

**AN AMERICAN IN THE
MAKING: THE LIFE STORY
OF AN IMMIGRANT**

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An American in the making: the life story of an immigrant by M. E. Ravage

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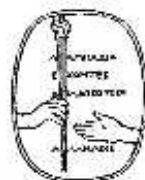
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*The Life Story of
an Immigrant*
by M. E. RAVAGE ✓



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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
TO MY WOMEN-FOLKS
JEANNE AND SUZANNE

INTRODUCTION

WHEN I hear all around me the foolish prattle about the new immigration—"the scum of Europe," as it is called—that is invading and making itself master of this country, I cannot help saying to myself that Americans have forgotten America. The native, I must conclude, has, by long familiarity with the rich blessings of his own land, grown forgetful of his high privileges and ceased to grasp the lofty message which America wafts across the seas to all the oppressed of mankind. What, I wonder, do they know of America, who know only America?

The more I think upon the subject the more I become persuaded that the relation of the teacher and the taught as between those who were born and those who came here must be reversed. It is the free American who needs to be instructed by the benighted races in the uplifting word that America speaks to all the world. Only from the humble immigrant, it appears to me, can he learn just what America stands for in the family of nations. The alien must know this, for he alone seems ready to pay the heavy price for his share of America. He, unlike the older inhabitant, does not come into its

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inheritance by the accident of birth. Before he can become an American he must first be an immigrant. More than that, back of immigration lies emigration. And to him alone is it given to know the bitter sacrifice and the deep upheaval of the soul that are implied in those two words.

The average American, when he thinks of immigrants at all, thinks, I am afraid, of something rather comical. He thinks of bundles—funny, picturesque bundles of every shape and size and color. The alien himself, in his incredible garb, as he walks off the gang-plank, appears like some sort of an odd, moving bundle. And always he carries more bundles. Later on, in his peculiar, transplanted life, he sells nondescript merchandise in fantastic vehicles, does violence to the American's language, and sits down on the curb to eat fragrant cheese and unimaginable sausages. He is, for certain, a character fit for a farce.

So, I think, you see him, you fortunate ones who have never had to come to America. I am afraid that the pathos and the romance of the story are quite lost on you. Yet both are there as surely as the comedy. No doubt, when you go slumming, you reflect sympathetically on the drudgery and the misery of the immigrant's life. But poverty and hard toil are not tragic things. They indeed are part of the comedy. Tragedy lies seldom on the surface. If you would get a glimpse of the pathos and the romance of readjustment you must try to put yourself in the alien's place. And that