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They
Who
Knock
at Our Gates

by Mary Antin



They Who Knock at Our Gates – Mary Antin

In 1914, over one million immigrants arrived in the United States, following in the footsteps of approximately ten million others who had arrived in the preceding decade. Faced with so many newcomers, many of them from backgrounds new to the American mix, voices in government and in the press had begun arguing in favor of more severely restrictionist immigration policies. In *They Who Knock at Our Gates*, Mary Antin broke down the discussion into three basic questions. First, the ethical question -- Where do we discover a right to restrict new arrivals, in light of all men's equal natural rights as declared by our founding documents? Second, the factual questions -- Who are these new immigrants, what sorts of gifts and qualities do they possess, what are their strengths and weaknesses, and what biases do we bring to our assessment of them? And third, the slippery question of individual interpretation -- How shall we decide without prejudice whether immigration is good for us, as a nation and as individual citizens? Written a century ago, Mary Antin's analysis of the "immigration question" still speaks to current readers. (Summary by Maria Kasper)

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Read by Maria Kasper
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