

Office of U. S. Commissioner of Immigration,

Personal.

New York, N. Y.,

May 20, 1899.

Dear Mr. Powderly:

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your personal letter of May 17th, in reference to the case of Juda Katz, aged 27, native of Galicia, who arrived at this port on the 27th ult., and to thank you for the opportunity you have given me to express my views on this matter. I am sure there can be no difference of opinion between us on questions of this sort, and I sincerely hope that in future, if anything arises which is not quite plain, you will give me a similar opportunity to clear up the matter.

I have had a personal investigation made by one of our most competent Inspectors as to all the facts in the case. In the first place, you will notice that the immigrant, when he appeared before the Board, originally stated he was going to his brother, which was not true. The man Shagrin, who is the brother-in-law and claims to be abundantly able to provide for the immigrant, is a tailor, earning the usual wages of this class, from \$8 to \$10 or less per week. As far as can be ascertained, there is nothing against his character in the neighborhood. He and his wife live in three rooms in a tenement house, keeping four boarders. The man Bonner, who claims to have a butcher shop and to be a cousin of Katz, is not, in fact, his cousin but now says that he is related to him "through his wife". The \$4,000 butcher shop proves, upon investigation,

to be a small Jewish meat store, worth probably \$500, the family living in the rear of the store, as is usual in places of this character. Bonner bears a good reputation in his neighborhood and like Shagrin knew absolutely nothing of the immigrant's intention to come here and is actuated in making his affidavit and appealing for him simply by a feeling of sympathy for a fellow countryman, who may possibly be a distant relative to his wife.

The position of the Honorable Secretary is one that would strike any person not fully familiar with our work as being full of force; but if he could witness what we see every day and go through what we have to experience, he would understand how hollow and unmeaning are most of the assurances of support given here by persons interested in obtaining the release of immigrants.

While I fully appreciate the weight of your advice that, in making public charge cases, we should secure some evidence other than the statements of the witnesses themselves, - it ought to be stated that an individual investigation of the outside merits of each case (such as was given Juda Katz) is quite out of the question with out limited force, especially at this busy season.

It must be borne in mind that most of the immigrants who are coming to our shores now, as in this case, come without having made any preparation whatever for their maintenance during the year in which our jurisdiction over them is limited, but simply come and throw themselves upon some relative, trusting to his generosity and shrewdness to get them out when they arrive here. This relative is

usually summoned by telegraph to come here for the immigrant after he is detained, and this is often the first intimation the relative has of his coming. A disqualified immigrant is usually going to an irresponsible witness. This witness will come here for him and, if he fails to obtain his release, the practice is to connect with some person a little higher up in the world and induce him to come here and, alleging relationship, say that he is able and willing to take care of the new arrival; and it is greatly to be feared that this latter class of witnesses are not always free from a financial motive.

The Board of Special Inquiry endeavors to keep in view always the immigrant himself; if he is a person not qualified to land in the United States, they hold that he should not be admitted because of the ability and willingness of some one to take care of him any more than a person belonging to the excluded classes should be admitted on bond, unless there is some peculiar urgent reason affecting the case. Of course, it would not be proper to refuse due consideration to all sincere assurances of ability and willingness to care for the immigrant, but, on the other hand, the assurance of no one ought to be permitted to take the place of the plain qualifications which the law requires the immigrant to possess. Most witnesses readily testify that they are able and willing to take care of the immigrants they are after, yet their assurances are not backed by any competent

proof, nor are they legally or morally bound to do so. I do not think that the assurances of alleged relatives or friends, who are too remotely connected with the immigrant to justify the belief that they are actuated by motives of affection or family ties, should be given the same weight as the assurances of relations whom the laws of nature suggest would be really interested.

Will you kindly assure the Secretary that every influence is in favor of admitting immigrants and that those who, after two hearings before the Board of Special Inquiry, are excluded and have this decision upheld in the opinion given by me on appeal, are certainly not worthy of admission to this country. It should be remembered that it is practically impossible to set down in black and white the impressions received from the personal conduct and appearance of the immigrant; while the opportunities we have here for individual scrutiny are such that no written records could convey any adequate idea of them.

The number of persons of just this class of immigrants under discussion, who apply here daily for relief and to be returned, convinces me that we should tighten and not in any measure relax the present inspection process. I enclose copy of a letter received this morning from Mr. George Blair, Superintendent of Out-Door Poor which is pertinent to this subject.

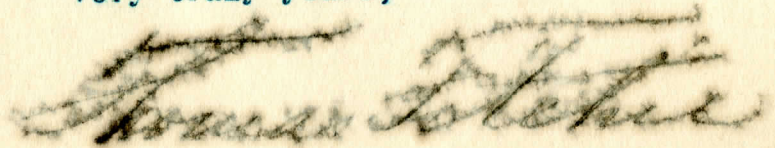
In conclusion, let me say that I am anxious to conform to the Department's policy; and I fully believe that a strict insistence on the immigrants' being supplied with sufficient money and other

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necessaries to maintain themselves for a proper period will, in the end, prove the more humane. When it is known abroad that we will adhere strictly to a certain standard they will very soon learn on the other side that it will not be safe for the more undesirable classes to venture here.

Thanking you again for affording this opportunity of expressing my views on the subject I am, with kindest regards,

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Thomas F. Slater". The signature is written in a cursive style with some flourishes.

(Enclosure.)

Hon. T. V. Powderly,
Commissioner-General of Immigration,
Washington, D.C.

M.