weaklings and degenerates, weaklings all, when he came over in the steerage, and at Ellis Island the visitor does not always get unalloyed encouragement as regards the National future. There are, however, many reasons besides failure for emigration. Perhaps Prof. Ross is only half wrong and American Medicine only half right.

Heroism That Is Disquieting.

On reading about the railway signalman over in New Jersey who, after a fall that seriously injured him, yet struggled up the stairs of his tower and set the lights against all trains before he sought the ministrations he desperately needed, the first thought is of the man's heroic devotion to his duty. JAMES SCALES is evidently an admirable type of the railway employé, and it is to be hoped that his courage will be adequately appreciated and rewarded by his company. But is there not cause for some disquietude in the revelation that if his injury had been just a little more severe than it was the disaster he prevented would have occurred? The necessity, or the possibility, of asking this question implies that more responsibility was placed on a single man than he could safely bear, and that it would have been well—except for the company's expense account—if he had been provided with a companion in a place where so much depended upon continuous service. There is a general impression, too, that what a tower signalman does is to let trains pass, and that when he does nothing the lines are closed. The story from Denville indicates that there is something wrong with that impression, and that the automatic protection of the traveling public is not quite what it has been supposed to be. The episode seems to be one that needs a little investigation, and exclamations over the heroism of JAMES SCALES are not enough to close it satisfactorily.

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

Good Advice from an Enemy.

One whom we suspect of antagonism to any change whatever in the spelling of English words slyly suggests that we, in turn, innocently suggest to Mr. CARNEGIE that he begin his reform with his own name and that of the board he has organized. We clearly see the malice of this, but we also see its humor, and therefore we are quite ready to make solemn announcement that both A-n-d-r-e-w and C-a-r-n-e-g-i-e are words that might be much better spelled than they are and that the simplification of s-i-m-p-l-i-f-i-e-d ought to be at once undertaken by the simplifiers. We remain convinced, however, that the Simplified Spelling Board is a fine institution, and it has the heartiest of our wishes for an active and efficient career. The plan it outlines is entirely practicable, though perhaps unnecessarily cautious. The number of people who are vehemently in love with the difficulties, absurdities, inconsistencies—and crystallized ignorances—of our present spelling is very small, and neither their denunciation nor their ridicule will weigh at all heavily upon the great majority, who look upon spelling as a means to an end, and to an end quite different from the preservation of etymological history in the most clumsy, expensive, and deceptive of forms. One might imagine, from the way in which the enemies of this reform run on, that any changes made now would be the first to which English spelling had ever been subjected—would be the establishment of an evil precedent instead of merely a slight hastening, in the interest of convenience and economy, of a process that has been going on steadily ever since the day when English became a written language. One of our correspondents said yesterday that, in his opinion, "before we try to monkey further with so good an instrument as the English language we ought to try to use it properly." Well, not necessarily. With a little, or even with a lot, of "monkeying" an amount of time almost incalculably large, now devoted to the learning of such utterly useless and imbecile things as the arrangement of the vowels in "siege" and "seize," could be used on the task which our correspondent wisely intimated is so important. The personality of the Simplified Spelling Board is guarantee that the demand for an improved orthography is not an outgrowth of ignorance or irreverence. These men have more than a little affection for the history of words, and they are not at all likely to do anything that will hide or distort it. They will, however, put and keep that history in its proper place.

Two Views of Immigration.

Prof. E. A. Ross of the Nebraska University has been exploiting the pleasant theory that Americans are a special and superior race, since they are selected specimens from all Europe, the easygoing and unenterprising types remaining at home and the active and adventurous one coming over here. This, he says, has always been the case and therefore it is no wonder that we are so much brighter and better than other peoples. American Medicine notes this theory only to attack it. "The successful people of a country," it says, "are those who stay at home, and it is only the unsuccessful or comparative failures who are discontented and migrate to better their fortunes. Instead of receiving the best we get the worst, and perhaps—and here's the rub—we always have received the worst. A small minority may indicate abnormality of some kind—they differ in opinion from the great mass of the normal or average. Hence, those who came for the purpose of practicing peculiar religious views may have been far from normal. The very boastfulness of the American eagle is itself an evidence of mental exaltation. So let us be humble and remember that for murders, crimes, civic unvirtue, and various other trifles we lead the civilized world. We hold life cheaper than the Chinese, we glorify certain murderers and hang very few, and our methods of high finance should please the devil himself. Have we acquired all this wickedness or are we naturally wicked—selected types?" Here, truly, is a lesson in humility, but the picture seems to us to be unnecessarily black. Still, STEVENSON found himself surrounded by

The New York Times
Published: March 14, 1906