

Why the Greeks?

Mall and Empire.

—Recent disturbances in the city have called attention to the fact that most of the small restaurants are run by Greeks, and curiosity as to the cause of this phenomenon. Why are the majority of Greeks in this city operating restaurants and shoe-shine parlors? Why are they going into the candy business and the pool rooms? Is it because they are natural-born restaurateurs, shoe shiners, Heaven-sent candy-makers and pool sharks? No, Mr. Chadband, it is not. Then, let us in a spirit of love enquire how it is. In the course of the observations we may find out why the Chinese are so largely engaged in the laundry business, why Italians are almost in control of the fruit business, and why it will be found in most cities that there is usually a trade or an occupation that seems to particularly attract certain classes of aliens. This fact is often interpreted to mean that these foreigners have established a sort of trust, and the suggestion has been put forward on certain occasions that in trying to control business they were acting for their Governments. In the case of Germans this is known to be so.

Facts concerning the first Greek to arrive in Toronto and set up in the shoe shine business might be discovered by chasing round for them, no doubt, but it is pleasanter to exercise the imagination than the legs in days like the present, and we will imagine that the Greek has arrived in town. He has a few dollars in his pocket. He knows nobody here. He has a very small acquaintance with the language, which he may have picked up in the few weeks or months he spent in New York. He has no trade, and he has an ambition not to be anybody's hired man. The shoe shine business attracts him as one that can be established at an outlay of a few dollars. It does not make extensive demands on the conversational powers. It offers a livelihood and the prospect of being able to lay by some money. So our original Greek becomes a shoe shine artist.

In a few months another Greek arrives in Toronto. He knows nobody here but the first Greek, and naturally he calls on him. He, too, is looking for something to do. If he is broke the original pioneer will probably grub stake him for the sake of being able to talk to someone in his native tongue. In the meantime until he decides what to do, the suggestion is made that he take a hand at the shoe shine game. If the business will offer employment for two, as by this time we may expect it to do. So Greek No. Two becomes a shoe shiner. He, too, saves his money, and presently is able to open an establishment of his own. When other Greeks arrive they have much the same experience, and gravitate naturally to the business in which they find their friends already engaged. From owning the shoe shine business to owning the pool room in which the stand is located is simply a matter of saving up enough money.