

ELLIS ISLAND CALLED NEW INFERNO

By SUMAYEH ATTIYEH.

THERE is a big hell at the gate of our great country. It is Ellis Island. It is the first and the worst sample of America. I spent six days there, from early in the morning until evening, walking, talking, laboring, begging and starving in an endeavor to release an aunt of mine about to be deported because she had failed to prove that she was a student, coming here for further education and intending to live with her brother, an American citizen.

In six days I must have spoken six thousand words, walked six thousand steps, had about seventy-five passes, because every time you turn around, get in or out of a door, look at an employe, or sneeze, you must present a pass; then, if you are lucky, you will have the pleasure of looking at a sour, cranky face for a second, asking a question and getting a snippy answer of "Yes" or "No"; then you are pushed aside, and some pointed elbow sticks you in the ribs, and if you are not knocked flat on your back or straight on your nose, you are indeed fortunate.

I came to New York three weeks ago and learned that my aunt was held at Ellis Island. No one had been permitted to see her. "Yes," she said, "my brother and two nieces live here, and I don't know why they will not come to see me," and she wept. Her brother and my sister in turn tried several times to see her, but were refused admission and sent away in a harsh manner every time. Her brother sent two telegrams to encourage and check her up, and neither reached her.

When my aunt could not prove that she was a student, because of her unpreparedness, although she spoke fairly

good English, I asked the Assistant Head Commissioner to give her another chance to prove the truth of her case, which he did. He sent me with a pass to some man, and that man sent me with another pass to another man, who cut me short and in a rough manner said to me, "Your aunt failed yesterday to prove that she was a student, therefore it is not necessary to have a further session, for I am sure she is not fit to enter college. He turned around and went away, leaving me with tears running down my cheeks.

Here were some of the questions put to me:

Are you an American citizen? Yes, sir.

How long have you been in America? Twelve years.

Are you a university graduate? No I only went one year to college.

Where? In Chicago.

Do you speak English? "Have I been talking Greek," I answered.

My grandfather, the Rev. Joseph Attiyeh, the father of this aunt, is a noted orator and a writer. He is called the Moody of Syria, and a saint because of his beautiful and unselfish life and works. The Presbyterian Missionary Board of America is my witness. He educated all of his children in the American missionary schools, and my aunt has taught in Tripoli, Syria, in the American missionary school for three years, saved her money, bought her ticket and came over here to us, and they were going to send her back without giving us a chance to prove her identity and the reason for her coming, or even permit us to see her, had I not put up a strong fight against the injustice of it all.

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