

MISUNDERSTANDING OF EASTERN AND WESTERN STATES REGARDING ORIENTAL IMMIGRATION

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The people who for sixty years have been building for themselves homes on the Pacific slope have in their veins, as have their kin in the East from whom they parted, the blood of the Puritan and the Cavalier, intermingled by the infusion from European countries. The short space of time during which they have lived apart and the few miles which separate them from each other have not caused them to become strangers. The pioneers of the West carried thither, and their descendants have inherited, the traditions, the laws, the customs, the ideals of their ancestors on the Atlantic. If, then, there is a difference of opinion or a misunderstanding between the people of the East and those of the West on the subject of Oriental immigration to the United States, it must be due solely to environment.

The people of the New England and Middle States have for more than half a century been accustomed to seeing the great flood of European immigrants pouring through their gates. While notes of warning have frequently been uttered against this invasion, the people at large have noticed that in the second or third generation the newcomers have generally become assimilated with our own population and in the main the country has benefited by their coming. The easterners have not, as yet, faced the problem of an influx of aliens unassimilable with ourselves.

But on the shores of the Pacific the white man, at first curiously noticing the incoming advance-guard of the Asiatic races, soon took genuine alarm at the thought that untold millions of these people might domicile themselves with us, introducing to our people dangerous forms of vice and creating a labor situation which it was feared would banish the white laborer from the coast; and it was also perceived that this vast exodus of coolies would not appreciably

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diminish the supply in the over-populated Orient. It was comparatively easy to stem the tide when it was the Chinese who were coming; the problem now is, in many respects, an entirely different one. While we are grappling with the question of the influx of Japanese and are uncertain as to the final outcome—or, at least, as to the method of achieving the only solution which will be conceded on the coast—we are threatened with an invasion of England's half-starved, superstitious, caste-bound Hindus, whose evil propensities in certain directions seemed delightfully interesting fiction coming from the fascinating pen of Kipling, but are now discovered to be none too truthfully portrayed by him. The West is alarmed.

The antipathy existing in the states beyond the Rocky Mountains to the natives of Nippon is due partly to racial, partly to economic causes. While the few may dream of the coming Utopia where the "Brotherhood of Man" has become an assured fact, the masses in every nation are still governed largely by inherited prejudices, and of all these race prejudice is, perhaps, the strongest. When an occasional marriage of a white woman to a Japanese raises a storm of protest among the white people of the community, it is no greater than that raised by the Japanese themselves, and for the same reason; each race is opposed to the intermarriage because it thinks its own member is degrading himself or herself by becoming a party to it.

There exists no prouder or more sensitive race than the Japanese, and to this fact is due, in great degree, the difficulty of dealing with the situation. The methods pursued in the exclusion of the Chinese, if followed in the case of their island neighbors, would undoubtedly lead to serious trouble, if not to open hostilities. Despite certain warlike utterances in some of the western newspapers, the great majority of the people on the Pacific Coast are fully alive to the horrors of war and do not wish recklessly to provoke one with any nation.

Again, the experience of the southern states in dealing with an alien race, even though domiciled there for centuries, has served as a vivid warning to the people of the West to avoid the perplexing questions which have for so long harassed the South. They believe that one such race problem should be sufficient to cause us to forever guard against the introduction of another.

The economic questions involved in the employment of Japanese
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labor are complex, and there is no unanimity of opinion on this subject among the people of the Pacific states. There are two prominent interests desiring more or less freedom of entry for the Asiatic races—the steamship companies and the horticulturist and farmer. The reasons actuating the former are obvious and need not be adverted to. But the question of labor in the orchards and vineyards and on the farms is of vital interest to the men by whose efforts there are produced annually in California alone fruit crops valued at thirty millions of dollars. On account of climatic and other conditions, many white men are averse to performing certain portions of the farm and orchard work. In many cases where they have been employed, there has been a tendency among them to quit their employment when the first pay-day arrived and to find congenial company in the saloons of the nearest town. It is not a question of low wages altogether, for Japanese frequently earn from three to five dollars per day in the harvest season. The crying need of the orchardist and farmer is reliable labor, and it is claimed that the only laborer who has yet come up to the requirements is the Chinese. He is as a general rule patient, reliable and uncomplaining, and will faithfully perform any contract he may enter into even at a pecuniary loss to himself, but he is barred by the exclusion act. The Japanese laborer is not as honest as the Chinese. He has no scruples about violating a contract with his white employer when he sees that by so doing he can place the owner at such disadvantage that, in order to save his crop, he will submit to demands that are extortionate. Nor is the Japanese content to remain an employee, but by cunning and trickery he forces the white land owner either to lease or sell to him his land. A favorite method of dealing with a white lessor is so to prune his orchard that in two or three years it will produce no revenue, and the discouraged owner will sell for any price.

The fruit-growers of California, in convention assembled, have officially memorialized Congress demanding that the Chinese exclusion law be modified and that a fixed and liberal number of Chinese and an equal number of Japanese be permitted admission annually. Their claim is that it is practically impossible to secure white men to perform certain work necessary in the orchards and on the farms—the primary processes, so-called—and that Asiatic labor in that particular is, therefore, non-competitive.

Opposed to the comparatively few who can profitably utilize the labor of the Orient are the white workingmen, who believe that the presence of large numbers of Japanese and Chinese laborers will tend to a reduction in wages and a lowering of the general standard of living. The leaders of union labor are particularly active in denunciation of Asiatic immigration. To the student of labor conditions on the Pacific Coast, it seems undeniable that the unrestricted entry of Japanese laborers would eventually destroy the home of the American workingman. They live together thickly in violation of all sanitary rules, and where they settle in numbers the American is forced to vacate. If he would, the white man could not live as do these aliens. Nor do the immigrants remain in the country districts, engaged in farm work; large sections of cities and towns are occupied by them and in many branches of labor they are in direct competition with the whites.

For the above and many other reasons there is rapidly crystallizing a sentiment, not only in the western part of the United States, but to an even more intense degree in British Columbia, that this portion of North America must remain "a white man's country." Californians are at present content to accept the assurances from Washington that this end can be attained by diplomacy. In the meantime the state government is taking steps to ascertain how many Japanese there are within its borders and whether they have ceased coming, as has been stated more than once.

There has been in the eastern states a very great misconception of the position of California with reference to the admission of Japanese to the public schools. Many of the hostile criticisms in the newspapers are predicated upon the assumption that the benefits of education were being denied children of Japanese parentage. This is erroneous. Boys born in America of Asiatic parents will eventually become voters, and California realizes, as fully as do any of its sister states, the necessity of having an intelligent, educated electorate. It is desirous of giving to them the same education that it does to white children. But the people of the state do object seriously to "Japanese school-boys" of eighteen years and upward attending the primary and intermediate grades and studying with white children many years their juniors. The Japanese code of morals is constructed on an entirely different principle from ours. The radical difference in the standards of morality may be illus-

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trated by reference to the case of a Japanese boy who was criminally prosecuted last year for sending through the mails to a white girl schoolmate an objectionable letter. While such matters may be entirely proper in Japan, California does not intend to tolerate them, nor would any other state in the Union do so.

For many years the city of San Francisco has maintained a separate school for the instruction of Chinese children, with white teachers and the same course of study as in other schools of the city. Chinese parents have made no protest, but have generally agreed that separate schools are preferable. But when a proposition is made to have Japanese attend so-called Oriental schools a storm is raised which causes extreme agitation in Tokyo and in Washington and column upon column of denunciation in the press of both countries.

California claims that the government of its public schools is a subject purely within state control; that the federal government has no power to exercise any supervision over the matter; and the state proposes to regulate the schools so as to confer the greatest good upon the greatest number. There is no desire, except upon the part of a very few persons, to stir up race hatred. On the contrary, it is believed that separate schools would assist very materially in arriving at an intelligent solution of the problems involved, by removing one very serious cause of irritation.

The West is not unduly or at all excited over the question of immigration from Japan; it is only determined. It has heard from Washington that the Mikado's government is going to refuse permission to its subjects to come to the United States. It hopes this will be done, but it is somewhat dubious when it hears rumors from day to day of the vast numbers of Japanese who are debarking in British Columbia and stealing their way across the border. If the influx cannot be stopped in one way it can in some other, and the West is insistent in the demand that it be done by some means, and soon. The Pacific states comprise an empire of vast potentialities and capable of supporting a population of many millions. Those now living there propose that it shall continue to be a home for them and their children, and that they shall not be overwhelmed and driven eastward by an ever-increasing yellow and brown flood.