

What is an American. (shortened)

[...] What attachment can a poor European emigrant have for a country where he had nothing? The knowledge of the language, the love of a few kindred as poor as himself, were the only cords¹ that tied him: his country is now that which gives him land, bread, protection, and consequences²: *Ubi panis ibi patria*³, is the motto of all emigrants. What then is the American, this new man? He is either an European, or the descendant of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. *He* is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap⁴ of our great *Alma Mater*. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity⁵ will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims, who are carrying along with them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigour⁶, and industry⁷ which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle. The Americans were once scattered⁸ all over Europe; here they are incorporated into one of the finest systems of population which has ever appeared, and which will hereafter become distinct by the power of the different climates they inhabit. The American ought therefore to love this country much better than that wherein either he or his forefathers were born. Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labour; his labour is founded on the basis of nature, *self-interest*; can it want a stronger allurements? Wives and children, who before in vain demanded of him a morsel⁹ of bread, now, fat and frolicsome¹⁰, gladly help their father to clear those fields whence exuberant¹¹ crops are to arise to feed and to clothe them all; without any part being claimed, either by a despotic¹² prince, a rich abbot¹³, or a mighty lord. Here religion demands but little of him; a small voluntary salary¹⁴ to the minister and gratitude to God; can he refuse these? The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions. From involuntary idleness¹⁵, servile¹⁶ dependence, penury¹⁷, and useless labour, he has passed to toils¹⁸ of a very different nature, rewarded by ample¹⁹ subsistence²⁰. - This is an American. [...]

(458 words)

Quelle:

<http://books.google.de/books?id=a7e92ie1h68C&pg=PA54&dq=%22letters+from+an+american+farmer%22+life+he+has+embraced&hl=de&sa=X&ei=tzYjT8uVHZGk-gaT5oTjCA&ved=0CDoQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false>

¹**cord** thin rope made of twisted threads – ²**consequence** here: importance – ³**Ubi panis ibi patria (latin)** where there is bread, there is my country – ⁴**lap** upper part of the legs of seated person – ⁵**posterity** descendants – ⁶**vigour** strenght, energy, enthusiasm – ⁷**industry** here: continuous hard work – ⁸**to scatter** to move apart, to separate widely – ⁹**morsel** very small piece of food – ¹⁰**frolicsome** happy, enthusiastic – ¹¹**exuberant** growing strongly and plentifully – ¹²**despotic** cruel and oppressive ruler with unlimited power; tyrant – ¹³**abbot** head of a monastery or abbey – ¹⁴**salary** wages, pay, earnings – ¹⁵**idleness** laziness, inactivity – ¹⁶**servile** submissive, obedient – ¹⁷**penury** poverty, need – ¹⁸**toil** hard work – ¹⁹**ample** (more than) enough – ²⁰**subsistence** personal requirements (food or money) a person needs in order to stay alive