

RACE SUICIDE IN THE UNITED STATES

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RACE suicide is the sensational battle-cry coined by Theodore Roosevelt for his campaign against one of the many remarkable phenomena of the social life of the new world. As is the case with all great movements affecting the life of the people, race suicide made its appearance gently and almost imperceptibly upon the stage of history. A long time elapsed before it was recognised that we were face to face with a momentous and novel revolutionary phenomenon, the seed of a world-embracing transformation. Even to-day, outside the United States, little attention has been paid to the matter. And yet the phenomenon is one of such far-reaching significance that many things about which a great deal of noise is made are but trivial in comparison. Would it not be a fact of enormous import if the dominant race of immigrants to North America, before which the Indian aborigines faded away into nothingness, were in its turn to vanish before the flood of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe? Those even who consider themselves superior to all race prejudice, cannot regard the threatened disappearance of the Anglo-American stock as without bearing on the history of the new world. Who can say to-day whether the immigration of Poles, Czechs, Rus-

sians, Slovaks, Slovenes, Finns, Greeks, Italians, and Hungarians, may not threaten Anglo-American civilisation, just as in former times the immigration of Germanic tribes into Italy shook Roman civilisation to its foundations? Even if we admit that the degree of civilisation of a nation is a matter of far greater importance than its racial affinities, and that nations belonging to the same stage of civilisation, though separated by profound racial differences, stand nearer to one another than do nations which, while presenting identical ethnic characters, differ widely in civilisation—none the less, we must not underestimate the historical significance of Anglo-American race suicide, for the new race, compounded of Slav, Magyar, and Romance racial elements, which is tending to replace the Anglo-American, exhibits notable differences from the latter in respect to civilisation.

The question of race suicide in the United States is closely interconnected with other racial problems. There is no country in the world in which these problems are so urgent as in the land of the star-spangled banner. All observers agree that in America social contrasts are far less in evidence than racial contrasts. In the transatlantic democracy we encounter racial contrasts at every turn. Those who have read descriptions of the Italian quarter of New York, where the side streets recall Naples and the maffia reminds us of Sicily; those familiar with the descriptions of the New York ghetto, where the Jewry of eastern Europe is reassembled in all its grinding poverty; those who have been influenced by the accounts of every visitor to the exotic Chinatown of San Francisco—will admit that there is no room for doubt regarding the im-

portance of racial problems in American life. The question of race suicide must be discussed in connection with the racial problem. A superficial view of racial contrasts in the new world may readily induce the impression that the doctrine of historical materialism (the doctrine that all recorded history is the history of class struggles) does not apply to America, inasmuch as there racial contrasts appear far more than class contrasts to determine the course of historical evolution. But a closer examination shows that the struggle of the white race against the Mongolian and the African is unquestionably, to this extent, a class struggle, namely, that the white protagonists in the struggle constitute a single social class, the white proletariat, whose movement against the yellow and the black workers is, indeed, notably differentiated from the social struggles of the European working classes by the fact that in the former case the ethical ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity of all mankind play no part. When American capital drew across the Pacific the cheap labour of the yellow races, the white proletariat immediately armed for defence. Denis Kearney preached open violence, and the white workers killed some of their yellow competitors. That which the workmen of California had begun in this way was continued by the labour organisations of other states by means of legislative action. A systematic agitation was pursued to expel all the yellow workers and to forbid their further immigration. In the year 1885, the class struggle of the white proletariat against the Mongolian workers came to an end with the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act, whereby the immigration of Chinese workers was prohibited. It is true

that the law is not strictly enforced except in the case of women, for American capital cannot get on without yellow workmen for certain unhealthy and dirty occupations which the white workers refuse to undertake. The strict exclusion of women of the yellow races limits the reproduction of these races on American soil, and this is a very important consideration from the racial standpoint. Thus for the avoidance of the "yellow peril," transatlantic democracy has availed itself of a method which was not unknown to classical communities. These latter, for the most part, excluded their slaves from reproduction by means of forcible segregation of the sexes. Infertility cuts the vital thread of a race no less surely than suicide closes the life history of the individual. But we must not forget that the infertility of the yellow races on American soil is involuntary, being imposed by the dominant whites. Superficial observers have dilated freely on the indescribable viciousness of the yellow population of the States. Even to-day, in popular agitation against the Chinese, an accusation of unnatural vice plays no small part, the accusers conveniently ignoring that this vice is the direct and inevitable outcome of the exclusion of Chinese women. When the possibility of natural sexual relationships is left open to the Chinese, the practice of homosexuality is notably curtailed, and the same is true of opium smoking. Neither of these indulgences can justly be regarded as racial characteristics of Mongolians, and therefore as stigmata of inferiority.

Putting on one side the Mongolian workers in the United States, living, as has been shown, in unnatural conditions forced on them by others, we find on the lowest rungs of

the social ladder, segregated from all other classes of the community, negroes and mulattoes, "coloured folk," contempt for whom is displayed by the genuine American at every possible opportunity. Since the despised "nigger" engages in only the lowest kinds of occupation, European travellers likewise incline to regard him as an inferior being. "In the four decades of freedom that he has now enjoyed," writes von Polenz, "the negro has proved that, notwithstanding the possession of a number of excellent and engaging qualities, he is and must remain a subordinate type."¹ We need not rush to the opposite extreme, and proclaim the complete intellectual and moral equality of negroes and mulattoes with the Anglo-American race. For example, we may point out the remarkable fact that nowhere, when negroes are in competition with a white working class, do we find the former entering any skilled occupations. But writers well acquainted with the lower strata of American life are far from attributing it to the "subordinate type" of the coloured population that skilled avocations in the States are pursued almost exclusively by whites. In truth it is the white workers who rigidly bar negroes and mulattoes from all attempts to rise in the social scale, by refusing to work at the same machine or in the same factory with coloured operatives. White men in America make no distinction between full-blooded negroes and coloured persons of any degree. Whoever has a single drop of black blood in his veins is a "nigger." Negro characteristics are unfailingly detected in hair, ears, finger-nails, etc.; and the "yellow nigger" is treated with no less contempt than the "black

¹ Von Polenz, *Das Land der Zukunft*, Berlin, 1903, p. 148.

nigger.” Consequently the man of colour, however accomplished, is compelled to pursue some unskilled occupation, and nothing but the lowest grades of manual labour are open to him. In a shop he may become errand-man, but not salesman; in a merchant’s office, he may be porter or floor scrubber, but not clerk or accountant; on the railway, he may be baggage porter, but not conductor; in the building trade, he may be hodcarrier or other kind of unskilled labourer, but not stonemason, bricklayer, or carpenter and joiner. Similar restrictions operate against women of colour, to whom positions as saleswomen or typists in white employ are inaccessible. The view put forward by many who have described American life, that negroes are fit only for employment as waiters, carmen, unskilled labourers, or domestic servants, is untenable. If negroes are so rarely found in skilled avocations, or in occupations which might give them a higher social position, this is not due to any intellectual or moral inferiority, but simply to the strong hand of the white proletariat. The unceasing class struggle, sometimes overt, sometimes concealed, carried on by white trade unionists against coloured workers, makes it absolutely impossible for negroes to rise in the social scale. In the southern states, where the coloured elements are especially numerous, this struggle assumes its most brutal form. Not only has the white population of the south deprived negroes of all political rights, but members of the coloured race have been forced to accept a position of social inferiority which is tantamount to the dominion of a caste system hardly less rigid than that of Hindustan. Negroes are forbidden to enter the same railway carriage with whites, or the

same compartments in public tram-cars. No negro is ever addressed by a white with the courtesy title of Mr., Mrs., or Miss. No person of colour is admitted to a theatre, a concert hall, or even a church, frequented by whites. At every turn it is made unmistakably clear to the negro that he belongs to an inferior and subject race, that he is a member of a pariah caste, that the dominant whites demand obedience and abject subordination.

Twenty years ago, Friedrich Ratzel expressed the fear that the African race in America, being more prolific than the white, would increase more rapidly, thereby endangering the supremacy of Anglo-Americans. At that time there seemed good ground for such an apprehension. During the half century from 1830 to 1880, the white population of the Union, through the operation of immigration in addition to natural fertility, had increased from 10.5 to 43.4 millions, whilst the negroes, through the sole operation of natural fertility, had during the same period increased fourfold. It is not surprising that Ratzel was alarmed lest the slackening of white immigration might lead to the formation of a "new Africa" upon American soil. But these forebodings have not been justified by the subsequent movement of population in the United States. The stream of immigration from Europe, far from slackening, has considerably augmented. On the other hand, the fierce campaign of the white proletariat against the negroes has not been without effect in checking increase in the coloured population. It was not, indeed, possible to condemn the blacks to racial extinction by prohibiting the immigration of coloured women, and the number of the latter is sufficiently great to render marriage possible

to every coloured man; moreover the "humane" hope that the coloured race might be swept away by tuberculosis has not been realised; but the fact that the white proletariat has forcibly prevented the negroes from rising in the social scale, and the consequent restriction of the latter to conditions of life characterised by low wages and insanitary surroundings, have had a notable influence in checking the increase of the coloured population. The latest census returns from the forty-five states shows the enormously greater mortality of Afro-Americans:

Deaths per Thousand Inhabitants

Year	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908
Whites	18.8	17.5	17.1	17.1	17.9	17.5	17.2	18.1	16.5
Blacks	32.5	29.3	28.8	27.8	29.2	28.3	28.1	29.0	26.2

Thus we see that the death-rate per thousand is from 10 to 11 higher among the coloured than among the white population. It need hardly be said that this difference is not due to any greater vitality possessed by the whites, but arises simply because the blacks are condemned to the hardest and worst paid kinds of labour. The inferior standard of life increases the mortality, and especially the infantile mortality, of the coloured population. Skilled white workers live for the most part in salubrious little houses, each sheltering not more than one family; but members of the black proletariat are crowded into horrible slums, full of infectious disease and vice. Owing to excessive mortality among the coloured population in

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conjunction with increasing immigration from Europe, there has actually been a decline in the ratio between coloured and white. This is shown in the following table:

Year	White Population	Ratio to the Total Population	Colored Population	Ratio to the Total Population
1880.....	43,402,970	86.5	6,580,793	13.1
1890.....	55,166,184	87.4	7,488,788	11.8
1900.....	66,990,788	87.7	8,840,789	11.5

The relative decline in the coloured population has thus temporarily removed the danger which Ratzel foresaw. But a new menace to the Anglo-American race has arisen, whereby the supremacy of that race is no less imperilled. The stream of white immigration which flows unceasingly into the American continent has in the course of the last few years changed in character.

First of all, the Celtic element has diminished. The great influx from Ireland, which attained its maximum in the nineties, has notably declined. In the decennium 1881-1890, Irish immigrants numbered 655,482; 1891-1900, they numbered 405,496; 1901-1909, they numbered 309,210. Although the Celtic (Irish) element has largely contributed to the formation of the Anglo-American race, the decline in Irish immigration was not unwelcome, for undoubtedly the Irish constituted that portion of the earlier stream of immigration which offered the greatest obstacles to assimilation by the dominant race. To the second and third generation, most Irish immigrants to the new world preserve a truly fanatical racial patriotism.

After his naturalisation papers have been taken out, the Irish Celt continues to feel himself a member of a distinct race, one altogether hostile to Anglo-Americanism. This Celtic racial patriotism would seem to have originated in social conditions. As is well known, the grinding poverty resulting from the predatory land tenure of the Emerald Isle drove the Irish peasants and labourers in enormous numbers to the shores of the new world. But here they soon experienced bitter disillusionment, for the curse of poverty and ignorance which attached to them in their original home was not lifted by their removal to American soil. Through under-nutrition in Ireland they had been drained of vital energy, and had neither desire nor aptitude for such strenuous physical toil as would have been demanded from them in American agriculture, in the founding of a farm. So the unhappy Irish remained in the towns, crowding the slums, playing their part in all the scenes of the life-drama of an inferior race: work-shyness, drunkenness in both sexes, and consequently an unending series of family brawls and nocturnal fights, in which broken crockery, iron cooking utensils, the inevitable whiskey, and black eyes, were the outstanding features. It is not surprising that in such an environment the children of the immigrants often proved unable to assimilate the best features of American civilisation, so that the native Americans soon came to regard with contempt this race of white paupers, an attitude which in its turn fanned the flames of Celtic racial patriotism.

The decline in Celtic immigration would have been of trifling importance to the Anglo-American elements of

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the United States had not the stream of Teutonic immigration from Germany, Holland, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, and Denmark, also exhibited simultaneously a sudden diminution. The number of immigrants from the various countries named is shown in the following table:

Country	1881-1890	1891-1900	1901-1909
Germany.....	1,452,970	543,922	310,215
Holland.....	53,701	31,816	40,728
Sweden }	568,362	95,264	172,967
Norway }		230,679	225,789
Switzerland.....	81,988	33,149	31,389
Denmark.....	88,132	52,670	58,301
Totals.....	2,245,153	987,500	839,389

We see that immigration from the countries whose population is predominantly Germanic was during each of the last two decades less than half what it had been in the decennium 1881-1890. On the other hand, the stream of immigration from the countries of eastern and southern Europe increased as follows:

Country	1881-1890	1891-1900	1901-1909
Austria-Hungary.....	353,719	597,047	1,886,529
Russia.....	265,088	593,703	1,410,514
Greece.....	15,996	141,631
Italy.....	307,309	655,694	1,830,340
Rumania.....	14,559	50,863
Turkey.....	10,960	157,241
Totals.....	926,116	1,887,959	5,477,118

When compared with the 54 million immigrants to the United States from eastern and southern Europe during the period 1901-1909, the 0.8 million who have entered the United States from Germanic countries are as a brook when compared with a mighty river. Unprejudiced examination of the figures of immigration during the last nine years produces the impression that the Anglo-American race is predestined to submergence in the Slav flood. It is true that immigration from Italy also increases year by year, but the Italian contingent is very different in nature from the Slavonic. Comparatively few of the Italians are permanent immigrants, the others being mere migratory workers who ultimately return to Europe. Should the developments of recent years continue, a new Slavonic realm will ultimately arise on American soil, larger and mightier than any of the Slav countries of Europe.

The critical reader will here interpolate that this forecast cannot be fulfilled unless the Anglo-American race condemns itself to infertility. A vigorous stock does not require for its maintenance any reinforcement by the immigration of allied racial elements; it continues to grow through its own natural fertility. But it is precisely in this respect that the Anglo-American population is peculiar, inasmuch as the dominant race in the Union, which forcibly prevents the reproduction of Mongolian immigrants, and partly limits the increase of the negroes by social oppression, is itself losing the will to propagate to the extent that is indispensable to ensure its own continuance. All available data combine to prove that the Anglo-American population has not merely attained its maxi-

mum, but has already begun to decline. This is not, indeed, immediately apparent from an examination of the movement of population. When we learn that during nine years the population of the Union has increased from 75.6 to 88.2 millions, we are at first inclined to believe that the Anglo-American race must possess a powerful reproductive energy. An increase of 12.6 millions in nine years would certainly afford proof of remarkable fertility were the increase solely dependent upon an excess of births over deaths. But the larger moiety of the increase is due to immigration. The total immigration from Europe during the period under consideration amounted to 7.7 millions, so that only 4.9 millions remain to represent the excess of births over deaths. From this, again, we must deduct 1.5 millions, a figure which approximately represents the excess of births over deaths among the coloured population. There are left 3.4 millions for the increase of the white population, numbering about 70 millions, so that in the case of these the average annual excess of births over deaths has been about 370,000. Germany, with a population of over 60 millions, shows an average annual excess of births over deaths of 850,000, from which it is clear that the reproductive energy of the white population of the United States is less than half that of Germany. The statistics of those states of the Union in which there is a trustworthy system of registration of births show very clearly that the birth-rate among the white population of America is far lower than that of Germany.

The following table exhibits the number of births and deaths per 1,000 inhabitants, and the excess of births

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over deaths, in six states of the Union, in Germany, and in France, during various years from 1903-1908:

Country	Year	Births Per 1,000 Inhabitants	Deaths Per 1,000 Inhabitants	Excess of Births Over Deaths Per 1,000 Inhabitants
Germany.....	1908	32.0	18.0	14.0
Maine.....	1906	22.1	15.9	6.2
Vermont.....	1907	21.5	16.2	5.3
Massachusetts...	1905	24.9	16.8	8.2
Rhode Island....	1903	25.6	18.8	6.8
Connecticut.....	1907	25.3	17.1	8.2
Michigan.....	1905	18.2	13.5	4.7
France.....	1908	20.2	19.0	1.2

The table shows that in the six American states the excess of births over deaths is far lower than in Germany, and that it even approximates to the low level of France. But these figures relate to the entire composite population of America, of which the Anglo-Americans, derived from Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, and Germanic elements, constitute no more than a fraction. Now the researches made in various districts by American observers have shown that among the immigrant population the birth-rate is incomparably higher than among native-born Americans. Bushee, for instance, publishes statistics of birth-rate, death-rate, and excess (or deficiency) of births over deaths, among the various races that make up the composite population of Boston, Massachusetts (see page 113).

Whereas among the native-born families of Boston there is an actual decline of population, among the immigrant families there is an enormous excess of births over deaths,

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Former Nationality of Parents	Birth-rate Per 1,000	Death-rate Per 1,000	Excess (+) or Deficiency (-) Births as Compared with Deaths Per 1,000
American.....	16.4	17.2	- 0.8
Scottish.....	40.3	15.7	+24.6
English.....	41.0	14.7	+26.3
Irish.....	45.6	25.2	+20.4
German.....	48.0	15.0	+33.0
Russo-Jewish.....	94.6	15.9	+78.7
Italian.....	104.6	25.3	+89.3

ranging from 24 to 79 per 1,000; this great excess is explicable solely on the assumption that among the immigrants at the time of landing there is a very small proportion of children and elderly persons. In certain other districts, the comparison is even more unfavourable to the native-born Americans. In New Hampshire, for example, the excess of births among immigrants is 58.5 per 1,000, whereas among the native-born the deaths per 1,000 actually exceed the births by as many as 10.4. Taking the New England states as a whole, we find that among the native-born white population of this area deaths exceed births by 1.5 per 1,000 inhabitants.²

What is the cause of this race suicide of the Anglo-American population? In books written as long ago as the early nineties, it is recorded that in the higher social strata of the states childless families are comparatively common. Since then, however, the desire to restrict the family to the smallest possible number appears to have affected the Anglo-American working classes as well. Kolb,

² Münsterberg, *Die Amerikaner*, Berlin, 1904, vol. II, p. 291.

who spent six months in Chicago and San Francisco, living as a workman among workmen, tells us, in a book published in 1905, that neo-malthusian ideas are widely diffused among the working classes. "The practice of abortion is, of course, a criminal offence. But this prohibition, like so many others, exists only on paper, and any one can tell you of doctors who make a living by the induction of artificial abortion. For working class women their fee is said to be ten dollars, a very moderate sum when compared with the cost of a confinement and of rearing a child." Moreover, the frequent practice of criminal abortion does not date from yesterday in the Great Republic. At any rate, in his *Geschichte der deutschen Frauen*, Johannes Scherr quotes from *The Medical Journal* of the year 1859 a passage to the effect that the women of New York "think less of abortion than they do of having a tooth out." It is probable that Kolb overestimates the influence of the practice of abortion in producing the fall in the birth-rate, and it can hardly be doubted that preventive methods are mainly responsible for this phenomenon. In any case, it is perfectly clear that the low birth-rate among the Anglo-American population is not the result of natural sterility, but is due to a deliberate restriction of births.

Among the social causes of this rapidly increasing refusal of parenthood, we have to mention, in addition to the high social position of women in America, the insecurity of livelihood. As far as the working classes are concerned, this insecurity is due to economic crises, more severe in North America than anywhere else in the world. The middle classes are affected, in addition, by the pe-

culiar insecurity due to the political system of the States. The very sections of the middle classes which in Europe enjoy an exceptionally secure position as public employés are exposed in the United States to a loss of situation with every oscillation of political mood. Such, too, is the working of the "spoils" system, that even when one political party remains in power for several terms in succession, the tenure of an official post is nevertheless extremely uncertain, for it is a party maxim in America to give as many adherents as possible a share of the "spoils," even though it be for a very brief period. Finally, there is no other country in the world in which for the middle classes the cost of living is so high as in the States. Taking all these circumstances into consideration, the precariousness of livelihood is so great that the foundation of a family becomes a sheer gamble whose issue no one can foresee. Thus there has arisen in America a system which, in contrast with the two-children-system so widely prevalent in France, may rather be known as the no-children-system. In the middle classes very many persons enter upon marriage with the fixed determination to avoid having any children at all. With this end in view, they rent a bedroom in a comfortable boarding house, where they can live very agreeably, childless indeed, but free from care, and where they can maintain their social standard at small cost. The wide extension of this practice is shown by the fact that in Boston between the years 1891-1895 the number of persons inhabiting such boarding houses increased from 27,512 to 54,442.

It would be an error to regard this no-children-system, which is being more and more widely adopted by middle

class Americans, as merely an accentuation of the two-children-system. Where the latter prevails, as in France, in Berlin, and among the Jewish population of Germany, we always find on the average from two to three children per marriage. Thus the two-children-system involves merely an arrest of the increase in population such as must sooner or later affect every civilised nation. But the one-child-system and no-children-system of America lay the axe at the very root of the race; they destroy the existence of a people as inevitably as a slow poison puts an end to the vital functions of the individual. It is no longer merely a case of the regulation of fertility in response to the demands of a higher civilisation; it is the absolute suppression of fertility. Hence this phenomenon is justly characterised as race suicide.

No positive means for the prevention of race suicide have as yet been advocated. An appeal to the racial patriotism of the women of Anglo-America, a demand that they should bear more children in the interest of the race, makes itself heard unceasingly from every corner of the land. But the result has been nil. Nor is such an appeal likely to have in the future any more effect than it has had in the past, for the evil of race suicide is far too closely associated with Anglo-American civilisation to be arrested by books or speeches. More important than appeals to race patriotism are the social and political measures which have been recommended for the prevention of race suicide. Among these, the proposal most worthy of consideration is one that is very popular among the working classes, namely, to restrict or prohibit immigration from southern and eastern Europe. It is undeniable that

since the early nineties the influx from Europe has ceased to be a source of rejuvenescence for the energies of Anglo-America. The great stream of immigration continues, as formerly, to supply an abundance of new racial wealth; but the constituents of the stream have changed, and the fresh racial elements fail to provide materials for the maintenance of the Anglo-American population. The latter must either accept extinction, or else must absorb foreign elements whereby its individuality will be destroyed. If the low birth-rate of the Anglo-American race were to continue nothing could save that race from extinction but a revival of the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic streams of immigration. Now it is not improbable that if the importation of cheap labour from southern and eastern Europe were checked, immigration from the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic lands would revive, though to what extent this might occur it is impossible to forecast. But a general prohibition of white immigration, such as many demand in the belief that it is the fierce competition of the immigrants which compels the native-born Americans to remain childless, would involve the entire white population of the Union in grave peril. It cannot be doubted that the hopes of an increase in the birth-rate of the Anglo-American elements would not be realised. On the other hand it is no less certain that the great demand for labour which would result from the prohibition of immigration would give a powerful impulse to the growth of the coloured race. A mere reduction to normal of the present coloured death-rate would result in an excess of births over deaths of 35 per 1,000, and the coloured population of the Union would then be in a position to double

itself every twenty years. Taking the coloured population in 1910 as ten millions; it would in 1930 be twenty millions; in 1950, forty millions; in 1970, eighty millions; and in 1990, one hundred and sixty millions. A general prohibition of white immigration would thus, within the space of about eighty years, suffice to transform the Union into a negro realm. Now although individual members of the Afro-American race have been able, when educated by whites, to attain the highest levels of European civilisation, negroes as a whole have not hitherto proved competent to maintain a lofty civilisation. The condition of affairs in the black republic of Haiti gives some justification for the fear that negro dominance would be disastrous. The prohibition of white immigration might expose the Great Republic to a peril even more serious than that of race suicide. On the other hand, the danger of the disappearance of the hitherto dominant Anglo-American race might be largely diminished by an effective encouragement of the immigration of those Anglo-Saxon and Germanic elements which are most closely allied to the Anglo-Americans.