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THE CHINAMAN AS COLONIST

“As the only people (the Chinese) who remain effective and ambitious in tropical climes we need their help in our new (colonial) undertaking, but we also need great caution in handling and guiding them.”—PROFESSOR WILLIAMS of Yale, “The Problem of Chinese Immigration in Farther Asia.” Washington, 1900.

His Increase in the United States and Australia—Singapore—Hong Kong—Industrial Value

THE national flag of China is rarely if ever displayed in the ports of the white man or even his colonies. Yet it is hard to name a country wherein the Chinaman is not profitably engaged in a variety of occupations ranging from a wash-tub to a banking-house. Hong-Kong, which was but a pestilential desert when England first occupied it (1841), is now one of the half dozen great seaports of the world, so crowded with Chinese that a large share of the population drips over the sea-wall into thousands of sampans (small native boats).

Singapore, another island which England occupied only eighty years ago, as a part of the Malay Peninsula, has attracted a teeming Chinese population, which has not merely asserted its superiority over the native of East India, but is competing successfully with merchants of our race. Such has been the stimulating ef-

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fect of British administration that the Chinaman, who in Peking and Canton conceals his wealth, makes such a display of it in Singapore and Hong-Kong as to astonish new arrivals. It is no uncommon thing at Singapore to meet on the Drive Chinese merchants, taking their evening airing in perfectly appointed European carriages, drawn by costly and well-harnessed horses, and with coachmen and footmen in livery on the box. The same men would in their own country crouch in the back of a springless two-wheeled cart and simulate poverty. In Java and the Philippines, though Dutch and Spaniards have passed successive laws discouraging to Chinese settlement, neither government has more than temporarily checked emigration from the Celestial Empire. In Batavia, as in Manila, Chinese competition affects nearly every branch of human industry, from day labor in the plantation to the chartering of freight steamers.

The United States has not legislated liberally for the Chinese, and therefore the development of the Philippines will probably remain less satisfactory than that of corresponding English territory in those regions.

Throughout the East Indies and the hundreds of islands north of Australia, between the Indian Ocean and the shores of South America, the Chinese are spreading themselves in proportion as they are not forbidden by superior force. Like the Jews, they show good or bad qualities according to the administration of the country they select. It is no mere accident that the best type of Jew is to be found in England and the vilest in Russia. Did we take advantage of this warn-

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ing, Manila would soon attract as good Chinamen as Singapore, and San Francisco would have as respectable a Chinese quarter as Hong-Kong.

Australia shares with the United States—in part, at least—a frank hostility to Chinese immigration, although neither country can execute its own laws on the subject to their full extent.

The Chinaman has a quality which makes him in many respects the best colonist in the world. I refer to his extraordinary capacity to endure extremes of heat and cold.

When the Pei-ho River is frozen tight and European gun-boats are locked fast at Tien-tsin; when the north wind from across the Mongolian Desert produces a temperature suggesting that of Dakota in January; when all who can do so wrap themselves in furs, and the long camel-trains from beyond the Great Wall move like a mass of frosted figures—throughout such winters the Chinese coolie, in his cotton quilting, labors from morning until night, or squats in the street beside his little stall, making no more of his Siberian winter than the Russian moujik in his coat of sheep-skin.

The Chinaman on the Canton River under a tropical sun astonishes the white sailor by labor so energetic and so persistent as to appear incredible in any human creature. Summer and winter, near the equator or the arctic circle, all weathers seem alike to the Chinaman. I have seen them in July and August at Singapore and Hong-Kong, and in the winter season in Canada and Corea, in South America at the mouth of the Orinoco and in the Red Sea in the stoke-hole

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of a mail-steamer. Where the white man shrivels up with the cold or turns limp with the heat, John Chinaman jogs along with a big load on his back, crooning a sort of a sing-song and wondering why other people do not take life easily. On my first journey from Hong-Kong to San Francisco, in 1876, our ship carried 2,000 Chinamen, and the captain assured me that they were cleaner in their personal habits, gave him infinitely less trouble, than twenty Irishmen. In 1898 we had a deck load of some 1,500 Chinese returning from Singapore to Hong-Kong, and so clean and quiet were they that their existence was hardly suspected by the white passengers on the upper deck. They did their own cooking in their own way, slept on their mats, kept the decks scrupulously clean, and did not quarrel. I am inclined to think that these passengers in three days did not dirty the ship so much as would have done steerage passengers from Queenstown in half an hour. In that same year one of the splendid ships of the "Empress" Line, which carried me from Yokohama to Vancouver, had about 1,000 Chinese forward, and these were, according to law, fumigated on arrival in Canada. It was a ridiculous precaution in the opinion of the captain as well as of those who knew the Chinese. If any fumigation of emigrants were justified, it was not on the Pacific Slope, but in New York or Montreal—against our fellow Christians!

In the United States we have found the Chinaman an industrial blessing—nay, an industrial necessity. In the construction of our first railway, joining Atlantic and Pacific, he came under contract to work

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as a coolie in shovelling dirt and lifting rails and sleepers. It was expected that on the completion of his term he would disappear along with the caboose of the construction train. But we miscalculated completely the intelligence of our guest, and in a few years the mining camps of California were enriched by a new race whose prosperity in American soil was checked only by occasional mob violence. Often have I seen in the California of twenty-five years ago the Chinaman working over diggings which white men regarded as exhausted. They grew rich by working at occupations which seemed undignified to the newly arrived emigrant from Ireland. Officers of the United States Army stationed in our remote territories have assured me that they would have had to do their own house-work but for John Chinaman. He occupied the ground which no other emigrant could occupy so well—turning his hand to raising vegetables, waiting at table, cooking the dinner, or taking the baby out for an airing.

But the political influence of San Francisco labor unions was strong enough to get a law passed excluding the Chinese from the United States, or, at least, preventing any more from coming in.

Thanks, however, to the laxity of our frontier officials, the Chinese have trickled in over the 3,000 miles of northern frontier so successfully that to-day there is hardly a hamlet in the United States where one or more Chinamen are not earning a competency—at least at the wash-tub. Here is a colonization less than half a century old, vigorously discouraged by the Government of the United States and wholly unsupported

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by the home government, proceeding silently, steadily, and irresistibly upon a career of industrial conquest, the extent of which is practically the whole earth. There are Chinamen in the West Indies and in South America, as well as in Canada and the United States. On the Pacific they man English and American steamships from the steward's pantry to the stoke-hole. The North German Lloyd carries a fully equipped Chinese laundry from Bremen to Shanghai, as well as shifts of Chinese firemen. They would carry Chinese stewards as well did they not fear political opposition in Parliament instigated by the trade unions.

During the battle of Manila Bay the Chinamen who served under Admiral Dewey as firemen, stewards, etc., showed as much fighting zeal and courage as any blue jacket could wish. An American officer, who had some Chinamen under him employed during the battle in passing ammunition, told me these kept constantly exposing themselves in their eagerness to know how the fight was going on. They would keep popping up from below, shout out to the men at the guns: "Give them Hell, boys!" then disappear like prairie dogs, after more ammunition. Their zeal was no doubt stimulated by the fond anticipation that American administration in the Philippines would be more favorable to them than that of Spain.

The Chinaman is colonizing the world in the sense that the German has done so—he is the only man who appears to love work for its own sake.

The Chinaman resembles the German in his capacity to leave his country without worrying much in regard to religious observances. The Irish colonist's

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first question is, how near the Roman Catholic Church may be. The Chinaman and the German care very little whether there is any church in the neighborhood—they don't even care much as to who is president or king.

In the summer of 1900 the streets of New York echoed to the howlings of a mob of white men who seized inoffensive negroes, beat them brutally, and in some instances left them for dead on the pavement. Such an outbreak is the manifestation of a race hatred which requires but a flimsy excuse to demonstrate that the equality of black and white is, in the United States at least, not a popular doctrine in all parts of the country. We have ourselves raised the negro question by declaring the black man equal to the white in political rights. The Chinaman we exclude completely from citizenship. There would be more sense in recognizing the Chinaman as our equal than the negro. But neither would be wise, or even expedient.

The Chinaman we have hitherto looked upon as a stranger who would soon return to his own country; whom we could, therefore, afford to ignore politically. Having no vote, our politicians have not bothered themselves on his behalf, and, having no political friends in the country, the mobs have felt that they could assault him with impunity. But mobs and political disabilities have alike failed to discourage him, and he is now an important economic element in the United States.

So far he has shown himself but timidly, and has but in few instances reared his head as an organizer of labor. On the Pacific Coast he figures extensively

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in farming, and it is to him that California mainly owes her commanding position as a fruit producer.

In the near future we shall no doubt see him spreading over the plantations of the Southern States; cultivating the bottom-lands of our Gulf States; reviving agriculture in Mississippi and South Carolina; acquiring large estates; beating the negro at his own work, and, ultimately, making a New South of industrial and political security.

We have hitherto thought that negroes only could cultivate the bottom-lands of our Gulf States—we shall discover that the Chinaman can do so on better terms; that, though we may pay him more per day, we shall get a reward from his labor that will amply cover the increased outlay. In Natal, on the occasion of my visit, some 40,000 natives of India were engaged upon the sugar plantations. That was indeed carrying coals to Newcastle—to bring to the habitat of the negro, men of another race to work in the tropical sun on the low lands about Durban. Yet the Natal planters cheerfully paid the cost, because experience had taught them that they could not depend upon the negro for steady work—at least not under the political freedom and the other conditions prevailing in South Africa.

On a small island like Santa Cruz or Barbados in the West Indies, the negro who takes a contract to work for a specified term can be compelled to fulfil that contract, because there is nowhere near to which he can run away and support himself in idleness. The police would soon bring back a defaulting negro in such an island. But in Natal, the Kaffir who is tired

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of work, slips off in a night and the next day is among his own people in Zululand, and can kick his heels in the sun while his wives pick bananas for him and get his dinner ready. In the United States we have no legal machinery by which a negro can be compelled to carry out a labor contract effectively; and, consequently, planting is not an ideal occupation for him who has to advance capital in an enterprise which at any moment may be seriously affected by a holiday—and his black workmen may select the harvest time for this recreation!

The Chinaman has the great merit of being indifferent to holidays, as he is to heat and cold. If he makes you a promise you may be sure that he will keep it. The manager of the Hong-Kong and Shanghai Bank told me that on the Chinese coast he employed hundreds of Chinese who had ample opportunity for defrauding him if they chose, but that the idea of loss through Chinese dishonesty never entered his head or the head of any other white merchant. The Chinese have the notion of commercial honesty highly developed, and local companies are found who will insure you against all manner of dishonesty, from that of a scullery-boy to the irregularity of a bank cashier. If a Chinaman gives you his word on a bargain you may count upon him, even though the bargain prove unprofitable to him. Commercial honesty may not be the highest form of human honesty, but, such as it is, it is essentially Chinese.

The negro has no trace of this instinct. He may promise you solemnly to pick your cotton crop on a certain day, and at the time he means well by you;

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but if on the morning of that day some whim calls him to the town—a dance, a cake-walk, or a picnic of some kind—the cotton crop may rot for all the thought he will give it until after he has exhausted his appetite for pleasure. With a Chinaman that cotton would have been his only thought until the last fluff had been picked.

So far the Chinaman is known on the Atlantic seaboard mainly as a laundryman—a day worker. In Hong-Kong he has, however, already established himself as a competitor to the white contractor for manufactured articles. He is already building steam-launches, to say nothing of repairing ships. At Shanghai the Chinaman is running steam cotton-mills, and at Macao I visited a silk-mill entirely peopled by Chinese—men, women, and children. The military necessities of the Chinese Empire are bound to increase the demand for local mechanics, and familiarity with steam machinery will, little by little, breed a mechanical class of laborers, who will threaten our machine shops quite as much as our laundries. In the interval between my first and second visit to China (twenty-three years) many changes had occurred, but almost exclusively under the shadow of the white man's settlements. It is not yet clear to what extent the mass of China is accessible to new ideas. The heads of manufacturing concerns in China, with whom I talked in 1898, were unanimous on the subject of the Chinaman as a rival mechanic. They regarded him as an excellent laborer under white guidance, but as a feeble creature when left to himself. The Chinaman is, indeed, too much of a machine himself ever to be a successful mechanic.

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In America every mechanic worthy of the name is at the same time an inventor. In China the coolie works day in and day out, and all his life, without apparently reflecting upon the possibilities of his machine. To him all things are of the past—he has not yet come to regard his work as an opening to the future. In the dockyards of Hong-Kong the laborers are nearly all Chinese, and their wages a mere trifle compared to what an American would be earning on the Delaware; yet the English manager told me that this labor was so painfully mechanical, and required so much supervision, that its value was thereby much impaired. The white man got more money because he earned it. If the Chinese built a man-of-war to-day, the chances are that they would continue repeating the same type for the next fifty years, irrespective of any improvements that might have been made in the interval.

The triumph of Industrial China is a remote contingency. For the moment we have before us a pressing question, presented to us by newly acquired colonies. These are tropical countries in which the white man does not do good field labor, and in which the work of the black man is far from satisfactory. The Chinaman can do that work—he is doing corresponding work in British colonies—his work is satisfactory, and there is every reason for thinking that under proper restrictions he would prove as valuable to Cuba and Luzon as he has already proved to Singapore and Hong-Kong.