the Swedes of today. Great progress has of course been made in two centuries, but in political wisdom, high moral courage, and benevolent purpose, Gustavus Adolphus and his advisers were distinctly in advance of the first two English Stuarts and their courts.

Perhaps no better illustration of this difference could be found than in the plans for the beginnings of the colonies on the James River and on the Delaware River. The scheme for a colony on the Delaware was originally outlined by the great Gustavus himself in 1624, but sterner duties took his energies; and after the fatal blow on the field of Lützen, it devolved on his daughter, Queen Christina, and her faithful minister, Oxenstjerna, to carry out

his plan for establishing a colony which was to be “a blessing to the common man,” a place for “a free people with wives,” and not a mere commercial speculation or a haven for aristocratic adventurers and spendthrifts.[5]

The first company of immigrants arrived in 1638, and year by year additions were received. So early as the middle of the seventeenth century, Sweden had a touch of the “America fever,” and when an expedition left Gothenburg in 1654 with 350 souls on board, about a hundred families were left behind for want of room. Perhaps only the transfer of the colony, first to the Dutch and then to the English, prevented the Swedish immigration from attaining large proportions two and a half centuries ago. The Swedish flag floated over New Sweden notwithstanding the protests of both the Dutch and the English, until the conquest of the colony by Governor Stuyvesant in 1655, and then it disappeared from the map of America.

In spite of threats, subjugation, and isolation, the prosperity of the early colony continued, and by the end of the seventeenth century it numbered nearly a thousand. No injustice in dealing with the Indians provoked a massacre, for these protégés of the Swedish crown, before William Penn was born, carefully and systematically extinguished by purchase the Indian titles to all the land on which they settled. Their piety and loyalty built the church and fort side by side, and long after they became subjects of the king of Great Britain they continued to receive their

---

[5] *Argonautica Gustaviana*, 3, 16.

ministers from the mother church in Sweden. In fact, pastors commissioned from Stockholm did not cease their ministrations until they came speaking in a tongue no longer known to the children of New Sweden.

This Swedish colony, planted thus in the midst of larger English settlements, continued for many generations to add its portion of good blood and good brains to a body of colonists in the New World, which too often needed sorely just these qualities. The Honorable Thomas F. Bayard, who lived long among their descendants, wrote in 1888: "I make bold to say that no better stock has been contributed (in proportion to its numbers) towards giving a solid basis to society under our republican forms, than these hardy, honest, industrious, law-abiding, God-fearing Swedish settlers on the banks of the Christiana in Delaware. While I have never heard of a very rich man among them, yet I have never heard of a pauper. I cannot recall the name of a statesman or a distinguished law-giver among them, nor of a rogue or a felon. As good citizens they helped to form what Mr. Lincoln called the plain people of the country, – and I have lived among their descendants and know that their civic virtues have been transmitted."[6]

Their thrift and comfort and sobriety attracted the attention of Thomas Pascall, one of the Englishmen of Penn's first colony, who wrote in January, 1683: "They are generally very ingenious

---

[6] Mattson, *Souvenir of the 250th Anniversary of the First Swedish Settlement in America* (1888), 44.

people, live well, they have lived here 40 years, and have lived much at ease having great plenty of all sorts of provisions, but they were but ordinarily cloathed; but since the English came they have gotten fine cloathes, and are going proud."[7] Penn himself declared: "They have fine children and almost every house full; rare to find one of them without three or four boys and as many girls; some six, seven and eight sons. And I must do them right – I see few young men more sober and industrious."[8]

---

[7] This letter, printed as a broadside in England about 1683, was furnished me by Mr. George Parker Winship of the Carter Brown Library of Providence, Rhode Island.

[8] Janney, *Life of William Penn*, 246-247.

CHAPTER II.
Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes

The common use of the term Scandinavian to describe Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes in a broad and general way, is one of the products of the commingling of these three peoples on the American side of the Atlantic. The word really fits even more loosely than does the word British to indicate the English, Welsh and Scotch. It was applied early in the history of the settlements in Wisconsin and Illinois, to groups which comprised both Norwegians and Danes on the one hand, or Norwegians and Swedes on the other hand, when no one of the three nationalities was strong enough to maintain itself separately, and when the members of one were inclined, in an outburst of latent pride of nationality, not to say conceit of assumed superiority, to resent being called by one of the other names; for example, when a Norwegian objected to being taken for a Swede. Thus the Scandinavian Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, organized in 1860, included both Norwegians and Danes; ten years later the name was changed to the Norwegian-Danish Conference; and in 1884 the differentiation was carried further, and the Danes formed a new Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church Association, supplementing the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which dated back to 1871.

Vigorous protests were made from time to time against the use of "Skandinavian" or "Skandinav." "Shall we Norwegians let the Danes persist in calling us Scandinavians?" wrote "Anti-Skandinavian" to the leading American Norwegian weekly of 1870.[9] He also quoted the sarcastic words of Ole Bull: "Scandinavia, gentlemen, – may I ask where that land lies? It is not found in my geography; does it lie perhaps in the moon?"[10] But the use and acceptability of the word steadily grew; the great daily paper in Chicago took the name *Skandinaven*; in 1889, the editor of *The North* declared: "The term has become a household word … universally understood in the sense in which we here use it (to designate the three nationalities)."[11]

Ole Bull was, of course, right in saying that there is no Scandinavian language, no Scandinavian nation; but the ordinary reader or student does not recognize clearly that Sweden, Norway and Denmark have different spoken languages (though the Danish and Norwegian printed language is one), different traditions, as well as different governments. Almost while these words are being written, the coronation ceremony in the ancient cathedral at Throndhjem completes the process by which Norway is severed entirely from Sweden and again assumes

---

[9] *Fædrelandet og Emigranten*, May 12, 1870: "Skulle vi Norske lade de Danske fremture i at kalde os Skandinaver?"

[10] "Skandinavien, mine Herrer, tör jeg spörge, hvor det Land ligger? Det findes ikke i min Geografi; ligger det maaske i Maanen?" Ole Bull, *Fædrelandet og Emigranten*, May 12, 1870.

[11] *The North*, June 12, 1889.

among the powers of earth that "separate and equal station to which the laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them."

The physique and characteristics of the three Scandinavian peoples have been profoundly affected by the physical features of the northern peninsulas; the mountains, fjords, and extensive coast lines of Norway, the level stretches, lakes, and regular coast of Sweden, and the low, sandy islands of Denmark find a counterpart in the varying types of men and women of those countries. The occupations which necessarily grew out of these differences of surface and soil tended to give to all a strong, sturdy, hardy body; farming naturally claims by far the largest percentage, though great numbers of the men yield to the call of the sea. Both Norway and Sweden have large lumbering interests, while Norway leads in fishing industries, Sweden in mining, and Denmark in dairying.

Nature is no spendthrift in any part of the Scandinavian peninsulas; small economies are the alphabet of her teaching, and her lessons once learned are rarely forgotten. Her children of the North, therefore, down to the stolidest laborer, mountaineer, and fisherman, are generally industrious and frugal, and when they migrate to the American West, to enter upon the work of pioneering, with its stern requirements of endurance, patience, persistent endeavor, and thrift, they start out in the new life with decided temperamental advantages over most other immigrants, and even over most native-born Americans.

Other characteristics common to these three peoples

distinguish them strikingly from the South European. From their Viking ancestors they have inherited a love for adventure, a courage in facing the possibilities of the future. Their hatred of slavery, and their clear, high ideas of personal and political freedom, are strongly marked, and their peasantry is ranked highest on the continent.[12] Their adaptability to changes of clime, of conditions, of circumstance, has been remarkably demonstrated over and over again, in Normandy in the 11th century, in Sicily in the 12th, and in America in the 19th; yet it has not degenerated into a facile yielding to moods and whims even under the rapid changes of New World society.

The typical Swede is aristocratic, fond of dignities, assertive: he is polite, vivacious, and bound to have a jolly time without troubling too much about the far future. Yet he is not afraid of hard work; he is persistent, ofttimes brilliant, and capable of great energy and endurance. He is notably fond of music, especially the singing of choruses and the opera, and the poetry of Bellman and the epics of Tegner belong to the great literature of the world.

The Norwegian is above all democratic. He is simple, serious, intense, severe even to bluntness, often radical and visionary, and with a tendency to disputatiousness.[13] There is an unmeasured

---

[12] N. S. Shaler, "European Peasants as Immigrants," *Atlantic*, LXXI, 649.

[13] N. P. Haugen comments on the good and bad features of this tendency in his Norway Day speech at the World's Columbian Exposition. *Skandinaven*, May 24, 1893.

quantity of passion and imagination in him, as there are unmeasured stores of power and beauty in the snows of his mountains and the waters of his coast. He has the capacity for high and strenuous endeavor, even verging on the turbulent, but he rarely has developed the qualities of a great leader. Like the Swede, the Norwegian is fond of music, but it is of a different sort. Both in his music and in his literature, the dramatic element is strong; no names in the realm of literature of the last generation stand higher than those of Ibsen and Björnson, who are first cosmopolitan and then Norwegian.

The Dane is the Southerner of the Scandinavians, but still a conservative. He is gay, but not to excess; the healthiness and jollity of a Copenhagen crowd are things to covet. He is preeminently a small farmer or trader, honest and persevering, ready and easy-going, and altho not given to great risks, he is quick to see a bargain and shrewd in making it. Of self-confidence and enterprise he manifests a decided lack.[14] His country is small, open on all sides, and near to great Powers; his interests, therefore, have led him out from his peninsula and islands, and foreign influences have more affected him than they have his neighbors across the Sound and the Skager Rack. His best work in literature and art has been done under strong Romantic and classic impulses from the South.

Such being the qualities of the peoples of Sweden, Denmark

---

[14] Borchner, *Danish Life in Town and Country*, 3-6; Bille, *History of the Danes in America*, 1, 7, 8.

and Norway, the conditions of life and society in those countries in the first half of the nineteenth century seem on close examination quite unlikely to produce a great emigration, in comparison with conditions in other countries from which large numbers of men and women migrated to America. There were no great social, economic, or political upheavals sufficient to cause the exodus of any class; religious intolerance and persecution were, with few minor exceptions, neither active nor severe. The Napoleonic wars did not depopulate these northern lands, nor did they, like their sister nations to the south, suffer seriously from the commercial restrictions of the Emperor of the French. Militarism did not crush them with its weight of lead and steel and its terrible waste of productive energy. Political oppression and proscription, so marked in the affairs of central and western European states down to 1850, were not features of the history of Norway, Sweden or Denmark. Though Norway protested in 1814 in no uncertain terms against the union with Sweden in a dual monarchy, she was, under the constitution of that year, one of the freest nations of Europe, "a free, individual, indivisible kingdom." In Sweden before 1840, one of the chief restrictions on the individual was potential rather than actual: a man who wished to leave the kingdom must have a passport from the king, for which he had to pay 300 kroner (about $81). He would also be under the close supervision of the state church, to which he was expected to belong.

There were, however, conditions in the home-lands as well

as in America, which impelled immigration. Anyone who has travelled over the fertile prairies of the Mississippi valley and then through Norway or Sweden, will often wonder that so many people have been content to remain so long in the older Scandinavia. In Norway there were in 1910, in round numbers, 2,390,000 people on an area of 124,000 square miles.[15] Of this population, about 425,000 were gathered in the larger towns, and 250,000 were in the smaller towns, making a total urban population of 29 %, over against 21 % twenty years before. The remainder were scattered over the vast mountainous country or along the coast-line of three thousand miles.[16] Thousands of fishermen's huts are grappled barnacle-like to the rocks, while behind them along a trickling thread of water stretches a precious hand-breadth of soil. The greater part of the interior is one wide furrowed plateau, in whose hollows, by lakes and streams, thrifty farmers skilfully utilize their few square yards of tillable land and pasture their cattle on the steep slopes. Save around Lake Mjösen, the Leir, Vos, and Throndhjem, there can scarcely be found in all Norway anything like a broad rich meadow. The farm products are almost literally mined from the rocks. "It is by dogged, persistent, indomitable toil and endurance, backed up in some cases by irrepressible daring, that the Norwegian

---

[15] *Statesman's Year-Book, 1914*, 1141 ff.

[16] In 1880, 20 % lived in towns; in 1890, 23.7 % lived in towns, and 76.3 % in the rural districts. *Norway* (English edition of the official volume prepared for the Paris Exhibition of 1900), 90.

peasant and fisher-folk – three-fourths of the population – carry on with any show of success their struggle against iron nature."[17] Yet in spite of such adverse conditions, these people have ever clung with passionate tenacity to their mountainous storm-beaten Norway, and by it have been made brave without bitterness, hardy without harshness, strong yet tender.

In Sweden the physical conditions are decidedly different. The area of 172,900 square miles supports a population of 5,600,000 (1912), of whom 50 % dwell in cities of which there are now thirty with more than 10,000, Stockholm leading with 350,000. The urban population increased 166 % between 1871 and 1912.[18] There are few lofty mountains and no jagged peaks, majestically dominating the outlook; the crag-set fjords are replaced by gentler bays and sounds sprinkled with beautiful islands; in some parts of the country, as in Wermland and Smaaland, are low and marshy sections, where, according to legend, the Lord forgot to separate the land and water. Agricultural conditions are less hard and means of communication are better than in Norway; closer relations exist between provinces and between parishes; information is more readily diffused, and gatherings of considerable size are held without particular difficulty.

Denmark more closely resembles Sweden than Norway, and is

---

[17] Wm. Archer, "Norway Today," *Fortnightly Rev.*, XLIV, 415.

[18] *Statesman's Year-Book, 1914*, 1316. The increase of urban population was five times the increase of the kingdom.

in still better touch with the larger world than either of the others. With an area of about 15,000 square miles, – Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, combined – it held in 1911 a population of 2,775,000. Copenhagen and its suburbs had a population of 560,000. The urban population was 26 %. Unlike the other two, Denmark has several important colonies in other parts of the world.[19]

In all three countries, as in the rest of Europe, changes in commercial, industrial, social, legal, and religious matters were sure to be slow. The tenure and succession in lands, the limited market for labor, the relatively small opportunity for initiative, especially for the younger members of considerable families, – all of these conditions with the characteristics already described, lent added attractiveness to the call of the American West.

---

[19] *Statesman's Year-Book, 1914*, 789 ff.

CHAPTER III.
Early Norwegian Immigration

> "Arrived last evening" (October 9, 1825).
>
> "Danish Sloop Restoration, Holland, 98 days from Norway, via Long Island Sound, with iron to Boorman and Johnson, 52 passengers."[20]
>
> "The vessel is very small, measuring, as we understand, only about 360 Norwegian lasts, or 45 American tons, and brought 46 passengers, male and female, all bound for Ontario County, where an agent who came over sometime since, purchased a tract of land."[21]

These ordinary shipping notices in the newspapers of New York City, and several other similar paragraphs, are the first entries in the chronicles of the newer Scandinavian immigration to the United States. From the cessation of Swedish immigration in the seventeenth century down to 1825, no considerable companies made the long journey from the Northlands to America, tho adventurous fellows in twos and threes came now and then, men who misliked the humdrum life in the old parishes, with its narrow opportunity and outlook, men who found the sea

[20] *The New York Evening Post*, Oct. 10, 1825.

[21] *The New York Daily Advertiser*, Oct. 12, 1825.

the only highway to novelty and a possible fortune.[22] Now, at last, the coming of a company of some size, from Norway, adding one more to the lengthening list of nationalities which contributed to the complex population of the United States, attracted more than passing attention.[23] That the sloop was not Danish, and that there is some discrepancy in the number of passengers – (and crew?) – and in the number of days in the voyage, are minor matters and easily accounted for; the New Yorker of 1825 could hardly be expected to distinguish clearly between Danes and Norwegians, when the people of the Northwest at the present time apply the name Swede indiscriminately to Swedes, Danes, Norwegians, Finns, and Icelanders. But back of the arrival of this little sloopful of Norwegians, is a story of motive, organization, and movement, more or less characteristic of Scandinavian immigration during the next two generations. The two main elements are: conditions in Norway and the United States, and the personal activities of one of the adventurous fellows already referred to.

In the region about Stavanger, in southwestern Norway, in 1825, there had been for some time a feeling of discontent with the religious conditions of the country, and a tendency to formal dissent from the established church. The direction

---

[22] Interview with Capt. O. C. Lange (who reached America in 1824) in Chicago, 1890; Norelius, *Svenskarnes Historia*, 1.

[23] *Niles' Register*, XXIX., 115. Several extended quotations from newspapers in New York, Boston, and Baltimore, for the month of October, 1825, relating to this company of the sloop "Restoration", indicating the interest created by its coming, are printed in Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 69-76.

of this tendency and the definition of the movement were vitally influenced by certain zealous and philanthropic Quaker missionaries from England, Stephen Grellet and William Allen, who visited Norway in 1818. Grellet was a French nobleman who sought refuge in the United States during the French Revolution, and there united himself with the Quakers or Friends. After residing in America for twelve years, he began making tours through Europe to propagate Quaker ideas, even obtaining an interview with the Pope, which he describes in his diary. The visit to Norway was in furtherance of his general plan. While his account of his stay in Norway does not make any mention of America, it is impossible to believe that no reference to America and to the conditions of the Friends in that part of the world, where he himself found refuge, crept into the conferences which he held around Stavanger, and that no seeds of desire to seek the New World were sown in the slow-moving minds of the Norwegian peasants whom he met.[24]

As dissenters from the established church, these Quakers were continually subject to actual or threatened pains and penalties, in addition to those troubles which might arise from their refusal to take oaths and to render military service. Their children and those of other dissenters must he baptised and confirmed in the Lutheran Church; they must themselves attend its services and pay taxes for its support, or suffer fines or other punishment for failing so to do. Tho prosecutions, or persecutions, were really

---

[24] Grellet, *Memoirs*, I, 321 ff.

few before 1830, an episode now and then showed the dissenters what might be in store for them if they persisted, as when one of the Quakers was arrested in 1821 for burying his children in unconsecrated ground, and fined five specie dollars a day until he re-bury them in consecrated ground, and agree to follow the outward ceremonies and customs of the state church.[25] Two years before one of the Friends wrote: "There are no laws yet made in favor of Friends, so that those who stand firm in their principles act contrary to the laws of the country. Friends must be resigned to take the consequences."[26] With signs of persecution, with an increase of discontent, and with the leadership of a man possessed of first-hand knowledge about the United States, it is not surprising that emigration was decided upon.

Kleng Peerson, called also Kleng Pederson and Person Hesthammer, was a man of dubious character, who has been variously described. One has called him the "Father of the Newer Norwegian Immigration" and as such entitled to a chapter by himself; another has written him down as a tramp.[27] A softer characterization, however, makes of him a "Viking who was born some centuries after the Viking period."[28] He appears to have

---

[25] Richardson, *Rise and Progress of the Society of Friends in Norway*, 37.

[26] *Ibid.*, 23.

[27] R. B. Anderson, "En Liden Indledning" in the series of articles "Bidrag til vore Settlementers og Menigheders Historie," *Amerika*, April 4, 1894. Bothne, *Kort Udsigt over det Lutherske Kirkearbeide bladnt Normændene i Amerika*, 822.

[28] O. N. Nelson, "Bemerkning til Prof. Andersons Indledning", *Amerika*, May 2, 1894.

been a sort of Quaker, either from conscience or convenience. His leaving his home parish of Skjold near Stavanger, and his emigration to the United States in 1821 in company with another Norwegian, are attributed to motives ranging from a commission from the Quakers to find a refuge for them in America, to a desire to escape the rich old widow whom he married, and who was tired of supporting him in idleness.[29] Certain it is that upon his return to Norway in 1824, after three years of experience in the New World, the sentiment favoring emigration from Stavanger soon crystallized.

By midsummer of 1825 a company of fifty-two persons, mostly Quakers from the parish of Skjold, was ready to journey to America. They purchased a sloop and a small cargo of iron which would serve as ballast and which might bring them profit in New York, tho this was probably a secondary matter.[30] On the 4th of July, 1825, they set sail from Stavanger, and after a somewhat circuitous voyage of fourteen weeks, which was not very long, as such voyages went, they made their landing in New York, October 9th, numbering fifty-three instead of fifty-two, for a daughter was born to Lars Larson on shipboard.[31] This landing of the "Sloop Folk" of the "Restoration," whose story is

---

[29] Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians*, I, 134 B-C.

[30] Langeland, *Nordmændene i Amerika*, 11.

[31] C. A. Thingvold gives a list of the names of the "Sloop Folk," save four, which he obtained from one of the survivors, in "The First Norwegian Immigration to America," *The North*, Aug. 10, 1892.

a favorite and oft-told one with the older Norwegian immigrants, is occasionally likened to the Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers who fled to a wilderness to escape persecution and to seek social and religious freedom; but on close examination the comparison breaks down at almost every point, – motive, objective, method and result.[32]

In New York the captain and mate of the "Restoration" were arrested for having more passengers than the Federal law allowed – two passengers to each five tons of the vessel. Having an excess of twenty, the sloop was legally forfeited to the United States.[33] However, for some unknown reason, the offenders were released and allowed to dispose of their cargo. The original cost of ship and cargo appears to have been about $1950, but both were sold for $400. This inadequate sum was supplemented by the generosity of the Quakers of New York, whose contributions and assistance enabled the "Sloop Folk" to proceed inland to Western New York.

They took up land in Kendall and Orleans County on the shores of Lake Ontario, about thirty-five miles northeast of the new town of Rochester in which two of the families decided to remain. The price of the land was $5 per acre, and each man was

---

[32] J. B. Wist, *Den Norske Invandring til 1850*, published about 1890, ventures to question seriously whether such a company ever came to the United States! His reason is that the clearance records of Stavanger show no such name as the "Restauration," and American statistics give the total Scandinavian immigration as 35, of whom 14 are credited to Norway.

[33] *Statutes of the United States, 1819*, Act of March 2.

to take about 40 acres; but as they were without cash, they agreed to pay for their farms in ten annual instalments. The reasons for selecting this region are not difficult to surmise, tho there is no direct proof of the motive. The country around Rochester was, in 1825, in the midst of a sort of Western "boom"; the Erie Canal was just finished, and the prospects of Rochester were very promising.[34] Its population grew quite marvelously; in September, 1822, it was 2700; in February, 1825, 4274; and in December of the same year, nearly 8,000.[35]

The first five years of the little colony were full of hardships and suffering. It was November of 1825 when they reached their destination; the country was all new and thinly settled; their own land was wild and could be cleared only with difficulty; and nothing could be grown upon it before the following summer. Just one man among them, Lars Larson, understood any English. By united efforts several families built a log-house, where the winter was spent in a most crowded condition, worse even than the three months in the close quarters of the "Restoration". The only employment by which they could earn anything was threshing with a flail in the primitive fashion of the time, and the wages consisted of the eleventh bushel threshed. With these scanty earnings and the help of kindly neighbors, they passed

[34] "Rochester is celebrated all over the Union as presenting one of the most striking instances of rapid increase in size and population, of which the country affords an example." Capt. Basil Hall, *Travels in North America*, I, 153.

[35] *Ibid.*, I, 155.

the dismal winter in a strange land. "They often suffered great need, and wished themselves back in Norway, but they saw no possibility of reaching Norway without sacrificing the last mite of their property, and they would not return as beggars."[36] But at length time, patience, and their own strength and diligence gave them a foothold. The land was cleared and produced enough to support them. A five years' apprenticeship made them masters of the situation; and when at last they had the means to return to the parish of Skjold, the desire had gradually faded out. Instead of re-migration, they were persuading others to join them in the New World.

But the New Norway, or the New Scandinavia, was not to be located in the Middle Atlantic States, though a beginning was made in Delaware and in New York. Land was too dear around the older settlements even at $5 per acre; the promised land was shifted to northern Indiana and northern Illinois, where fine prairie tracts which needed no clearing could be had for $1.25 per acre and upwards. And into these newer regions went the settler and the land speculator, sometimes in one and the same person. Schemes for internal improvement sprouted on every side, and canal-building was much discussed as the best means of providing cheap transportation.[37] One of these projects was for a

---

[36] Langeland, *Nordmændene i Amerika*, 15.

[37] Ackerman, *Early Illinois Railroads* (No. 23, *Fergus Hist. Ser.*), 19, quoting an editorial from the *Sangamo Journal*, Oct. 31, 1835: "We rejoice to witness the spirit of internal improvement now manifesting itself in every part of Illinois."

canal from Lake Michigan to the Illinois River, for which a land grant was made in 1827. This canal would bring great prosperity to northern Illinois, it was argued, just as the Erie Canal had developed central and western New York; the price of land would go up, markets would be accessible, and speculator and farmer would reap rich rewards.

Nor was this argument based entirely on theory, for halfway to the East, in Indiana, this progressive realization was in full blast. Harriet Martineau travelled through this part of the West in 1836, and noted with the eye of an acute and experienced observer, the rapid rise in values of farms. She estimated that a settler, judiciously selecting his land in the Northwest, would find it doubled in a single year, and cites the case of a farmer near LaPorte, Indiana, whose 800 acres, costing him $1.25 per acre three years before, had become worth $40 per acre – probably not a unique example of prosperity.[38] With these visions before them, many men moved from western New York, and along the line of the proposed canal in Illinois grew up hamlets bearing the names familiar along the great Erie Canal, – Troy, Seneca, Utica, and Lockport.

Among those attracted thither, was Kleng Peerson, who again served, perhaps without deliberate planning, as a scout for his Quaker friends.[39] On his return to the Orleans County settlers,

---

[38] Martineau, *Society in America*, I, 247, 259, 336.

[39] "I have complete evidence that he visited La Salle County, Illinois, as early as 1833." Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 172.

he convinced them that a better future would open to them in Illinois, and in the spring of 1834 some of the families moved into the West and began the so-called Fox River settlement in the town of Mission near Ottawa, La Salle County, Illinois. By 1836 nearly all the Norwegians of the New York colony had removed to the West, and several tracts of land were taken up in the towns of Mission, Miller, and Rutland. The sections located seem to have been unsurveyed at the time of the first settlement, for no purchases are recorded until 1835.[40] Henceforth most of the immigration from Norway was turned toward the prairie country, and whole companies of prospective settlers after 1836 went directly to the Fox River nucleus, for the region thereabouts had the double advantage of being at once comparatively easy of access and in the most fertile and promising region in which government land could be had at the minimum price.

In its new location, the twice transplanted colony of "Sloop Folk" was reasonably prosperous from the start, tho the panic of 1837 made impossible any realization of Miss Martineau's roseate estimate of probable profits. No further move of the original immigrants was made, and the Fox River Valley is still occupied by the well-to-do descendants of the Norwegian settlers of the thirties.

As a preliminary to further immigration from the three countries of Northern Europe, a definite knowledge of America and its opportunities must be developed among the peasants,

---

[40] *Ibid.*, 174, 176 ff.

and a desire to remove themselves thither must be awakened and stimulated. To whole communities in Norway, made up of simple, circumscribed people, America about 1835 was an undiscovered country, or at best a far-off land from which no traveller had ever come, and from which no letters were received; the name itself, if known at all, was a recent addition to their vocabulary. Ole Nattestad, one of the early immigrants, who was decently educated for his time and more experienced in the world than the majority of his neighbors, relates how he first heard of America in 1836, when he was a man thirty years old.[41]

The leavening process went on but slowly from 1825 to 1836, for the story of the early experiences of the little company of dissenters, obscure persons from an obscure parish, if known at all, was not likely to inspire others to follow in large numbers. With increasing prosperity in the Rochester, and later in the Fox River, colony, the tone of letters sent back to friends in Norway took a new ring: America came to mean opportunity, and now there were men speaking the Norwegian tongue to whom newcomers might go for instruction, advice, and encouragement. Old settlers still bear witness to the great influence of these letters of the thirties telling of American experiences and of American conditions. Among the most influential of these semi-conscious propagandists of emigration was Gjert G. Hovland, who came to the Rochester settlement with his family in 1831, and bought fifty acres of land, which after four years of cultivation he sold at

---

[41] *Billed Magazin*, I, 83.

a profit of $500. Writing to a friend near Stavanger in 1835, he spoke in terms of high praise of American legislation, equality, and liberty, contrasting it with the extortion of the Norwegian official aristocracy. He counseled all who could to come to America, as the Creator had nowhere forbidden men to settle where they pleased.[42] Of this and other letters by Hovland, copies were made by the hundred and circulated in the Norwegian parishes, and many of the early immigrants have stated that they were induced to emigrate by reading these letters.[43] Another man whose words prompted to emigration, was Gudmund Sandsberg, who came to New York in 1829 with a family of four.[44]

These letters scattered through western Norway from 1830 to 1840, were as seed sown in good ground. Times were hard; money was scarce and its value fluctuating.[45] The crops were often short, the prices of grain were high, and the demand for the labor of the peasants was weak; the economic conditions of the lower classes, especially in the rural districts – much the greater part of the country – were growing worse rather than better.[46]

---

[42] Translated from Langeland, *Nordmændene i Amerika*, 16n. This writer summarizes a letter of which he saw a copy as a young man in Norway.

[43] *Ibid.*; Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 147.

[44] Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 133.

[45] *Billed Magazin*, I, 18-19. Of the year 1836, one writer asserts: "En Daler ei gjældt mere end to norske Skilling," and that many lost all their property.

[46] In Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 133-135, is a translation of a letter written in Hellen in Norway, May 14, 1836: "If good reports come from them (certain emigrants about to sail) the number of emigrants will doubtless be still larger next year.

Even the oldest son, who was heir to his father's homestead, was likely to find himself possessed of a debt-burdened estate and with the necessity of providing for the mother and numerous younger children.[47] The younger sons, being still worse off, were forced to try their hands at various occupations to earn a bare living. Ole Nattestad, already mentioned, was by turns before his emigration farmer, peddler, blacksmith, and sheep-buyer.[48] To many a man with a large family of growing children the possibility of disaster in the United States was less forbidding than the probability of ultimate failure in Norway.

But not to occasional letters alone was the peasant, – and the emigration movement – to be left for information and inspiration. Young men who had prospered in the new life returned to the homesteads of their fathers and became, temporarily, missionaries of the new economic gospel, teaching leisurely but effectively by word of mouth and face to face, instead of by written lines at long range. One such man was Knud A. Slogvig, who returned to his home in Skjold in 1835 after ten years in America, not as an emigrant agent nor as a propagandist, but as a lover to marry his betrothed, – an early example which thousands of young Scandinavians in the years to come were to

---

A pressing and general lack of money enters into every branch of business, stops, or at least hampers business, and makes it difficult for many people to earn the necessaries of life. While this is the case on this side of the Atlantic, there is hope of abundance on the other, and this, I take it, is the chief cause of this growing disposition to emigrate."

[47] *Billed Magazin*, I, 6 ff.

[48] *Ibid.*, I, 83.

follow gladly.[49] Whatever may have been the results of his visit to Slogvig personally, they were of far-reaching importance to the emigration movement in western Norway. From near and from far, from Stavanger, from Bergen and vicinity, and from the region about Christiansand, people came during the long northern winter, to talk with this experienced and worldly-wise man about life in New York or in Illinois – or, in their own phrase, "i Amerika." There before them at last, was a man who had twice braved all the terrors of thousands of miles of sea and hundreds of miles of far-distant land, who had come straight and safe from that fabulous vast country, with its great broad valleys and prairies, with its strange white men, and stranger red men. The "America fever" contracted in conferences with Slogvig and men of his kind, was hard to shake off.[50]

The accounts of America given by this emigrant visitor were so satisfactory, that when he prepared to go back to the United States in 1836, a large party was ready to go with him. Instead of the fifty-two who slipped out of Stavanger, half-secretly in 1825, there were now about 160, for whose accommodation two brigs, *Norden* and *Den Norske Klippe*, were specially fitted out.[51] The increased size of this party was doubtless due in some measure

---

[49] Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 148.

[50] Langeland, *Nordmændene i Amerika*, 18; *Billed Magazin*, I, 83. Langeland writes: "Tre af Nedskriverens Paarörende, som reiste fra Bergen i 1837, var blandt dem, som i Vinteren 1836 besögte ham, og kom hjem fulde af Amerikafeber."

[51] Langeland, *Nordmændene i Amerika*, 18; *Billed Magazin*, I, 83, 150 (Nattestad's account).

to discontent with the religious conditions of the kingdom, but more to the activity of Björn Anderson Kvelve, who desired to escape the consequences of his sympathy with Quakerism, and of the marriage which he, the son of a peasant, had contracted with the daughter of an aristocratic, staunchly Lutheran army officer.[52] Being, as his son admits, "a born agitator and debater" – others have called him quarrelsome, – he persuaded several of his friends to join the party, and he soon became its leader.[53] The greater part of the two ship-loads, after arrival in New York, went directly to La Salle County, Illinois, a few stopping in or near Rochester. For several years after the arrival of this party, the immigrants from Norway generally directed their course towards the Illinois settlement, which, as a result, grew rapidly and spread into the neighboring towns of Norway, Leland, Lisbon, Morris, and Ottawa.

The actual process of migration from Norway to Illinois or Wisconsin was full of serious difficulty, and to be entered upon by those only who possessed a strong determination and a stout heart. The dangers, discomforts, and hardships which everywhere attended immigration before 1850, were made even more trying, in prospect, by the weird stories of wild Indians, slave-hunters, and savage beasts on land and sea, all of which were thoroly believed by the peasants. Moreover, the church

---

[52] Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 157 ff; *Madison Democrat* (Wis.), Nov. 8, 1885.

[53] Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 155.

took a hand to prevent emigration, the bishop of Bergen issuing a pastoral letter on the theme: "Bliv i Landet, ernær dig redelig." (Remain in the land and support thyself honestly.)[54] Until a much later time, no port of Norway or Sweden had regular commercial intercourse with the United States, and only by rare chance could passage be secured from Bergen or some southern port direct to New York or Boston. The usual course for those desiring passage to America was to go to some foreign port and there wait for a ship; it was good luck if accommodation were secured immediately and if the expensive waiting did not stretch out two or three weeks. The port most convenient for the Norwegians was Gothenburg in Sweden, from which cargoes of Swedish iron were shipped to America; from that place most of the emigrants before 1840 departed, tho some went by way of Hamburg, Havre, or an English port.

Long after 1850, the immigrants came by sailing vessels because the rates were, on the whole, cheaper than by steamer; those men who had large families were especially urged to take the sailing craft.[55] The days of emigrant agents, through-tickets, and capacious and comparatively comfortable steerage quarters in great ocean liners were far in the future; the usual accommodations were poor and unsanitary; the danger from

---

[54] Langeland, *Nordmændene i Amerika*, 22. He naïvely remarks that the Scandinavians have preferred to follow that other text: "Be fruitful … replenish the earth."

[55] *Billed Magazin*, I, 123-124.

contagious diseases, scurvy, and actual famine were very real, especially if the voyage, long at the best, was prolonged to four and perhaps five months.[56] The cost of passage varied greatly according to accommodations and according to the port of departure. Sometimes the passage charge included food, bedding, and other necessaries, but usually the passengers were required to furnish these. One company of about 85 in 1837 paid $60 for each adult, and half fare for children, from Bergen to New York.[57] In the same year another company of 93 paid $31 for each adult from Stavanger to New York, without board; still another, numbering about 100, paid $33 1-3 for each adult passenger from Drammen in Norway to New York; the Nattestad brothers paid $50 from Gothenburg to Boston.[58] In 1846, a large party went to Havre, and paid $25 for passage to New York.[59] The extreme figures, therefore, seem to be about $30 and $60 for passage between one of the Scandinavian ports and New York or Boston. When the cost of transportation from the Atlantic seaboard to Illinois and Wisconsin is added to these figures, it will be plain that a considerable sum of ready cash, as well as strength and courage, was necessary for undertaking the transplantation of a whole family from a Norwegian valley in the

---

[56] Interview with the late Rev. O. C. Hjort of Chicago, July, 1890, whose party spent five months on the sea.

[57] Langeland, *Nordmændene i Amerika*, 25 – "saavidt nu erindres."

[58] *Billed Magazin*, I, 9, 94.

[59] *Ibid.*, I, 388.

mountains to an Illinois prairie.

CHAPTER IV.
The Rising Stream of Norwegian Immigration

The second period of Norwegian immigration, extending from 1836 to 1850, is marked by the strengthening and deepening of the emigration impulse in Norway and by its spread to new districts, and also by the deflection of the course of the rising stream in the United States. Not merely in the vicinity of Stavanger, from which a second party, made up of 93 persons from Egersund, followed the wake of the first and reached Illinois in 1837, but from Bergen and in the districts near it, the "America fever" was spreading. The letters of Hovland circulated there, and at least three men journeyed to interview Slogvig. Knud Langeland, whose little book on the Northmen in America is frequently quoted in these pages, relates how, as a young man of sixteen, his imagination was fired by reading a small volume written by a German and entitled *Journey in America*, which he discovered in the library of a friend in Bergen in 1829; how he read eagerly for several years everything which he could lay hands on relating to America; and how he gathered all possible information about the emigration from England, during a visit to

that country in 1834 – and then became himself an immigrant.[60]

By 1837 a goodly number were determined to emigrate, and had disposed of their holdings of land. A way opened for them to make the long voyage under especially favorable circumstances. Captain Behrens, owner and commander of the ship *Ægir*, on his return to Bergen in the autumn of 1836, learned that a large party wanted transportation to America. In New York he had seen vessels fitted up for the English and German immigrant traffic; he had learned the requirement, of the laws of the United States on the subject; two German ministers who returned to Europe in his ship, gave him further information. He therefore fitted up his vessel for passengers, and carried out his contract to transport to New York the party which finally numbered 84, being mainly made up of married men each with "numerous family," at least one of which counted eight persons.[61] From New York the company proceeded to Detroit, where they were joined by the two Nattestad brothers from Numedal, and from thence they went by water to Chicago.

Their original intention was to go to the La Salle County settlement, but in Chicago they met some of the Fox River people, Björn Anderson among others, who gave such an unfavorable account of conditions in that colony that the majority determined to seek another location. At the instigation of certain

---

[60] Langeland, *Nordmændene i Amerika*, 20-21. See Cobbett, *The Emigrant's Guide* (London, 1829), a typical English guide book of the period.

[61] Langeland, *Nordmændene i Amerika*, 25 ff.

Americans, presumably land speculators, a prospecting party of four, including Ole Rynning, one of the leading spirits of the company, went into the region directly south of Chicago and finally chose a site on Beaver Creek. Thither about fifty immigrants went, and began the third Norwegian settlement, which proved to be the most unfortunate one in the history of Norwegian immigration. Log huts were built and the winter passed without unusual hardships, tho it was soon evident that a mistake was made in settling so far from neighbors and from a base of supplies at that time of the year when the soil produced nothing. Serious troubles, however, developed with the spring, and grew with the summer. The land which appeared so dry and so well-covered with good grass when it was selected and purchased in August or September, proved to be so swampy that cultivation was impossible before June. Malaria attacked the settlers, and as they were beyond the reach of medical aid, nearly two-thirds of them died before the end of the summer. The remnant of the colony fled as for their lives, regardless of houses and lands, and scarcely one of them remained on the ground by the end of 1838.[62]

One of the victims of these hard experiences was Ole Rynning, who succumbed to fever in the autumn of 1838. Tho in America scarcely a year and a half, he is one of the uniquely important figures in the history of Norwegian immigration.

---

[62] Langeland, *Nordmændene i Amerika*, 30 ff; Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 195 ff.

The son of a curate in Ringsaker in central Norway, and himself dedicated by his parents to the church, he passed the examinations for entrance to the University of Christiania, but turned aside to teaching in a private school near Throndhjem for four years before his emigration.[63] He is invariably spoken of as a man of generous, philanthropic spirit, genuinely devoted to the human needs of his fellow immigrants.

Having learned by personal observation in America the answers to many of the questions which he, as a man of education, had asked himself in Norway, he took advantage of the confinement following the freezing of his feet during a long exploring tour in Illinois, to write a little book of some forty pages, to which he gave the title (in translation): "A true Account of America, for the Instruction and Use of the Peasants and Common people, written by a Norwegian who arrived there in the Month of June, 1837."[64] The manuscript of this first of many guidebooks for Norwegian emigrants was taken back to Norway by Ansten Nattestad and printed in Christiania in 1838.[65] It plays so large a part in a great movement, that a detailed analysis is worth presenting.

The preface, bearing the author's signature and the date,

---

[63] Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 203-205; Langeland, *Nordmændene i Amerika*, 31. Much information regarding Rynning was derived from the Rev. B. J. Muus, of Minnesota, a nephew of Rynning.

[64] Sandfærdig Beretning om Amerika til Veiledning og Hjælp for Bonde og Menigmand, skrevet af en Norsk som kom der i Juni Maaned, 1837.

[65] *Billed Magazin*, I, 94.

"Illinois, February 13, 1838," is translated as follows:

"Dear Countrymen, – Peasants and Artisans! I have now been in America eight months, and in that time I have had an opportunity of finding out much in regard to which I in vain sought information before I left Norway. I then felt how disagreeable it is for those who wish to emigrate to America to be in want of a reliable and tolerably complete account of the country. I also learned how great is the ignorance of the people, and what false and ridiculous reports were accepted as the full truth. In this little book it has, therefore, been my aim to answer every question which I asked myself, and to clear up every point in regard to which I observed that people were ignorant, and to disprove false reports which have come to my ears, partly before I left Norway, and partly after my arrival here."[66]

The body of the book is made up of thirteen chapters devoted to these questions and their answers:

> 1-3. The location of America, the distance from Norway, the nature of the country, and the reason why so many people go there.
>
> 4. "Is it not to be feared that the land will soon be overpopulated? Is it true that the government there is going to prohibit immigration?"
>
> 5-6. What part of the land is settled by Norwegians, and

---

[66] Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 207-208. In making this and the following translations, Mr. Anderson used the copy of Rynning's book belonging to the Rev. B. J. Muus, the only copy known to be in America. This copy is now in the library of the University of Illinois.

how is it reached? What is the price of land, of cattle, of the necessaries of life? How high are wages?

7. "What kind of religion is there in America? Is there any sort of order and government, or can every man do what he pleases?"

8-9. Education, care of the poor, the language spoken in America, and the difficulties of learning it.

10. Is there danger of disease in America? Is there reason to fear wild animals and the Indians?

11. Advice as to the kind of people to emigrate, and warning against unreasonable expectations.

12. "What dangers may be expected on the ocean? Is it true that those who are taken to America are sold as slaves?"

13. Advice as to vessels, routes, seasons, exchange of money, etc.

Rynning assured his readers, in the seventh chapter, that America is not a purely heathen country, but that the Christian religion prevails with liberty of conscience, and that "here as in Norway, there are laws, government, and authority, and that the common man can go where he pleases without passport, and may engage in such occupation as he likes."[67] Then follows this strong, significant paragraph, intelligently describing the slavery system, which undoubtedly had a powerful influence on the future location, and hence on the politics, of the immigrants from Scandinavia:

---

[67] Rynning, *Sandfærdig Beretning*, 23, 24. Translated in Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 214-215.

"In the Southern States these poor people (Negroes) are bought and sold like other property, and are driven to their work with a whip like horses and oxen. If a master whips his slave to death or in his rage shoots him dead, he is not looked upon as a murderer… In Missouri the slave trade is still permitted, but in Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin Territory it is strictly forbidden, and the institution is strictly despised… There will probably soon come a separation between the Northern and Southern States or a bloody conflict."

From the account given thirty years afterwards by Ansten Nattestad, it appears that a chapter on the religious condition of Norway was omitted by the Rev. Mr. Kragh of Eidsvold, who read the proofs, because of its criticisms of the clergy for their intolerance, and for their inactivity in social and educational reforms.[68] This has led some writers like R. B. Anderson to attribute large weight to religious persecution as a cause of emigration. While religious repression was a real grievance and affected many of the early emigrants, the cases where it was the moving or dominant cause of emigration after 1835 are so few as to be almost negligible.[69] At best, it re-enforced and completed a determination based on other motives. For most Norwegian dissenters, the Haugians for example, lack of toleration was rather an annoyance than a distress, save, perhaps, for the more

---

[68] *Billed Magazin*, I, 94.

[69] Letters of R. B. Anderson and J. A. Johnson, *Daily Skandinaven*, Feb. 7, 1896.

persistent and turbulent leaders.[70] It is hardly fair, therefore, to compare them, as a whole, with the Huguenots of France.[71]

In the years immediately following 1838, the "America Book," distributed from Christiania, went on its missionary journeys and reached many parishes where the disaster at Beaver Creek and the untimely death of Ole Rynning had never been heard of. By its compact information and its intelligent advice, it converted many to the new movement. The diary of Ole Nattestad, printed in Drammen in the same year, seems to have exerted very little influence, but the visit of his brother Ansten to his home in Numedal, in east-central Norway, a hitherto unstirred region, awakened keen and active interest in America, and again men travelled as far as 125 English miles to meet one who had returned from the vast land beyond the Atlantic.[72]

The first party from Numedal left Drammen in the spring of 1839, under the leadership of Nattestad, and went directly to New York. It numbered about one hundred able-bodied farmers with their families, some of them being men with considerable capital. From New York they went to Chicago, expecting to join Ole Nattestad at the Fox River. At the latter city they learned that he had gone into Wisconsin after his brother left for Norway in 1838, and that he had there purchased land in the township of Clinton in Rock County, thus being probably

---

[70] Brohough, *Elling Eielsens Liv og Virksomhed*, 10-11, 20-21, 30-36.

[71] Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 50.

[72] *Billed Magazin*, I, 94.

the first Norwegian settler in Wisconsin. Accordingly the larger part of the Numedal party followed him to the newer region, where better land could be had than any remaining in La Salle County, Illinois, at the minimum price, and took up sections near Jefferson Prairie. Thus the current of Scandinavian settlement was deflected from Illinois to Wisconsin, and later comers from Numedal, in 1840 and afterwards, steered straight for southeastern Wisconsin. In 1839 and later other recruits for the growing and prosperous settlement of Norwegians in Rock County and adjoining counties came from Voss and the vicinity of Bergen. Possibly the difference of dialects had something to do with drawing people from the same province or district into one settlement, but in a general way the same reasons and processes operated among the Norwegian emigrants as among those from Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia who settled in various States in sectional groups, sometimes dividing a county by a well-defined line.

Closely connected with this settlement, begun under the leadership of the Nattestad brothers, were other settlements in adjacent townships, – at Rock Prairie or Luther Valley, comprising the present towns of Plymouth, Newark, Avon, and Spring Valley in Rock County, Wisconsin, and Rock Run in Illinois. Through these settlements many new comers filtered and spread out rapidly toward the West and Northwest, reaching in a few years as far as Mineral Point, more than fifty miles from Jefferson Prairie.

Other sections of Norway than those already mentioned began to feel the effects of the emigration bacillus after 1837, and the processes illustrated by the movements from Stavanger, Bergen, and Numedal were repeated – the emigration of two or three, letters sent home, the return of a man here and there, the organization of the party, the long journey, and the selection of the new home. Thelemark, the rugged mountainous district in south central Norway, was in a condition to be strongly moved by stories of freer and larger opportunities. Long before 1837, great tracts of land in Upper Thelemark became the property of two wealthy lumber men, and the tenant-farmers were drawn more and more into work in the lumber mills, to the neglect of farming and grazing. Consequently, when logging was suspended in the hard times, and the wages, already low, were stopped altogether, great distress resulted, and emigration seemed about the only means of escape. "With lack of employment and with impoverishment, debt and discontent appeared as the visible evidences of the bad condition. That was the golden age of the money-lenders and sheriffs. So the America fever raged, and many crossed the ocean in the hope of finding a bit of ground where they could live and enjoy the fruits of their labors without daily anxiety about paydays, rents, and executions."[73]

A company of about forty, representing eleven families from Thelemark, failing to get accommodations with the Nattestad party at Drammen, went on to Skien and thence to Gothenburg,

---

[73] Translated from *Billed Magazin*, I, 18 ff.

where they secured passage in an American vessel loaded with iron, and made the voyage to Boston in two months.[74] Three weeks more were consumed in the circuitous journey to Milwaukee by way of New York, Albany, the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes. Like several other parties of that year they originally aimed at Illinois.[75] But their boat "leaked like a sieve," and the stop at Milwaukee was probably precautionary. Instead of proceeding further, they were persuaded to send a committee, under the guidance of an American, into the present county of Waukesha, where they selected a tract about fourteen miles southwest of Milwaukee, on the shore of Lake Muskego.[76] Here each adult man took up forty acres at the usual minimum price of $1.25 per acre, and so began the Muskego colony proper, the name, Muskego, however, being later applied to the group of settlements in Waukesha County and to several towns in Racine County.[77] Like the colony in Rock County, the Muskego group grew rapidly in spite of malarial troubles, and for ten years it was an objective point for immigrants from Thelemark, and a halting

---

[74] *Ibid.*, 6-7.

[75] A shipping notice in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Aug. 1, 1839 reads: "Passengers, – in the "Venice" from Gothenburg, 67 Norwegians on their way to Illinois."

[76] An oft-repeated story tells how the company was persuaded to remain in Wisconsin by some enterprising Milwaukee men who pointed out to the immigrants a fat, healthy-looking man as a specimen of what Wisconsin would do for a man, and a lean, sickly-looking man as a warning of what the scorching heats and fever of Illinois would quickly do to a man who settled there. See *Billed Magazin*, I, 7.

[77] *Billed Magazin*, I, 10.

place for those bound for the frontier farther west in Wisconsin or in Iowa.

As the emigration movement from Norway increased, the planning of settlements and the organization of parties took on a more definite and business-like air. The process is well illustrated in the case of the town of Norway in Racine County, Wisconsin, which was one of the most successfully managed settlements in the Northwest. In the fall of 1839, two intelligent men of affairs, Sören Bakke, the son of a rich merchant of Drammen, and John Johnson (Johannes Johannesson), came to America on a prospecting tour, for the purpose of finding a place where they might invest money in land as a foundation for a colony, which they may possibly have intended to serve as a new home for a sect of dissenters known as Haugians.[78] After visiting Fox River in Illinois, and various locations in Wisconsin, they found a tract that suited them – good land, clear water, and abundance of game and fish, enough to satisfy the most fastidious. This they purchased, building a cabin on it and awaiting the coming of their friends to whom they sent a favorable report.[79] The party arrived in the autumn of 1840, under the leadership of Even Heg, an innkeeper of Leir, who brought still more money, which was also invested in land. Altogether, the money which Bakke brought with him, or received later, amounted to $6000.[80]

---

[78] *Ibid.*, I, 12.

[79] *Ibid.*, I, 18.

[80] *Ibid.*, I, 12.

It was all used for purchasing land, which was either sold to well-to-do immigrants, or leased to new comers. This business was supplemented by a store kept in the first cabin. Upon the death of Johnson in 1845, Bakke went home and settled upon an estate owned by his father in Leir, one of the first of the very small number of men who have returned to permanent residence in Norway after some years spent in America.[81] Even Heg became the real head of the colony at Norway, Wisconsin, after the departure of Bakke, whose interests he continued to look after, and under his management a steady development followed. This settlement became the Mecca of hundreds of immigrants arriving in Milwaukee in the late forties, and "Heg's barn was for some months every summer crowded with newcomers en route for some place farther west."[82]

Another important and highly prosperous group of settlements, called Koshkonong after the lake and creek of that name, sprang up in 1840 and 1841, in the southwestern corner of Jefferson County, Wisconsin, and the adjacent parts of Dane and Rock Counties. The beginning was made by men who removed thither from the Fox River and Beaver Creek localities after investigating the lands in Wisconsin. In 1840 there were nine entries of land by Norwegians in the present townships of Albion, Christiana, and Deerfield, the usual purchase being eighty acres; the next few years saw the spread of the colony to the townships

---

[81] *Ibid.*; Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 280 ff.

[82] Langeland, *Nordmændene i Amerika*, 44; *Billed Magazin*, I, 13.

of Pleasant Valley and Dunkirk, from the influx of immigrants from Illinois and from Norway.[83] After the stress and hardship of the first pioneer years, the fortunate choice of location in one of the best agricultural sections of Wisconsin told very promptly, and Koshkonong became "the best known, richest, and most interesting Norwegian settlement in America, the destination of thousands of pilgrims from the fatherland since 1840."[84] Many of the farms are still in possession of the families of the original settlers, whose children are prominent in business, professional and political circles.

The movement of the stream of Norwegian immigrants after 1845 was distinctly in a direction westward from the Wisconsin settlements; the land farther out on the prairies was better, tho it did not have the combination of timber and stream or lake which the early settlers insisted on having, often to their detriment, since land chosen with reference to these requirements was apt to be marshy. The fresh arrivals, after a few weeks or months in the friendly and helpful communities of early immigrants, were better prepared by a partial acclimatization, by knowledge of the steps necessary for acquiring citizenship and land-ownership, and by the formation of definite plans of procedure, for the next stage in the western course of their empire. Occasionally

---

[83] Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 326 ff. Anderson quotes in full a letter from the United States Commissioner of Land Office giving date and extent of each entry by Norwegians.

[84] M. W. Odland, *Amerika*, Jan. 15, 1904.

a shrewd farmer of the older companies took advantage of the rise in the value of his farm, sold out, and bought another tract farther out on the frontier, perhaps repeating the process two or three times.[85] John Nelson Luraas, for example, was one of those men who first spent some time in Muskego, then bought land in Norway, Racine County; after improving it for three years, he sold it in 1843 and moved into Dane County.[86] Here he lived for twenty-five years, and then moved into Webster County, Iowa, taking up new land. After a few years he went back to his Dane County property, where he spent another thirteen years; finally, as an aged, retired, wealthy farmer, he died in the village of Stoughton in 1890.[87]

Provision for religious instruction and ministration was one of the early concerns of the Norwegian immigrants, as would be expected from a people essentially religious, who moved by whole families. Nor was there much distinction between the more orthodox and the dissenters. After their magnetic center shifted to the west in 1835 and the settlements and population multiplied, a good deal of lay preaching of one sort and another went on, – Lutheran, Methodist, Haugian, Baptist, Episcopalian, and Mormon. Lay services, in fact, were the rule all along the

---

[85] Langeland, *Nordmændene i Amerika*, 44-45; *Billed Magazin*, I, 13.

[86] It may be well to note that the name of Dane county has no relation to Scandinavian settlement, but was given in honor of Nathan Dane of Massachusetts, author of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.

[87] Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 276.

westward moving frontier, and services conducted by regular clergymen the exception. One of the Norwegians wrote: “We conducted our religious meetings in our own democratic way. We appointed our leader and requested some one to read from a book of sermons… We prayed, exhorted, and sang among ourselves, and even baptised our babies ourselves.”[88]

Cut off by language from much participation in English worship – a man must know an alien tongue long and thoroly to make it serviceable for religious purposes – the men from Numedal, Vos, and Drammen, felt keenly a great need for some one to instruct their children in the Norwegian language and in the Lutheran religion after the Old World customs. In 1843, two hundred men and women in the flourishing group of settlements around Jefferson Prairie, Wisconsin, signed a petition addressed to Bishop Sörenson in Norway asking him to send them a capable and pious young pastor, to whom they promised to give a parsonage, 80 acres of land, $300 in money, and fees for baptisms, marriages, and the like.[89] Tho this petition itself seems not to have been answered, it was not long before a properly ordained clergyman arrived.

Claus Lauritz Clausen, a Danish student of theology seeking employment as a tutor in Norway, was persuaded, probably by the father of Sören Bakke in Drammen, to heed the call

---

[88] A letter of John E. Molee, February, 1895, quoted by Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 320. (See also, *ibid.*, 396-399.)

[89] Anderson, *Norwegian Immigration*, 255.

from America.[90] On his arrival in the West in 1843, he found the need for a pastor and preacher more urgent than for a teacher, and accordingly he sought and received ordination at the hands of a German Lutheran minister, October, 1843.[91] He proceeded to organize, in Heg's barn at Norway, the first congregation of Norwegian Lutherans in the United States, and so began a career of useful ministration which lasted nearly half a century. Not long after his ordination, its validity was called in question by strict Lutherans. The question was finally submitted to the theological faculty of the University of Christiania, which decided that "the circumstance that an ordination is performed by a minister and not by a bishop, cannot in itself destroy the validity of the ministerial ordination."[92] At any rate, Clausen's activity, general helpfulness, staunchness of convictions, and length of service, if not his ordination, make him one of the typical pioneer preachers.[93]

Another clergyman of the same class as Clausen, was Elling Eielsen, a Haugian lay-preacher who went from place to place in the Northwest from 1839 to 1843, holding services with his countrymen. He was ordained in the same month as Clausen, and, like him, in a semi-valid fashion, by a Lutheran clergyman,

---

[90] Nelson, *Scandinavians in the United States*, (2d ed.) 387 ff.

[91] Bothne, *Kort Udsigt*, 835 ff.

[92] Jacobs, *Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 411.

[93] Bothne, *Kort Udsigt*, 835; Jensson, *American Lutheran Biographies*, "Clausen."

not a bishop.[94] Like Clausen, also, his term of labors as a Haugian apostle, passed forty years.[95]

Whatever irregularities in the ordination of Clausen or of Eielsen may have disturbed the consciences of the stricter of the Lutheran sect, nothing of the sort attached to the Rev. Johannes Wilhelm Christian Dietrichson, who arrived in 1844, fresh from the University of Christiania and from the ordaining hands of the Bishop of Christiania. He was a diligent, aggressive, zealous young man of about thirty, sent out as a kind of home missionary in foreign parts at the expense of a wealthy dyer of Christiania. For two years, summer and winter, he went back and forth in southern Wisconsin ministering to the Norwegians of all ages and beliefs, – and all for the stipend of $300 yearly.[96] One of the results of these labors, was a little book, *Reise blandt de norske Emigranter i "de forenede nordamerikanske Fristater,"* in which Dietrichson gives the earliest detailed account of the settlements in Wisconsin and Illinois before 1846. He described the origin, numbers, conditions, and prospects of each community in his

---

[94] Brohough, *Elling Eielsens Liv og Virksomhed*, ch. II, and App.

[95] Nelson, in his *Scandinavians in the United States*, 388, is probably mistaken in stating that Eielsen built the first Norwegian church and organized the first congregation in 1842 at Fox River, confusing the fact that Eielsen had built a log house on his own land, and held religious services in the loft, with the possibility of the formation of a congregation. Eielsen's biographer makes no mention of his organization of a regular congregation. Brohough, *Elling Eielsens Liv og Virksomhed*, 61.

[96] *Minde fra Jubelfesterne paa Koshkonong* (1894), 54 ff; Bothne, *Kort Udsigt*, 839-842.

wide parish. At Fox River, he says he found about 500, who were of all creeds, mostly dissenters, including 150 Mormons.

Three church edifices were erected in 1844-5, and dedicated within a short time of each other. Dietrichson dedicated one at Christiana, Dane County, Wisconsin, December 19, 1844, and another at Pleasant Valley a little further west; Clausen dedicated his church at Muskego on March 13, 1845.[97] All were simple structures, as would be expected; a plain table was the altar, and the baptismal font was hewn out of an oak log. But they served none the less as effective and inspiring centers of the religious life of the settlements. For the Muskego church, Even Heg gave the land, and Mr. Bakke of Drammen, whose protégé Clausen was, gave $400 towards construction. Dietrichson left his two churches in Koshkonong in 1845, and returned to Norway where he remained about a year. Aided by benevolent friends and by the Norwegian government, he came back to his prairie parishes in 1846 for a final stay of four years.[98] But his ways were not altogether ways of pleasantness, nor entirely in the paths of peace. The records of the church, and his own story, show that he had more than one stormy time with his people.[99] He departed for Norway in 1850, and never again was in America.[100]

---

[97] Dietrichson, *Reise blandt de norske Emigranter*, 45 ff; *Minde fra Jubelfesterne paa Koshkonong*.

[98] *Nordlyset*, Sept. 9, 1847.

[99] Dietrichson, *Reise blandt de norske Emigranter*, 57-67. Some of the church records are printed in *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 21, 1895.

[100] The following year he published a second book, *Nogle Ord fra Prædikestolen i*

The preceding account of the beginnings and progress of the earliest Norwegian settlements in Illinois and Wisconsin has been given in some detail, for the reason that the course of these settlements, in a very broad sense, is typical of all the Norwegian colonization in the Northwest, and of the Swedish and Danish as well. In the later chapter on economic conditions, the causes which led these people to settle upon the land rather than in the cities will be discussed at length. Suffice it here to say that the average immigrant brought only a small amount of cash, along with his strong desire for land, and he consequently went where good land was cheap, in order the more speedily to get what he wanted. This meant that he would push out on the newly accessible government land in Iowa, Minnesota, and the Dakotas in turn. So the transformation of the frontier has witnessed the continual repetition of the experiences of the early Norwegian immigrants in Illinois and Wisconsin in the years from 1835 to 1850, as they are described in this and the preceding chapters. At the present time, in the remoter parts of the Dakotas, Montana, Washington, Oregon, and Utah, the same story is being retold in the same terms of patience, hardship, thrift, and final success.

Amerika.

CHAPTER V.
Swedish Immigration Before 1850

When the Swedish emigration of the nineteenth century began, it is doubtful if many persons in Sweden knew of the existence of the descendants of their compatriots of the seventeenth. The last Swedish pastor of Gloria Dei Church in Philadelphia died in 1831, and there is no evidence that any immigrant after 1800 turned his steps toward Philadelphia or the valley of the Delaware expecting to join the third or fourth generation of Swedes there.[101] Before 1840, in New York, Philadelphia, and a few other places, a Swede might now and then be found. One of these adventure-seeking young fellows was Erick Ålund, who reached Philadelphia in 1823; another was O. C. Lange who arrived in Boston in 1824, and by 1838 found himself in Chicago, probably the first of that mighty company of Swedes which has made Chicago the third Swedish city in the world.[102] Olof Gustaf Hedström, who left Sweden in 1825, and his brother Jonas, were influential early arrivals.[103] But the

---

[101] Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History of America*, IV, 488.

[102] Interview with Capt. O. C. Lange in Chicago, March, 1890. He stated that he was the only Swede in Chicago in 1838, but that there were thirty or forty Norwegians "who were doing anything for a living, even begging," – but Capt. Lange was an ardent Swede and despised Norwegians!

[103] Norelius, *Svenskarnes Historia*, 23-26.

number of such men could not have been large, for ignorance as to America was quite as dense in Sweden as in Norway, the name being all but unheard of in parts of the kingdom.[104]

Sixteen years elapsed after the "Sloop Folk" landed in New York, and five years after they located in their second American home, in Illinois, before the Swedish immigration really began. The first party, or regular company, of Swedes, consisting of about twelve families, arrived in 1841 under the leadership of Gustav Unonius, a young man who had been a student at the University of Upsala.[105] It was made up of the "better folk", and included some, like Baron Thott, who were entitled to be called "Herr."[106] The immigration does not appear to have been induced by any religious persecution or discontent, but was purely a business venture of a somewhat idealistic sort, into which the immigrants put their all, in the hope that they could get a more satisfactory return than they could from a like investment in Sweden.

From New York the party went by the water route to Milwaukee, following in the wake of parties of Norwegians. There they met Captain Lange, who seems to have persuaded

---

[104] Mikkelsen, *The Bishop Hill Colony*, 26.

[105] Norelius, *Svenskarnes Historia*, 2 ff. The early history of the Swedish immigration is treated in a much more complete and scholarly fashion than is the Norwegian, in the works of Unonius, Norelius, and Peterson and Johnson. For this reason, and because of the similarity of the early Swedish and Norwegian movements, the Swedish settlements are not followed up in this study with the same detail as the Norwegian.

[106] Unonius, *Minnen*, I, 5 ff; *History of Waukesha County, Wis.*, 748.

them to select a location near Pine Lake – a name that would certainly attract a Swede – in the neighborhood of the present town of Nashotah, about thirty miles west of Milwaukee. Here they were later joined by a variegated assortment of characters attracted by letters which Unonius wrote to newspapers in Sweden, – noblemen, ex-army officers, merchants, and adventurers,[107] so that the colony took on almost as motley an air as that at Jamestown in the first years after 1607. While they hardly could have succeeded under more favorable circumstances, they were particularly unfitted by their previous manner of living to become farmers or to undergo the deprivations and hardships of pioneering. The winter of 1841-2 was severe, and their poorly-built houses gave inadequate protection against the cold of January and February in Wisconsin; their land was badly tilled, tho they labored earnestly; and their first crop fell short of their necessities. Their hope of leading an Arcadian life in America was rudely shattered. Captain von Schneidau, late of the staff of King Oscar, was a farm laborer, and Baron Thott became a cook for one of the settlers in order to get a bare living.[108] Sickness, misfortune, want of labor, and lack of money led to almost incredible suffering at the first, and some of the settlers, like Unonius and von Schneidau, went to Chicago, where the former became pastor of

---

[107] "and a large proportion of criminals," Nelson, *Scandinavians in the United States*, II, 117.

[108] *History of Waukesha County, Wisconsin*, 749.

a Swedish congregation, and the latter prospered as "the most skilful daguerreo-typist, probably, in the whole state."[109]

Frederika Bremer, the famous Swedish traveller, visited both the Norwegian and the Swedish settlements in Wisconsin in 1850, and has left a very graphic and sympathetic account of the Pine Lake colony where she spent a few days.[110] She found about a half dozen families of Swedes. "Nearly all live in log-houses, and seem to be in somewhat low circumstances. The most prosperous seemed to be that of the smith; he, I fancy, had been a smith in Sweden …; he was a really good fellow, and had a nice young Norwegian for his wife; also a Mr. Bergman who had been a gentleman in Sweden, but who was here a clever, hard-working peasant farmer."[111] At one of the houses she met twenty-one Swedish settlers. The failure of the colony, to Miss Bremer's mind, was not altogether due to circumstances; the settlers at first "had taken with them the Swedish inclination for hospitality and a merry life, without sufficiently considering how long it could last. Each family built for itself a necessary abode, and then invited their neighbors to a feast. They had Christmas festivities

---

[109] Bremer, *Homes of the New World*, II, 214-217. Miss Bremer relates how Mrs. von Schneidau "had seen her first-born little one frozen to death in its bed," and how Mrs. Unonius "that gay, high-spirited girl, of whom I heard when she was married at Upsala to accompany her husband to the New World … had laid four children to rest in foreign soil."

[110] *Ibid.*, 225-235.

[111] *Ibid.*, 225; Unonius, *Minnen*, II, 6 ff.

and Midsummer dances."[112]

Notwithstanding the hard life of the first years at Pine Lake, the letters from well-educated and well-known men like Unonius, especially those published in the Swedish newspapers, helped to stimulate a desire for emigration in Sweden. A company of fifty, from Haurida in Smaaland, left in the autumn of 1844, part of them going to Wisconsin, and at least one family going to Brockton, Massachusetts, and beginning the considerable Swedish settlement in that city.[113] In the following year, five families were influenced by letters from a Pine Lake settler, to leave their homes in Östergötland, and to set out for Wisconsin. At New York, however, they were persuaded, probably by Pehr Dahlberg, to go to Iowa, then just admitted to the Union, where land was supposed to be better than at Pine Lake, and could be had at the same price. The route followed was an unusual one for Scandinavian immigrants, – from New York to Pittsburg, down the Ohio River, and up the Mississippi. The location finally chosen was in Jefferson County, Iowa, about forty-two miles west of Burlington; and the settlement was christened New Sweden. To it many immigrants from the parishes of Östergötland found their way in later years. The second rural settlement of the Swedes thus established was, quite in contrast to the first one, distinctly successful from the start.[114]

---

[112] Bremer, *Homes of the New World*, II, 214.

[113] Norelius, *Svenskarnes Historia*, 27.

[114] G. T. Flom, "Early Swedish Immigration to Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and*

The first Swedish settlements in Illinois, may be traced to the efforts of the brothers Hedström already mentioned. Olof visited his old home in 1833, after an absence of eight years, and on his return to New York he was accompanied by his brother Jonas.[115] These two men influenced the course which Swedish immigrants were to take in America down to 1854, in much the same way as the Nattestad brothers had earlier affected the Norwegians. After several years, spent presumably in New York, Jonas moved into Illinois and settled in the township of Victoria, in Knox County.[116] Olof Hedström was converted to Methodism in America, and became a zealous minister of that church; in the history of Methodism in New York City and in the chronicles of Scandinavian immigration, his is a unique figure. The needs of the multiplying hosts of immigrants of all sorts, who were flocking to New York, were thoroughly understood by the Methodist authorities of that city, and Hedström was put in charge of the North River Mission for Seamen. His "Bethel Ship" work began about 1845, a time when there was great need for a helping hand to be extended to the Scandinavians, among other immigrants, for whom agents, "runners," and "sharks" were lying in wait. The Rev. E. Norelius, the cultivated and scholarly pastor and historian, who had personal experience of the kindly offices of Hedström, declares that the missionary was a father to

---

Politics, III, 601 ff. (Oct., 1905); Norelius, *Svenskarnes Historia*, 27.

[115] Norelius, *Svenskarnes Historia*, 21.

[116] *Ibid.*, 24-26; Johnson and Peterson, *Svenskarne i Illinois*, 286.

the Scandinavian people who came to America by way of New York.[117]

With Olof Hedström offering friendly greeting, help, and advice in New York, and working in connection with his brother Jonas in Illinois, no prophetic instinct was needed to foretell the goal which would be ultimately sought by those who came under the benevolent ministrations of this Swedish Methodist preacher. The path to Illinois became a highway for multitudes of Swedes, and that State was to the Swedish immigration what Wisconsin was to the Norwegian.

Swedish settlement on a large scale began in 1846, with the founding at Bishop Hill, in Henry County, Illinois, of the famous Jansonist colony, whose history is exceedingly interesting and, at times, highly pathetic. Not only were there many hundreds of Swedes and some Norwegians grouped together in a single county, but the colony was also an experiment in communism, based on peculiar religious tenets.[118]

The Jansonist movement in Sweden, which must not be confused with the Jansenist school or system of doctrine of another time and place in Western Europe, began about 1842 in Helsingland, in the prosperous agricultural province of

---

[117] Norelius, *Svenskarnes Historia*, 21, 23-26.

[118] The history of this Swedish settlement, with its numerous peculiarities, its prosperity and its misfortunes, has been so often written up with considerable detail, that only the outlines of it are given here. See Bibliography.

Norrland.[119] For fifteen years there had been an undercurrent of dissent in the Established Church in that province, led by Jonas Olson, who called his followers "Devotionalists." The agitation was carried on primarily against the general ignorance of the people and the sloth of the clergy, but not until Eric Janson appeared on the scene did any organization of the dissenters take definite form. When he moved from Wermland to Helsingland in 1844 and published the high claim that he represented the second coming of Christ and was sent to restore the purity and glory of Christianity, he was received with great enthusiasm by the restless peasants, and accepted as a divinely appointed leader who should gather the righteous into a new theocratic community.[120]

The progress of the dissenting sect was so rapid that the Established Church, backed by the civil authorities, took stern measures to suppress the heresy. It must be confessed that the dissenters continued to show a fanatical spirit, and gave the ecclesiastical officers special cause for alarm. In June, 1844, for example, the Jansonists made an immense bonfire near Tranberg, and burned as useless and dangerous, all the religious books which they could lay their hands on, with the exception of the Bibles, hymn-books, and catechisms. As if one offense

---

[119] Mikkelsen, *The Bishop Hill Colony*, 19 ff.

[120] *Ibid.*, 25. "The glory of the work which is to be accomplished by Eric Janson, standing in Christ's stead, shall far exceed that of the work accomplished by Jesus and his Apostles," – quoted in translation by Mikkelsen from *Cateches, of Eric Janson* (Söderhamn, 1846), 80.

of this kind were not enough to shock the pious Lutherans and everywhere stir up the zeal of the Lutheran clergy, a second burning of books followed in October, in which the Bible alone was spared.[121]

Janson was repeatedly arrested and imprisoned; his followers were subjected to the same treatment; and finally, a price was put upon the head of the pestilent arch-heretic. It was these persecutions, supplemented by letters from a Swedish immigrant in America, which turned the thoughts of the Jansonists towards the United States. So it happened that when Janson was rescued by his friends from the crown officer who had him in custody, he was spirited off over the mountains to Norway, and thence to Copenhagen, where he embarked for America. In New York he met Olof Olson, the "advance agent," who was sent out by the new sect in 1845 to spy out the better country where there was no established church, no persecution for conscience's sake, and no aristocracy.[122] Olson met Olof Hedström on landing in New York, and by him was directed to his brother Jonas in Illinois, who gave the new-comer a hospitable reception, and assistance in a prospecting tour of Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Olson decided on Illinois as the State in which to plant the proposed colony. On the arrival of Eric Janson in 1846, the exact site in Henry County was selected, and the name Bishop Hill given it

---

[121] Mikkelsen, *The Bishop Hill Colony*, 22; Norelius, *Svenskarnes Historia*, 63.

[122] Mikkelsen, *The Bishop Hill Colony*, 24.

after Biskopskulla, Janson's birthplace in Sweden.[123]

Janson appointed leaders for the would-be emigrants, – captains of tens and of hundreds – before he left Sweden, and under their guidance several parties made their way to Henry County in 1846, usually going by way of New York, the Erie Canal, and the Great Lakes. Nearly 1100 persons were ready to emigrate, but, like the early Norwegians, they experienced great difficulty in securing passage, being compelled to go in companies of fifty or one hundred in freight vessels, usually loaded with iron.[124] The greater number sailed from Gefle, though some went from Gothenburg and some from Stockholm.[125]

The greater part of these emigrating Jansonists were poor peasants, unable from their own means to bear for themselves and their families the great expense of the long journey from Helsingland to Illinois. In addition to other difficulties some of them had to purchase release from military service. It was to solve these problems of poverty and expense, that Janson followed the example of other leaders of religious sects, even of the early Christian leaders, and instituted community of goods for the whole sect. The pretext seems to have been religious, but from this distance it is clear that the motive of the leader was essentially economic and philanthropic. Nothing could

---

[123] Johnson and Peterson, *Svenskarne i Illinois*, 26; *History of Henry County, Illinois*.

[124] Swainson in *Scandinavia*, Jan., 1885.

[125] Mikkelsen, *The Bishop Hill Colony*, 28.

better attest the tremendous earnestness of these uneducated enthusiasts than their implicit obedience to the commands of Eric Janson, for they gave all they had into his care and discretion – their property, their families, and themselves. The amounts contributed to the common treasury after the sale of individual property varied greatly, of course. Some turned in almost nothing, while others gave sums reaching as high as 24,000 kroner, or about $6,500.[126]

The methods and practices of the sect are revealed, in unsympathetic and perhaps exaggerated fashion, in a printed letter, dated at New York, May 23, 1847, written by one who found himself unequal to the high demands of the new faith and its self-appointed apostle.[127] This backslider, who emigrated with the rest, tells a story that sounds strangely like accounts of the action of more recent sects and their "divinely ordained" prophets and priestesses. Janson and all his works are denounced in very bitter terms. After a five-months voyage not more than fifty out of three hundred, says the writer of the letter, were well, and many were suffering from scurvy; but Janson's "prophets" came aboard and "tried to work miracles and heal the sick," even damning those who did not believe they were well when they were raised up. He further says that the Jansonists were warned

---

[126] Johnson and Peterson, *Svenskarne i Illinois*, 28.

[127] This account is contained in a small pamphlet, signed O. S., which was unearthed in the Royal Library in Stockholm while the author was searching there in 1890 for material on Swedish emigration.

in Illinois to use medicine or the government would take a hand in their affairs. The letter closes with a statement that more than a hundred had already left the society.

The colony had a homestead at the outset, for Janson and his co-workers purchased for $2000 a tract of 750 acres, part of which was under cultivation. By the end of 1846, new recruits brought the number in the settlement up to about 400 souls, who were accommodated in log-houses, sod-houses, dug-outs, and tents. A church was improvised out of logs and canvas, and services were held daily at half past five in the morning and in the evening. In spite of the community of goods, the first year with its crowding brought much suffering; the funds of the society were depleted by the expenses of the great journey for so many people, and by the expenditures for land.

With the coming of spring in 1847, the settlement became a hive of industry. Adobe bricks were made, a new saw-mill was erected, better houses were built, and more land was bought to accommodate the new arrivals. By 1850 the community owned fourteen hundred acres of land, nearly free from debt. The religious or economic attractiveness of the colony is evidenced by the fact that its population in 1851 reached the considerable figure of about eleven hundred,[128] nearly one-third of the total population of Henry County, notwithstanding a schism in 1848

---

[128] Swainson puts the number of seceders at 250, and asserts that they were drawn off by Jonas Hedström, the Methodist. *Scandinavia*, Jan. 1885. Mikkelsen, *The Bishop Hill Colony*, 33, 35, 37.

whose centrifugal force drove upwards of 200 from the fold, and notwithstanding the epidemic of cholera in 1849 which claimed 150 victims. Among these hundreds were representatives of almost every province in Sweden.

The communistic principle worked well, at least in the first years, in spite of the severity of the religious discipline. The land was thoroughly cultivated. The growing of flax became a prominent factor in the prosperity of the colony, and from this crop were made linen and carpeting which found a ready market, the product of the looms reaching 30,579 yards in 1851.[129]

The death of Eric Janson by the hands of a Swedish adventurer, John Root (or Rooth), with whom he had a quarrel of long standing, removed the prophet and builder of this New Jerusalem, but did not seriously interrupt its development. In fact it might be said to have been a benefit to the colony, for Janson was not a careful and skilful man of business, and he had involved the community in debt. To relieve this pressure of obligation, Jonas Olson, Janson's right-hand man, was sent out with eight others, in March, 1851, to seek a fortune in the California gold fields.[130]

The period of which this chapter treats ends with 1850; but inasmuch as that year marks no break in the history of Bishop Hill, it will be well here to finish the sketch of the development of that colony. On learning of the death of Janson, Olson returned

---

[129] Johnson and Peterson, *Svenskarne i Illinois*, 335.

[130] *Ibid.*, 39.

at once from California and became the head of the colony after February, 1851. Improvements immediately followed; the government, which had been autocratic or theoretically theocratic, became more and more democratic under Olson. Finally, as a completion of this broadening evolution, an act of the Illinois legislature of 1853 incorporated the Bishop Hill Colony, and vested the government in a board of seven trustees who were to hold for life or during good behavior, their successors to be elected by the community.[131]

The trustees were from the first afflicted with a speculative mania, and invested in all sorts of enterprises – in grain, in lumber, in Galva town lots, in railroad and bank stock, and in a porkpacking establishment. Disaster after disaster followed between 1854 and 1857, when a general panic prostrated the industries of the country. The climax of the reckless mismanagement of the Colony came in 1860, and the corporation went into the hands of a receiver, only to get deeper and deeper into financial and legal troubles. Individualization of property took place in 1861, when $592,798 was distributed among 415 shareholders, and other property to the value of $248,861 was set aside to pay an indebtedness of about $118,000.[132] The last traces of communism were gone, and with the disappearance of communism went also the old religious

---

[131] Act of January 17, 1853. The Charter and Bylaws are reprinted in Mikkelsen, *The Bishop Hill Colony*, 73 ff. (App.).

[132] Johnson and Peterson, *Svenskarne i Illinois*, 44 ff.

tenets peculiar to the faith. The majority of the Jansonists joined the Methodist communion; even Jonas Olson deserted and became "an independent Second [Seventh?] Day Adventist."[133]

Difficulties continued, however, for Olof Johnson, the chief offending trustee, secured his appointment as one of the receivers. Assessment followed assessment, and when the totals were footed up the chicanery of trustees and receivers was made clear: to pay an original debt of $118,403, these ill-fated people of the Bishop Hill Colony actually expended in cash $413,124, and in property $259,786, or an aggregate of $672,910.[134] Of course a lawsuit was begun, and the "Colony Case" dragged along in the courts for twelve years, to be finally settled by compromise in 1879, nine years after the death of Olof Johnson.[135]

Besides the numerous companies which went to Bishop Hill, many others between 1846 and 1850 sought different localities in the United States.[136] Some remained in Chicago; some built homes in Andover, Illinois; others began the large Swedish settlement in Jamestown, New York; while still others were persuaded to go to Texas, thus beginning the only considerable permanent settlement of Scandinavians in the Southern States before 1880, with the exception of settlements in Missouri.

---

[133] Mikkelsen, *The Bishop Hill Colony*, 71.

[134] Johnson and Peterson, *Svenskarne i Illinois*, 49-52.

[135] The special master in chancery found in 1868 that Olof Johnson was indebted to the Colony in the sum of $109,613.29. Mikkelsen, *The Bishop Hill Colony*, 68.

[136] Norelius, *Svenskarnes Historia*, 30-38.

During these years, knowledge of the prosperous condition of the immigrants was spreading, in the usual fashion, into every province of Sweden; Småland, Helsingland, Dalarne, and Östergötland, were especially affected. Not merely were Jansonists and dissenters moved to emigrate, but men of the Established Church as well; a Jansonist's word in matters of faith, Scriptural interpretation, and religious practice was worse than worthless to staunch Lutherans, but there was no reason to doubt the accuracy of his statements regarding land, wages, prices, and opportunities in Illinois or Iowa. Even Lutheran clergymen began to lead little companies of their adherents to the "States," and no one considered it a mortal sin or eternal danger to follow in the footsteps of worldly-wise heretics.[137]

[137] Norelius, *Svenskarnes Historia*, 34.

CHAPTER VI.
The Danish Immigration

The Danish immigration began much later than the Norwegian and Swedish, and its proportions were inconsiderable until after the Civil War. Not until 1869 did the annual influx of Danes reach 2,000. Tho the population of Denmark was and is somewhat greater than Norway's, yet the Danish immigration has never in any one year equalled the Norwegian, and in but seven years has it been more than one-half. As against Norway's total of nearly 600,000 from 1820 to 1905, Denmark's is only about 225,000.[138] In calculating the immigration, however, a large allowance must be made. Since the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein were acquired by Prussia in 1864 and 1866, their emigrants have of course been recorded as German. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the movement from Denmark has lacked momentum; its proportions are relatively small; and the influence of the Danes in the United States is much less important than that of either of the other Scandinavian nationalities.

---

[138] See the tables in Appendix.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, купив полную легальную версию на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.