

15 BABY PILGRIMS COMING TO AMERICA

Aquitania the "Mayflower" of
Youngsters Who Some Day
May Be in Social Register.

RED TAPE GENEROUSLY CUT

Prominent Philanthropists Pro-
vided Avenues for Adoption of
Especially Picked Children.

A new party of fifteen Pilgrims will sail from England on the Cunard liner Aquitania tomorrow morning to seek new homes in the United States. It will be the most unusual party of immigrants—those who are to receive them call them "ambassadors"—ever to land on American soil, because no member of the party is more than 1 year old, and because they have as little knowledge of their new homes in this country as the original party of Pilgrims had when they landed on Plymouth Rock.

This party, however, comes in the deluxe cabins of one of the biggest and finest liners on the seas and with five or more attendants to see that no wish on the voyage is unfulfilled. So, too, in favor of this influential party has the United States Government waived all the usual requirements for the entrance of immigrants—including the literacy test—and they will be met down the bay as if they were real ambassadors from the King's Government, with never a hint of the usual immigrant inspection at Ellis Island.

Within two weeks after their landing every baby will be in a new home, where there are no other children and where there are unusual means for the physical and mental development of each pilgrim in the best environment. The names of many of these children will be in the Social Register in a few years because they are to enter some of the most prominent families in this city, socially and financially. It is doubtful if the names of these families will ever become known to the public.

A New "Mayflower."

The plans for this new "Mayflower" were made by the National Adoption Society of England with a newly formed British-American Adoption Committee in this city. The Chairman of this American committee is Miss Clara B. Spence, head of Miss Spence's school for girls in West Fifty-fifth Street. Associated with her are physicians and clergymen who have been active for years in work for the betterment of child life.

Miss Spence was the pioneer in the nursery adoption plan and, in fact, originated the method whereby children were taken from institutions and placed in attractive homes where they could develop into useful citizens. She and her partner, Miss Charlotte Baker, have seen that nearly 200 children were placed in good homes in the last twenty years.

Although many other persons have established nurseries of this kind in the last few years they have been unable to fill the demand for good, healthy children for adoption. When a representative of the National Adoption Society of England told of the over-supply of desirable children for adoption in England and also of the unfavorable legal conditions for adoption in that country, Miss Spence and her associates saw opportunity to get more healthy children for adoption in this country and at the same time perform a public service for children, for families and for the betterment of Anglo-American relations.

Miss Spence undertook the formation of the British-American Committee and was appointed chairman by her associates. Miss Baker also became a member, with the Rev. Dr. William T. Manning, newly installed Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal diocese of New York; Dr. and Mrs. Henry Dwight Chapin, and Miss Josephine Plows-Day, an English woman who is familiar with the work of the English society.

Dr. Chapin is one of the foremost baby specialists, and aided in choosing the children adopted by Mrs. Finley J. Shepard, formerly Helen Gould, and many other wealthy families. With Mrs. Chapin, he founded the Alice Chapin Adoption Nursery—named in honor of his wife—and during the ten years of their work they have found homes for about 300 babies.

Together, these experts labored for months on the plan to import a few selected babies from England to fill at least a part of the imperative demand in this country for children in homes where there were the means and the desire to rear and educate them properly. A fund of several thousand dollars was raised to cover the expenses of transporting

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these diminutive Pilgrims from England to their new parents in this country.

Obstacles Overcome.

Obstacles seemed insurmountable, but all apparently have been overcome and the babies are ready to sail tomorrow. Some of these difficulties were serious, but seem humorous now that they have been safely overcome by the cutting of the red tape of regulations.

First was the rule that no immigrant should be admitted to this country if likely to become a public charge. The law excludes "all children under 16, unaccompanied by or not coming with one or both of their parents, except that any such children may, in the discretion of the Secretary of Labor, be admitted, if in his opinion they are not likely to become a public charge and are otherwise eligible." Lawyers visited Secretary Davis in Washington and obtained his permission for the admission of the children under bond. The committee provided these bonds, in the sum of about \$500 for each child.

A second obstacle was the medical examination, but the physicians of the National Adoption Society certified that the young pilgrims were in excellent health, had been subjected to Wassermann tests and tests for tuberculosis, and were fine physical specimens, with every indication of unusually good mentality. They probably will undergo another perfunctory examination in this country.

A third problem was the physical question of transportation and the care of the infants on the voyage. The National Adoption Society arranged to send several nurses and physicians to Southampton with the children. The Cunard Line agreed to turn over all the necessary cabins to the children and to provide special facilities for the provision of milk, food and service on the way across. No fewer than five nurses, and possibly more, accompany the children.

No Literacy Test.

A fourth provision of the law has been discussed facetiously by members of the committee here. That is the so-called literacy test, but the provision is not applicable in this case because the children are under 16. The law says that all aliens who are physically capable shall be mentally able to read English

or some other language or dialect. "Baby talk" is not mentioned in the law.

The first public intimation of the formation of this new party of fifteen Pilgrims was contained in an Associated Press dispatch printed in the New York Times yesterday. Inquiry here among persons interested in child welfare brought out not only confirmation of the report from London, but full details of the work of the committee. Miss Spence talked at length of the project on the eve of its success.

When the children arrive they will be sent to the various adoption nurseries to rest after their trip, and prospective parents will visit them before adoption. The Alice Chapin Adoption Nursery will take five of the children, Miss Spence and Miss Baker will take five, and the remaining five doubtless will be sent to the adoption nursery of the Spence Alumnae Association in East Sixty-second Street, through which 200 children have passed to good homes in the last few years.

"I am glad to tell of the work of our committee in the hope that little children may be benefited," said Miss Spence. "These fifteen little ones, who form the advance party, are in good health and will be placed in homes in this country where they will be happy and have a chance to become useful citizens. They will go into homes where there are no children and where they will have every opportunity and, we are confident, every happiness.

"Yes, it is true that we have been unable to find enough children in this country to fill the demands of all those who wished to adopt babies. So many dear children are in orphan asylums, but for some reason it is difficult to get those children out of institutions and into the private homes. Adoption nurseries have become numerous, perhaps almost a fad, but every one is doing excellent and useful work, and more of them, not fewer, are needed to find children for the homes that have none.

They Cheer the Homes.

"We have found—my associate, Miss Baker, and I—that each one of our children transformed the home to which it was sent from our adoption nursery. It is a civic duty to provide every good home with a child, and to provide every child with a good home."

Since the adoption nursery idea was developed by Miss Spence and Miss Baker and Dr. and Mrs. Chapin, several other persons have taken it up. The Spence Alumnae have placed 200 children in homes. Others who have done similar work from time to time are Mrs. Don C. Seltz, Miss Margaret Whitney, Mrs. Benjamin Stern and Mrs. Charles R. L. Putnam, wife of the physician.

Miss Spence said she had received no cable message intimating that the English society might abandon temporarily the plan to send the children on the Aquitania because of labor troubles. She is confident that the children will be here next week, and has made all plans to that end.