

Strangers in the Land

PATTERNS OF AMERICAN NATIVISM

1860-1925

JOHN HIGHAM

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and Labor to admit borderline cases; it established in the Bureau of Immigration a division of information, designed by anti-restrictionists to promote the distribution of immigrants by finding jobs for them outside the big cities; and it set up a commission charged with making an exhaustive investigation of the impact of immigration on the nation. The last idea crept into the law as a substitute for the literacy test. It had the merit of sounding constructive, and above all it would afford a breathing spell, postponing another nativist assault until the opposition to restriction was better organized.⁷⁰

The anti-restrictionists had had a narrow squeeze, and they knew that the issue was far from settled. Perhaps they sensed that the ruthless power of the Speaker might not again avail them, though they could not foresee that it would be broken before the immigration question came to a head again. Yet they could count on building more durable barriers to legislative action. Big business was just beginning to take an active part in resisting restriction. The masses of naturalized Americans from southern and eastern Europe had shown only a fraction of their potential voting strength, and every ship was bringing more recruits. The victors of 1907 resorted to the delaying action of a lengthy investigation in the belief that time was on their side.

In a limited sense it was. Every year the new immigrants and their allies put up a more energetic defense. From a larger point of view, however, they had made too little and too sluggish use of a crucial interlude. The complacent optimism of the early twentieth century could not, in the nature of things, last for very long; the social and economic problems of the industrial age were certainly far from solved. Henceforth, confidence in the future of American society would have to rest increasingly on the use of organized intelligence to preserve and fulfill what fortune initially provided. With the extension of centralized direction over the national life, immigration would surely come under purposeful control. Yet the friends of the immigrant had simply adopted on the issue of restriction a frozen posture of defending the status quo. The progressive spirit reacted to ethnic problems too ambiguously to be of much help. So the opportunity to think out an immigration policy that might be both realistic and democratic was lost.

Chapter Six

Toward Racism: The History of an Idea

It need not puzzle us that Malay and Papuan, Celt and Roman, Saxon and Tartar should mix. . . . The best nations are those most widely related. . . .

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1856

“You cannot dodge the Mendelian law, my boy. Like begets like, but in a union of opposites we get throwbacks. . . . You’re not going to run the risk of mongrelizing the species, are you?”

—Peter B. Kyne, 1923

Hardly any aspect of American xenophobia over its course from the eighteenth to the twentieth century is more striking than the monotony of its ideological refrain. Year after year, decade after decade, the same charges and complaints have sounded in endless reiteration. Various combined, formulated, and documented, adapted to different and changing adversaries, rising and falling in intensity and acceptance, nearly all of the key ideas persisted without basic modification.

But in one major respect the pattern of nativist thought changed fundamentally. Gradually and progressively it veered toward racism. Absent from the strictures of the eighteenth century nationalist, notions of racial superiority and exclusiveness appeared in the mid-nineteenth, but they were to undergo a long process of revision and expansion before emerging in the early twentieth century as the most important nativist ideology. Several genera-

tions of intellectuals took part in transforming the vague and somewhat benign racial concepts of romantic nationalism into doctrines that were precise, malicious, and plausibly applicable to European immigration. The task was far from simple; at every point the race-thinkers confronted the liberal and cosmopolitan barriers of Christianity and American democracy. Ironically and significantly, it was not until the beginning of the present century, when public opinion recovered much of its accustomed confidence, that racial nativism reached intellectual maturity.

Of course racial nativism forms only a segment, though a critical and illuminating segment, of the larger evolution of race consciousness in modern times. The greater part of the complex phenomenon which is now fashionably called "race prejudice" lies beyond the scope of this book; its history is tangled and still largely unwritten. What concerns us is the intersection of racial attitudes with nationalistic ones—in other words, the extension to European nationalities of that sense of absolute difference which already divided white Americans from people of other colors. When sentiments analogous to those already discharged against Negroes, Indians, and Orientals spilled over into anti-European channels, a force of tremendous intensity entered the stream of American nativism.

The whole story of modern racial ferment, nativist and otherwise, has two levels, one involving popular emotions, the other concerning more or less systematic ideas. Most of the emotions flow from a reservoir of habitual suspicion and distrust accumulated over the span of American history toward human groups stamped by obvious differences of color. The ideas, on the other hand, depend on the speculations of intellectuals on the nature of races. The distinction is partly artificial, for the spirit of white supremacy—or what may be labeled race-feeling—has interlocked with race-thinking at many points. Indeed, their convergence has given the problem of race its modern significance. But at least the distinction has the merit of reminding us that race-feelings and explicit concepts about races have not always accompanied one another. The Anglo-Saxon idea in its early form did not entail the biological taboos of race-feeling. Nor did the pattern of white supremacy, in all likelihood, depend at the outset on formal race-thinking. Traditional religious beliefs, often hardly articulated

at all, served the pragmatic purposes of the English colonists who enslaved Negroes and who scourged Indians as Satanic agents "having little of Humanitie but shape."¹ However, the evolution of white supremacy into a comprehensive philosophy of life, grounding human values in the innate constitution of nature, required a major theoretical effort. It was the task of the race-thinkers to organize specific antipathies toward dark-hued peoples into a generalized, ideological structure.

To the development of racial nativism, the thinkers have made a special contribution. Sharp physical differences between native Americans and European immigrants were not readily apparent; to a large extent they had to be manufactured. A rather elaborate, well-entrenched set of racial ideas was essential before the newcomers from Europe could seem a fundamentally different order of men. Accordingly, a number of race-conscious intellectuals blazed the way for ordinary nativists, and it will be useful to tell their story before turning in later chapters to the popular emotions their ideas helped to orient.

From Romanticism to Naturalism

Two general types of race-thinking, derived from very different origins, circulated throughout the nineteenth century. One came from political and literary sources and assumed, under the impact of the romantic movement, a nationalistic form. Its characteristic manifestation in England and America was the Anglo-Saxon tradition. Largely exempt through most of the century from the passions of either the nativist or the white supremacist, this politico-literary concept of race lacked a clearly defined physiological basis. Its vague identification of culture with ancestry served mainly to emphasize the antiquity, the uniqueness, and the permanence of a nationality. It suggested the inner vitality of one's own culture, rather than the menace of another race. Whereas some of the early racial nationalists attributed America's greatness (and above all its capacity for self-government) to its Anglo-Saxon derivation, others thought America was creating a new mixed race; and, such was the temper of the age, many accepted both ideas at the same time. But whether exclusive or cosmopolitan in tendency, these romantics almost always discussed race as an ill-

defined blessing; hardly ever as a sharply etched problem. During the age of confidence, as Anglo-Saxonism spread among an eastern social elite well removed from the fierce race conflicts of other regions, it retained a complacent, self-congratulatory air.

Meanwhile a second kind of race-thinking was developing from the inquiries of naturalists. Stimulated by the discovery of new worlds overseas, men with a scientific bent began in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to study human types systematically in order to catalogue and explain them. While Anglo-Saxonists consulted history and literature to identify national races, the naturalists concentrated on the great "primary" groupings of *Homo sapiens* and used physiological characteristics such as skin color, stature, head shape, and so on, to distinguish them one from the other. Quite commonly this school associated physical with cultural differences and displayed, in doing so, a feeling of white superiority over the colored races. On the whole, however, the leading scientific thinkers did not regard race differences as permanent, pure, and unalterable. A minority insisted that races were immutable, separately created species; but the influence of this polygenist argument suffered from its obvious violation of the Christian doctrine of the unity of mankind. For the most part, early anthropologists stressed the molding force of environmental conditions in differentiating the human family.²

In the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the separation between the two streams of race-thinking gradually and partially broke down. Racial science increasingly intermingled with racial nationalism. Under the pressure of a growing national consciousness, a number of European naturalists began to subdivide the European white man into biological types, often using linguistic similarity as evidence of hereditary connection. For their part, the nationalists slowly absorbed biological assumptions about the nature of race, until every national trait seemed wholly dependent on hereditary transmission. This interchange forms the intellectual background for the conversion of the vague Anglo-Saxon tradition into a sharp-cutting nativist weapon and, ultimately, into a completely racist philosophy.

Behind the fusion—and confusion—of natural history with national history, of "scientific" with social ideas, lay a massive trend in the intellectual history of the late nineteenth and twentieth

centuries. Hopes and fears alike received scientific credentials; and men looked on the human universe in increasingly naturalistic terms. In religion, literature, philosophy, and social theory ancient dualisms dissolved. Human affairs and values were seen more and more as products of vast, impersonal processes operating throughout nature. The Darwinian theory represented a decisive step in this direction; in the eyes of many, it subsumed mankind wholly under the grim physical laws of the animal kingdom.

While the whole naturalistic trend encouraged race-thinking and lent a sharper flesh-and-blood significance to it, Darwinism added a special edge. By picturing all species as both the products and the victims of a desperate, competitive struggle for survival, Darwinism suggested a warning: the daily peril of destruction confronts every species. Thus the evolutionary theory, when fully adopted by race-thinkers, not only impelled them to anchor their national claims to a biological basis; it also provoked anxiety by denying assurance that the basis would endure. Although most Anglo-Saxonists still identified their race with an indwelling spiritual principle, now they had also to envision the bearers of that principle as combatants in the great biological battle raging throughout nature.

On the other hand, it is not true that Darwinian (and Spencerian) ideas led directly to an outburst of racial nativism or to an overriding hereditarian determinism. The whole scientific revolution of the nineteenth century merely prepared the way and opened the possibility for those developments. Actually, the evolutionary hypothesis left major obstacles to a rigidly racial creed.

First of all, the general climate of opinion in the early Darwinian era inhibited the pessimistic implications of the new naturalism. What stood out in the first instance, as the great social lesson of the theory of natural selection, was not the ravages of the struggle for survival but rather the idea of "the survival of the fittest." To a generation of intellectuals steeped in confidence, the laws of evolution seemed to guarantee that the "fittest" races would most certainly triumph over inferior competitors. And in their eagerness to convert social values into biological facts, Darwinian optimists unblinkingly read "the fittest" to mean "the best." They felt confirmed in their supremacy over the immigrants, who in turn seemed the winnowed best of Europe. Darwinism, therefore, easily

ministered to Anglo-Saxon pride, but in the age of confidence it could hardly arouse Anglo-Saxon anxiety.

Secondly, Darwinism gave the race-thinkers little concrete help in an essential prerequisite of racism—belief in the preponderance of heredity over environment. Certainly the biological vogue of the late nineteenth century stimulated speculation along these lines, but the evolutionary theory by no means disqualified a fundamentally environmentalist outlook. Darwin's species struggled and evolved within particular natural settings; they survived through adaptation to those settings. This aspect of the theory ultimately impressed itself so forcefully on American social scientists that toward the end of the century one of them acclaimed the doctrine of evolution for actually discouraging racial as opposed to environmental interpretations.³ And while liberal environmentalists drew comfort from the new scientific gospel, it left the race-thinkers with no definite knowledge of how hereditary forces function or persist. Darwinism explained only the survival, not the appearance, of biological variations from pre-existing types. The origins of and relationships among races remained obscure.

Obviously both of these difficulties would have to be overcome if the Anglo-Saxon nationalism of the 1870's was to evolve into a fully effective instrument for race-feelings. Even to begin the transition the race-thinkers would have to cast loose from Darwinian optimism, discarding the happy thought that the fittest, in the sense of the best, always win out. That done, they would still lack a strict racial determinism. To divorce race entirely from environment and to put biological purity at the center of social policy, American nationalists would need further cues from the developing natural sciences.

Patricians on the Defensive

Americans were slow to take that second and more drastic step. Although sweeping theories and pretentious sciences or pseudo-sciences of race developed in continental Europe in the late nineteenth century, American intellectuals of that period knew practically nothing of them. Nor did American scientists make any contributions to race-thinking similar to those of Broca, Ammon, or Lapouge. In the United States psychologists dealt with individuals

rather than groups, sociologists with institutions rather than peoples. Anthropologists immersed themselves in narrowly empirical studies of primitive folk, chiefly the Indians.⁴ The movement toward racism was an up-hill fight in democratic America.

But a number of Anglo-Saxon nationalists in the eighties and nineties did begin to break away from evolutionary optimism. At first, instead of trying to qualify or rebut the principle of the survival of the fittest, the race-thinkers simply turned from complacent contemplation of America's Anglo-Saxon past to an anxious look at its future. This swing to a defensive outlook marks the initial phase of racial nativism. It required no fresh intellectual stimulus; it was precipitated by the general crisis in American society.

The same internal crisis that reactivated the older nativist traditions crystallized the new one. Until unrest and class cleavage upset the reign of confidence in the 1880's, the assimilationist concept of a mixed nationality had tempered and offset pride in Anglo-Saxon superiority. But when the Anglo-Saxon enthusiasts felt their society and their own status deeply threatened, they put aside their boasts about the assimilative powers of their race. They read the signs of the times as symptoms of its peril. Contrary to an impression widespread among historians, the new racial xenophobia did not originate as a way of discriminating between old and new immigrations. It arose from disturbances, within American society, which preceded awareness of a general ethnic change in the incoming stream. At the outset, Anglo-Saxon nativism vaguely indicted the whole foreign influx. Only later did the attack narrow specifically to the new immigration.

The current social scene presented a troubling contrast to the image of America that Anglo-Saxon intellectuals cherished. The tradition of racial nationalism had always proclaimed orderly self-government as the chief glory of the Anglo-Saxons—an inherited capacity so unique that the future of human freedom surely rested in their hands. But now the disorders of the mid-eighties cast doubt on the survival of a free society. The more anxious of the Anglo-Saxon apostles knew that the fault must lie with all the other races swarming to America. Did they not, one and all, lack the Anglo-Saxon's self-control, almost by definition? So, behind the popular image of unruly foreigners, a few caught sight of un-

ruly races; and Anglo-Saxon nativism emerged as a corollary to anti-radical nativism—as a way of explaining why incendiary immigrants threatened the stability of the republic.

The explanation came out clear-cut in the convulsion that followed the Haymarket Affair. A writer in a business magazine stated the racial lesson of the riot in the baldest terms: anarchy is “a blood disease” from which the English have never suffered. “I am no race worshipper,” he insisted, “but . . . if the master race of this continent is subordinated to or overrun with the communistic and revolutionary races, it will be in grave danger of social disaster.”⁵ During the same fateful summer a leading Congregational theologian equated race and unrest in words so sharp that he withheld them from publication for a year and a half. The Reverend Theodore T. Munger, an exponent of evolutionary theology, had long admired the Anglo-Saxons, the most highly developed, the most individualistic, and indeed the most Christian of races. As he surveyed the strife of 1886, he saw “anarchism, lawlessness . . . labor strikes, and a general violation of personal rights such as the Anglo-Saxon race has not witnessed since Magna Charta. . . . This horrible tyranny is wholly of foreign origin.” Fundamentally, however, the problem was not just foreign. It was “physiological”: how to restrict immigration “so that the physical stock shall not degenerate, and how to keep the strong, fine strain ascendant.”⁶

Compared to the common and simple attack on radical *foreigners*, the attack on radical *races* was at first a minor theme. Indeed, it did not immediately displace the older kind of race-thinking. During the eighties many Anglo-Saxonists still clung to the traditional pride and confidence in America’s powers of assimilation. Josiah Strong, for example, was still celebrating the absorptive capacities of the Anglo-Saxons after he had begun to attack the immigrants as socially disruptive. And in 1890 James K. Hosmer’s glowing constitutional history of the Anglo-Saxon race still conceded that racial mingling invigorated it, although Hosmer was equally certain that immigration was diluting the Anglo-Saxons’ blood and subverting their social order.⁷

During the 1890’s, as the social crisis deepened, racial nativism became more defined and widespread. If one may judge, however, from Congressional debates, newspapers, and the more popular

periodicals, Anglo-Saxonism still played a relatively small part in public opinion. The rising flood of popular xenophobia drew much more upon conventional anti-foreign ideas.

On the whole, the Anglo-Saxon tradition in its new nativistic form still found its support within the patrician circles where it had persisted throughout the age of confidence. Now, as then, the race-thinkers were men who rejoiced in their colonial ancestry, who looked to England for standards of deportment and taste, who held the great academic posts or belonged to the best clubs or adorned the higher Protestant clergy. Some, like Frank Parsons or Albert Shaw, were active reformers, especially in the municipal field. But, in general, racial nativists worshipped tradition in a deeply conservative spirit, and in the tumult of the nineties it seemed to them that everything fixed and sacred was threatened with dissolution. Among them were Episcopalian Bishop A. Cleveland Coxe, who added the final “e” to his family name in order to re-establish its antique spelling;⁸ Woodrow Wilson, then a historian with aristocratic sympathies, a disciple of Burke and Bagehot who believed heartily in evolution because it moved so slowly; John W. Burgess, who brought from German seminars a love for “the race-proud Teutons” rather than the Anglo-Saxons and whose political science proved that racial amalgamation endangered private enterprise; and of course Henry Cabot Lodge, who mourned for the days when society venerated the old families, their traditions, and their ancestors. No one expressed the state of mind in this group better than the Presbyterian clergyman in New York who thought nature’s great principle of inequality endangered by a “specious humanity,” liberty-loving Anglo-Saxons beset by socialistic foreigners, and the intelligent people in the clutches of the unintelligent.⁹

A substantial number of these patrician nativists belonged to the cultivated intelligentsia of New England, the region where the Anglo-Saxon idea was most firmly entrenched. There the proportion of foreign-born in the total population was rising more sharply than in any other part of the country. There too the declining vitality of the native culture contributed to a defensive attitude. Brahmin intellectuals such as Lodge, Henry Adams, and Barrett Wendell knew that the historic culture of New England had entered its “Indian Summer,” and the knowledge gave them added

cause to see their race and region beleaguered by the alien.¹⁰ In other places also a pessimistic spirit was creeping into intellectual life as the century waned. What the German writer Max Nordau was calling "vague qualms of a Dusk of the Nations" darkened various minds receptive to social anxieties or to the grimmer implications of Darwinian naturalism. But New Englanders particularly succumbed to the melancholy, *fin de siècle* mood and gave it a racial form. Thus at Harvard, Barrett Wendell, whose English accent matched his Anglophile interpretation of American literature, was settling into the conviction that his own kind had had its day, that other races had wrenched the country from its grasp for once and all.¹¹

Many if not most of these men in the early nineties remained oblivious of the new immigration, assuming that the immigrants as a whole lacked the Anglo-Saxon's ancestral qualities. However, the avant-garde of racial nationalists was discovering during those years the shift in the immigrant stream. The discovery was important, because it lent a new sharpness and relevance to race-thinking. By making the simple (and in fact traditional) assumption that northern European nationalities shared much of the Anglo-Saxon's inherited traits, a racial nativist could now understand why immigration had just now become a problem. Also, the cultural remoteness of southern and eastern European "races" suggested to him that the foreign danger involved much more than an inherited incapacity for self-government: the new immigration was racially impervious to the whole of American civilization! Thus Anglo-Saxon nativism, in coming to focus on specific ethnic types, passed beyond its first, subordinate role as a corollary to anti-radical nativism. It found its own *raison d'être*, and in doing so served to divide the new immigrants from their predecessors in an absolute and fundamental way. Racial nativism became at once more plausible, a more significant factor in the history of immigration restriction, and a more precisely formulated ideology.

Three prominent intellectuals of the day illustrate this evolution in the Anglo-Saxon idea. Each of them embarked on anti-foreign agitation in the loose terms provoked by the internal events of the eighties, and each of them ended by fixing on the new immigration as constitutionally incapable of assimilation.

Nathaniel S. Shaler, the Kentucky-born geologist who presided

over the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard, was in some ways a reluctant and unlikely nativist. One of the most benign of individuals, Shaler felt a real sympathy for disadvantaged groups; and his professional training impressed upon him the large influence of the physical environment in creating human differences. But his early southern background had given Shaler an indelible race consciousness. He easily shared the belief of his Brahmin colleagues that American democracy rested on an English racial heritage. At first he stated the racial argument against immigration in class terms, contending that the immigrants threatened social stability because, as peasants, they lacked the Americans' inborn instinct for freedom. In 1894, however, he shifted to a more specific and sweeping attack on the new immigration. Instead of indicting the immigrants as a whole, he now drew a sharp racial contrast between northwestern and southeastern Europeans, maintaining that the new "non-Aryan" peoples were wholly different from earlier immigrants and innately impossible to Americanize.¹²

Henry Cabot Lodge arrived by a similar route at the same conclusion but carried it much further. What was perhaps his earliest public attack on immigration reflected simply a nationalist reaction to the crisis within American society. At that time, in 1888, he actually repudiated the injection of racial considerations into political issues. His own Anglo-Saxonism still conformed to the traditional eulogistic pattern.¹³ Events, however, soon turned his attention to invidious racial comparisons.* In 1891 Lodge published a statistical analysis, which cost him much time and effort, concerning "the distribution of ability" in the American population. By classifying the entries in a biographical encyclopedia, he tried to show "the enormous predominance" of an English racial strain over every other in contributing to the development of the United States. Although the figures in this study suggested the inferiority of every non-English group in America, thereafter Lodge concentrated his fire on the new immigration, arguing that

* In 1890, for largely partisan reasons, Lodge brought to a head a Republican drive to enact a Force Bill designed to insure Negro suffrage in the South. The attempt failed; in fact, it brought down upon Lodge the condemnation of "the best people" of Massachusetts. The next year, instead of opposing racial barriers, Lodge proceeded to champion them by opening his campaign in Congress against the new immigration. See James A. Barnes, *John G. Carlisle, Financial Statesman* (New York, 1931), 188.

it presented a supreme danger transcending political or economic considerations: it threatened "a great and perilous change in the very fabric of our race."¹⁴

To support this view, Lodge went far beyond his American contemporaries in the direction of a racial philosophy of history. During a summer in France in 1895, he happened upon a new book by Gustave Le Bon, *The Psychology of Peoples*. Le Bon was a poetic social psychologist, an enemy of democracy, and a man who lived in dread of an imminent socialist revolution. His book treated nationalities as races and races as the substrata of history. Only through crossbreeding, according to Le Bon, could a race die or miss its destiny. He saw little hope for continental Europe but thought that the English, alone among European races, had kept their purity and stability. Lodge took these ideas back to the United States and repeated them practically verbatim on the floor of the Senate in 1896 in leading the fight for the literacy test. Without restriction of the new immigration, he warned, America's fixed, inherited national character would be lost in the only way possible—by being "bred out."¹⁵

Lodge was exceptional both in his direct contact with European race-thinking and in the degree to which he embraced an ideal of racial purity. It was not so easy for others to ignore the influence of environment or to understand how a supposedly backward, inferior type could overwhelm the puissant Anglo-Saxons.

A third member of the Yankee upper crust moved more cautiously into racial nativism but exerted in the long run a more telling intellectual influence. Francis A. Walker, president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and one of the outstanding economists of his day, was virtually the only American who made an original contribution to nativist thought in the late nineteenth century. Unlike Lodge, Shaler or the rest, Walker faced up to the key Darwinian issue of the survival of the fittest.

When he awoke to the menace of the foreign-born during the great labor upheaval of the mid-eighties, it was not race but rather the European's characteristic "insolence and savagery" that gave Walker visions of "great cities threatened with darkness, riot, and pillage." He continued to think of labor unrest as the most important aspect of the foreign peril and, in fact, never indulged in comprehensive racial theorizing. But as early as 1890 he trembled at a

new influx of totally unassimilable races, representing "the very lowest stage of degradation." That these were laggards in the struggle for existence Walker had no doubt. Lest anyone should still defend the old Darwinian notion of migration as a selective process bringing America the most energetic and enterprising of Europeans, Walker neatly turned the tables, declaring that natural selection was now working in reverse. Due to the cheapness and ease of steamship transportation, the fittest now stay at home; the unfit migrate. The new immigrants, he declared in phrases that rang down through the restriction debates of the next three decades, "are beaten men from beaten races; representing the worst failures in the struggle for existence. . . . They have none of the ideas and aptitudes which . . . belong to those who are descended from the tribes that met under the oak trees of old Germany to make laws and choose chieftains."¹⁶

But still there was the hard question: How and why can such unfit groups endanger the survival of America's strong native stock? Walker held the clue long before it occurred to him to ask the question. As superintendent of the United States census of 1870, he had noticed that the rate of population growth in America was declining. At the time and for many years afterward he interpreted the decline very sensibly as a result of urbanization and industrialization. Then, when the events of the eighties and early nineties turned his attention to the racial significance of immigration, the old problem of population growth appeared in a new light. Might not the dwindling birth rate be a prudential response by the old American stock to a Darwinian struggle with immigrants capable of underbidding and outbreeding them? With an ingenious show of statistics, Walker argued in 1891 that the reproductive decline was occurring largely among the native population and that immigration rather than domestic conditions was responsible for it. In order to compete with cheap foreign labor, he said, Americans preferred to reduce the size of their families rather than lower their standard of living. Thus the foreign-born were actually replacing the native stock, not reinforcing it; in the very act of maintaining social and economic superiority, native Americans were undergoing biological defeat. In view of the new influx from southern and eastern Europe, Walker was sure that this long

process of replacement would now enter an increasingly ominous stage.¹⁷

From a racial point of view, the argument had the disadvantage of resting on social and economic determinants and therefore failing to make any real distinction between immigrant types. Nevertheless, it did effectively counter Darwinian optimism while defining the foreign danger in plainly biological terms. Like Lodge's bluster about crossbreeding, Walker's birth-rate hypothesis suggested that unobstructed natural selection might insure the survival of the worst people rather than the best. The recasting of the Anglo-Saxon tradition into the mold of a gloomy, scientific naturalism was under way.

Optimistic Crosscurrents

Before this naturalistic trend made further headway, in fact before nativists paid much attention to Walker's theory, events temporarily twisted race-thinking in a very different direction. The fears and forebodings that were pushing Anglo-Saxonism toward sharper, more dogmatic formulations suddenly lifted at the end of the century; a new era bright with hope and flushed with well-being relieved the need to define enemies and explain failures. At a time when every xenophobia subsided, racial nationalism softened, relaxed, and resumed once more its historic air of triumphant confidence. Yet, oddly, it flourished as never before.

Actually, two currents of racial nationalism had developed among American intellectuals during the 1890's. One was defensive, pointed at the foreigner within; the other was aggressive, calling for expansion overseas. Both issued, in large measure, from the same internal frustrations; both reflected the same groundswell of national feeling. But one warned the Anglo-Saxon of a danger of submergence, while the other assured him of a conquering destiny. By 1898 the danger and doom were all but forgotten, and the conquest was made. An easy and successful adventure in imperialism gave racial nationalism both an unprecedented vogue and a cheerful tone. In a torrent of popular jubilation over the Anglo-Saxon's invincibility, the need to understand his predicament scientifically dissolved in a romantic glow.¹⁸

Imperialists happily intent on absorbing Filipinos and Puerto

Ricans felt little doubt of the Anglo-Saxons' powers of assimilation. Instead of Lodge's dread of racial mixture and his insistence on the fixity of the Anglo-Saxon folk, the country now heard once more the earlier theory of John Fiske: that Anglo-Saxons possess a unique capacity to merge with other peoples while retaining their own dominant traits. Franklin H. Giddings, the first professor of sociology at Columbia University, dressed up in scientific language the old notion that immigration was recapitulating in the United States the same blend of European strains from which the English had originally emerged. His proof that the United States was still English moved the editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal* to congratulate the home of the oppressed for its success in assimilation.¹⁹ Others admitted that America's racial composition was changing but insisted that its Anglo-Saxon (or Teutonic) ideals were imposed on all comers. Albert Shaw, once one of the leading racial nativists, explained his shift away from a restrictionist position by asserting that America's power to assimilate had increased. Another imperialist felt so strong a sense of national homogeneity that he gave a new definition to the term Anglo-Saxon. All who stand together under the stars and stripes and fight for what it represents, he declared, have a right to that proud designation.²⁰

Of course, there was another, less uplifting side to this frame of mind. The prime object of the imperialist ideology, after all, was to justify imposing colonial status on backward peoples. Every Anglo-Saxonist knew that the United States was taking up "the white man's burden" in extending American control over the dark-skinned natives of the Philippines, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. Under these circumstances the Anglo-Saxon idea easily associated itself with emotions of white supremacy. In other words, while welcoming the immigrant population into the Anglo-Saxon fold, imperialists were also linking their ideal of nationality to a consciousness of color. Although a romantic idealism temporarily blurred the ideological sharpness of racial nationalism, at a deeper and more permanent level the Anglo-Saxon would henceforth symbolize the white man par excellence.

The imperialist excitement itself lasted only a short while, leaving the Anglo-Saxon tradition freighted with race-feelings and exposed again to a defensive, nativistic reaction. Overseas adventures lost their savor as soon as they engendered difficult moral prob-