



Mayor Phelan at his desk in the City Hall

The Case Against the Chinaman

By James D. Phelan, Mayor of San Francisco

THE expiration, on May 5 next, of the Geary Exclusion Law has again brought before the country the consideration of the Chinese question. That law and the treaty with China embodying its provisions, dated May 8, 1894, exclude Chinese laborers and admit merchants, students and travelers.

The reason why Congress limited the duration of the Exclusion Law was, no doubt, to observe the condition of the people affected and to be guided thereby in its future action. Taking advantage of this, the Chinese Minister at Washington, Mr. Wu Ting-fang, and the Chinese Consul-General at San Francisco, Mr. Ho Yow, have inaugurated an extra-diplomatic movement whose object is to influence public opinion and the deliberations of Congress against the reenactment of the expiring law.

Seeing, therefore, the necessity of taking immediate action, the municipal authorities of San Francisco called a convention for November 21 last, which met in San Francisco to express the sentiments of the State. Three thousand delegates from county boards, municipal bodies, labor unions and commercial and civic associations assembled, and after two days' discussion, without a dissenting voice, memorialized the President and the Congress of the United States asking them to reenact the Geary Exclusion Law and to continue the present treaty with China.

The Menace of Coolie Invasions

It may be recalled that in 1868 the Burlingame treaty was negotiated, and under its protection 75,000 Chinese coolies had, before the year 1880, found their way to California under contracts for work. The State was ablaze with indignation when it realized that the white population had been thus driven out of employment, and that men, women and children were marching the streets of the cities, hungry for bread. Kearnyism, which stood simply for vigorous opposition to Chinese coolieism, swept the State, carried the new constitution and elected the Mayor of San Francisco.

In 1882 Congress passed the first Exclusion Law, which was reenacted in 1892, and is now again before Congress. The effects of exclusion have been satisfactory and beneficent. According to the census of 1900 the 75,000 Chinese population of California in 1880 has been reduced to 45,500. Industrial conditions have greatly improved and a desirable Caucasian population has flowed naturally into the State.

The people, of course, want a continuation of a policy that has brought them prosperity and population. They object to the Chinese on the ground that they are a non-assimilative race, and claim that the experiences of the last thirty-five years have demonstrated it. For twenty years, or ever since the passage of the first Exclusion Act, the Chinese have not been disturbed. They have taken employment freely in every branch of industry, and yet they are the same sullen, non-assimilative people that they were at that time and have maintained their racial peculiarities intact. In fact, Ho Yow admits in a recent article that they work more cheaply than the white man; they live more cheaply; they send their money to China; most of them have no intention of remaining in the United States. They do not adopt American manners, but live in colonies and not after the American fashion. He might have said that they are governed by their own laws; that they have tribunals of their own; that in most cases they are not free agents, but exist and find employment under the patronage, if not the ownership, of the Six Chinese Companies; that they are slaves to the opium habit; that the vast majority of them are single men who sleep on shelves in crowded cellars or rooms, subsisting principally on rice; that as members of Tongs they wage war upon one another after the manner of the Corsican vendetta; that Highbinders, professional blackmailers and assassins are paid for protection and to execute revenge; that the Chinese breed disease, and that the unsanitary condition of their quarters is a constant menace to the public health.

The Impossibility of Americanizing the Mongol

The San Francisco Board of Health says, in a recent report, that there is no remedy for the evils of Chinatown apart from its utter demolition. Its vices, its gambling, its female slavery and its opium joints make a police problem most difficult of solution. Fines amounting to upward of \$3000 a month are collected from Chinese; the jails and prisons are full of them, and still the conditions remain which give contributing force to the conclusions of the Board of Health.

The Chinese do not bring their wives in their immigration because they intend, when a competency is earned, to return to their native land. Until this year no statute had been passed by the California Legislature forbidding the intermarriage of whites and Chinese, and yet very few such marriages have ever taken place. The issue of them develop the virtues of neither race, but exhibit the vices of both.

The Chinese cannot, therefore, be moulded, as are other nationalities, into the American stock, the composite of many assimilative peoples. The Chinese have been and are a permanently foreign element, and, like every foreign substance in the body or the body politic, yield no nourishment, derange the system, produce disease, and unless encysted, as in the case of the San Francisco Chinatown, will ultimately imperil the life.

We are therefore presented with a simple question, whether we shall admit the Chinese coolies in unlimited numbers, first to overwhelm California, the most exposed and accessible State, and then to inundate the rest of the country. The Chinese work incessantly. They possess a certain imitative ability which enables them to enter all skilled employment. They take no holidays, their hours for labor are unlimited, and they are willing to work for the lowest wages. The consequences of their immigration are therefore inevitable—they will drive the American laborer and artisan out of employment, displace the sons and daughters of the pioneer, and, by their presence, arrest the settlement of the country by a desirable population.

There is nothing new or local in the policy of Exclusion. The Federal immigration laws to-day exclude the contract and the pauper labor of Europe, and the coolies coming from the best of the Chinese lands, the Canton Province, whence most immigration so far has come, are both contract and pauper labor.

The Perils of Cheap Coolie Labor

"Cheap labor" is the only defense made for the Chinaman. It is urged that cheap labor is a good thing for a country and that it contributes largely to the production of wealth. But America is not solely concerned in the production of wealth. It has other interests and duties. Its per capita productive energy to-day is, however, greater than any other country—due to the invention and improvement of machinery, which has been made for the most part by its own intelligent workmen. Progressively will the productive capacity of the people increase. At the rate of twelve per cent. per decade of growth, this country, one hundred years hence, will have a population of two hundred and thirty millions. Production and population will advance together, and the home market, to which Chinese labor does not contribute, will be preserved.

Do we therefore need to stimulate our production by letting down the bars to the immigration of non-consuming and non-assimilative coolies? Is it not, after all, a question of holding this continent for development by Caucasians, who have so far succeeded so well? Regarded solely as a laboring class, as you would look upon the slaves of the South prior to the war, the Chinese are, no doubt, entitled to consideration; but can we, in consonance with our institutions, segregate a labor class and regard it simply by its capacity for work? If so, the Chinese meet nearly every requirement. They work for low wages, and they are not concerned about their political, religious or social condition.

But America has dignified labor, has invested its people with political rights and civic duties. In fact, the Government is controlled by majorities, and the majority of the people of this country, were Chinese immigration unlimited, would be directly and most harmfully affected. The effect would be disastrous. It would be putting an army of single men, inured to ceaseless and unrelenting toil, content with the longest hours and the lowest wages and the most meagre food, without wives, appetites or aspirations, in competition with the American citizen, who has been bred by our civilization to family life and civic duties. The result would be either he would come down to the Chinese standard or be destroyed; or, again, after long suffering, during which our form of Government, dependent upon an intelligent and prosperous suffrage, would be shaken to its foundations, he would rise up and, perhaps outside the forms of law, resist the invasion.

I am, however, absolutely convinced that as soon as the question is understood, if it be not fully understood now, the majority of our countrymen, who would thus be directly affected, will give, as they have given in the past, their support to the peaceful and wise remedy now proposed, namely, the reenactment of the Chinese Exclusion Law.

Why Yellow Citizens are Undesirable

This country has been warned by the experience of the South and knows the bitterness of racial animosity. Suffrage is a privilege conferred by the several States upon citizens where it is believed that its exercise will be for the benefit of the State. The Chinese, having no appreciation of the blessings of liberty and not being attached to our institutions, socially and physically non-assimilative, mere contract laborers, subject to the orders of their masters, could not be safely intrusted with the right to vote. And yet, Ho Yow intimates blandly that they not only should be admitted freely, but should be admitted to all the privileges of citizenship. There are four hundred millions of human beings in China. They are attached to their land by a superstitious bond, and, when they are dead, their bones must repose in its sacred soil. It is the Celestial Kingdom. They make incursions into other lands; spoil-seekers, but never permanent residents.

In Hawaii to-day there are 25,000 Chinese. They receive good wages according to their standard. At home they are

paid no more than two dollars a month for farm work, and there they are paid thirty dollars, but they cannot be induced to remain after they have accumulated \$1000, which they consider a fair competency.

So, far from seeking an asylum, offering allegiance and understanding our institutions, necessary prerequisites to citizenship, they are not even bona-fide settlers; they are automations wound up for work. They make no contribution to the country's enduring interests. In the contemplation of the Constitution they are mere machines. This is a republic of men. They come along after the country has been discovered, wrested from despotism, made free, opened up, settled by the pioneer and occupied by his posterity, to participate in the prosperity which liberty, invention and industry have developed and civilization has crowned.

The only thing they can offer in exchange is their labor; but the labor is already provided by those of our own household. Chinamen can make no contribution to citizenship, and, if their services are accepted, those who are capable of doing the work, supporting our schools, churches and institutions, recruiting our free population and fighting our battles, are crowded out. We abandon our fields and our factories to a servile class.

The Mongolian Immigrant a Social Parasite

The question before the country to-day is not so much the increase of more wealth as the equitable distribution of the great wealth we produce. The reorganization of labor and capital must be on lines of greater sympathy and better understanding, and the introduction of the Chinese, a race so alien to our own, would permanently prevent the improvement of the relations between the employer and the employee. Industrial monopoly, taking a short-sighted view, might be able, in the presence of a vast Chinese population, to coerce labor and reduce the standard of wages, hours and living. In fact, the tendency of unenlightened selfishness would be to give preference in employment to the Chinese themselves. Land monopoly, which destroyed Rome, when slaves tilled the soil and drove the farmer to the capital, would find an easy means of repeating history under conditions which the presence of the Chinese would create.

The brotherhood of man is a doctrine which deters many a well-meaning American from taking advanced grounds against the exclusion of undesirable peoples; but the East has shut out the pauper and contract labor of Europe, and the West demands only the same treatment of the aliens who are pressing for admission at her gates. The brotherhood of man can be best served by the Chinese realizing that they have a great industrial destiny in their own country, and that there, under the stimulus of American ideas, energy and invention, they can improve their own conditions. Then, merchants, travelers and students may come here as before and carry back the benefits of our improvements and experiments; and, when they have more merchants and more travelers and more educated men, our gates shall be opened to them as guests, but not as parasites. The Chinese coolies, by every test, are parasitical. They live off the body on which they alight, because their wages, instead of being reinvested, are taken out of the country. They are neither a necessary nor desirable part of our American system. The policy of protection, which guards us against the trade, logically should also guard us against the man.

The Old Solution of the Problem the Best

There have been timid protests against exclusion on the ground that our commerce with China and the friendly relation produced by our island possessions, and our participation in Oriental affairs, should be encouraged. Granted. But since 1880 exclusion has had no deterrent effect upon our Chinese commerce. Indeed, it has increased fifty per cent. during that period. We stand second to Great Britain alone in the volume of our export and our import trade, according to the Consular Reports of August, 1901. Our diplomatic relations with China have never been more cordial. By treaty, she acquiesced in our domestic policy of exclusion.

So, as a race, labor, trade and political question, there seems to be no good reason for departing from the solution which we have already found, or from the policy which we have based upon it.

Europe, in the last two thousand years, has been frequently exposed to invasion by Asiatic hordes, which, had it not been resisted by force of arms, the civilization which we enjoy to-day and of which we are a part would have gone down in barbarism.

A peaceable and insidious invasion from China would constantly reduce the standards which have been established by American civilization, and what force could not accomplish in past centuries might ultimately be accomplished on this free continent under the fostering influences of mistaken and foolishly generous laws.

The duty before this country is the betterment of man. It is by the improvement of political conditions and not by their debasement through the infiltration of inferior races that we shall succeed. Let us accept the settled law of the country with respect to Chinese Exclusion and turn our minds to higher and more important things. Let our influence radiate over the world, and for that purpose, if brotherhood be one of our objects, let us keep the patriotic fires burning and not suffer them to be dimmed.