Auburn, Calif.,
July 13th, 21;

Dear Miss Tarbell:

How can I thank you for your lovely letter of July 5th. I am so happy in the thought that you liked "Stash." Nothing could delight me more than winning the favor of Miss Tarbell! I asked Doran to send you a copy and sometime I hope to write in it "To my dear friend--" and to be meeting you face to and face and talking like old friends. Preferably on that Connecticutt farm of yours.

I never feel sure that Ibhave spelled that state right. I have an old Hoosier schoolmaster friend living across the street and he always says "Massatussetts." Howells has an old English rustic call it "Massatusdey." This Hoosier friend says "dwaddle" to rhyme with saddle, instead of dawdle. He always says "statute quo" and speaking of some Utah Indians once he said: "There they sit--as immobile as statutes." In spite of these queer little quirks he is a fine teacher, and all the quainter and more interesting for his edcentricities. This is a little mountain county seat and characters thrive innits atmosphere.

Yes, I knew the sort of "Stash" when I was a boy in Michigan. Detroit for nine years and other parts of Michigan for four and summers in northern Illinois and Indiana gave me a chance to get fully acquainted with those fellows and thosexdear impulsive people when I was full of zest as they. I had a baseball team and half of the fellows were Polish boys. Then I bumped into a bad accident in making a fallaway slide to first and in the consequent layoff and long illness I learned how good and friendly and loyal they could be. I began to think things out and look into the depths of things, at least to some extent, and gradually there seemed to reveal itself to me a great drama going on in that Great Lakes country I knew so well. Into this intrinsically American country of the Old Northwest were flowing multi-colored streams of new folk, altering and emending, darkening here--brightening there--confusing somehere else--the native pattern. I read foreign colony stories to get an interpretation of it, and they did not satisfy me. They went into the immigrant's point of view and described his little transported unit. I wanted a big, big canvas of our America--taking in these new elements casually, hardly knowing what was happening to it, gradually becoming foreign and thinking things from the foreign point of view, changing like a big changing growing boy, wondering sometimes what he is, and gradually getting the hang of himself and realizing that he is no longer what he once thought he was--arrived now at a new estate. And that's where America has arrived--and doesn't know it. Wexspeak of Americanism--but how many are there of us old-stock Americans with self conscious ideas about what we are. Just a handful. We are the reading and talking America, so we think we are most of it.

Detroit, our fourth largest city, is 70 per cent foreign born or born of foreign parents. The other thirty per cent is probably rather dubious from a New England point of view. Well, then, even though that seventy per cent doesn't write about itself it's there and it's the new America--our America "as is", as the naval auctioneers say. Evident right there tha t it isn't a matter of foreign colonies spotted here and there. The bulk of that big city is what we used to think of as alien, and our other cities are in a good deal the same fix.

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Well, then, why not quit the missionary point of view of the foreign colony story and talk about us just as we are--largely foreign yet American of the new America. I wanted to present my hero in such a way that he would seem like the incarnation of the youth of this new America, and leave the reader with the feeling that he was more vivid and real and just as much representative American as Scotty McCandlish or Pentree or any of the rest of the American layout. I wanted him to symbolize this new America where the haphazard experiment is working out fairly well.

And I wanted to present the tragic failure of Americanization in his brother Varsh, who gets caught in our wretched machinery and jelly well broken. A real touch of the conscious America that is capable of helping transformed Stash. But Varsh was onbthe outside, nonone gave him a hand-up.

Of course I pictured the boys I knew. Stash was no particular one boy; although the minute I've said that I feel that it isn't quite the fact. But anyway, he was many boys that I know, just as was Varsh.

I got the notion somewhere that fiction ought not to present cures for problems. Its province was to interest and arouse sympathy. Interest always is the key to sympathy. The foreign horde looks gray and shabby to the man in the street. Let two or three of these aliens emerge and fly their true colors and the man in the street pricks up his attention and gets interested--and before he knows it his sympathy has been enlisted. Every Spanish girl that emerges on a new scene wears an aura of interest that has been given her by "Carmen." Thanks to Prosper Merimee and Bizet she has less o f a handicap to carry, handicap of dullness and grayness and woppishness, than girls of other nations have. A Spanish girl! Ah!--Carmen--red boleros--tamborines!--music! Thanks to two great Frenchmen she is a little less the wop--a little less the spiggoty than she would have been. Interest has been won for her, interest that is the key to sympathy.

So I wanted people to see that these foreignors were as real as their neighbors; were theirneighbors--or might be when the Pentrees had to leave their old lavender house. And I wanted people to be interested in them and in the new character fibres, twilled of colors native to strange lands past many seas and rivers of startling nomenclature. And I wanted to show that though they brought tragedy and ruin they also brought beauty and thrill into our American scene. And maybe a feeling of our responsibility to help it not to be tragedy.

You know Wells says that the mental turmoil caused by indigestion leads to rare literary expression. Perhaps we should have been too blandly eupeptic if it hadn't been for the indigestion wrought by th ese foreign masses. In any case, here they are. They are us. And it's all fascinating.

I certainly treasure that note from you. I wish you were to be out in California this year. I'd so enjoy a visit from you. My chances of going East are slim. I'm going to try next summer. Meantime there's pleasure in hoping and dreaming.

Sincerely your friend,

Harold Waldo

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