

CHAPTER II

CAUSES OF IMMIGRATION

THERE are two basal facts upon which rests immigration to the United States. One, vast areas of virtually free land without people; the other, oppressed populations in Europe without land or access to it. No view of the causes of immigration that does not have for its background these two central facts can secure the proper perspective of this great movement of European populations to the United States.

At the opening of the nineteenth century the sparse population of the United States was largely confined to the Atlantic seaboard. Westward from the Alleghenies stretched an unexplored and virtually an uninhabited country whose extent was unknown but into whose plains and prairies and forests the explorer, the surveyor, the trapper, the pioneer, and the frontiersman had already gone to prepare it for habitation. Here lay trackless forests and untilled plains; great lakes, and rivers equally great; a region rich in soil and mineral deposits and possessing a climate suitable to man's welfare. Briefly, here was a virgin empire needing only the labour of man to yield forth a superabundance of material wealth.

From an elevation of nearly six hundred feet