

# **Graduating Address of Yan Phou Lee, at Yale College.**

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The American Missionary.  
Volume 41, Issue 9  
September 1887  
pp. 269-273

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2006

GRADUATING ADDRESS OF YAN PHOU LEE, AT YALE COLLEGE.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CHINESE QUESTION.

The torrents of hatred and abuse which have periodically swept over the Chinese industrial class in America had their sources in the early California days. They grew gradually in strength, and, uniting in one mighty stream, at last broke the barriers with which justice, humanity and the Constitution of the Republic had until then restrained their fury.

The catastrophe was too terrible, and has made too deep an impression to be easily forgotten. Even if Americans are disposed to forget, the Chinese will not fail to keep the sad record of faith unkept, of persecution permitted by an enlightened people, of rights violated without redress in a land where all are equal before the law.

Sad it is that in a Christian community only a feeble voice here and there has been raised against this public wrong; while the enemies of the Chinese laborer may be counted by the million. Yet these men, having everything their own way, are still dissatisfied and cannot rest secure until all the Chinese laborers have been driven out or killed off with the connivance of a perverted public opinion. Is it not high time for good men to \_\_\_ themselves and say to the enemy of industry and order, "Halt! thus far shalt thou go, and no farther"? For be assured that after the Chinese have all departed, those men who are determined to get high wages for doing nothing will turn against other peaceful sons of toil; and who would venture to say that there will be absolute safety for the native American? Mob-rule knows no respect for persons; the Chinese were attacked first simply because they were the weakest. I do not deny that the anti-Chinese agitation has some *show* reason. But its strength rests on three erroneous assumptions, by proving the groundlessness of which the whole superstructure of fallacy and falsehood can be made to totter.

First, it is assumed that the work to be done and the fund for labor's remuneration are fixed quantities, and that if the Chinese are employed so much will be taken from other laborers. It is sufficient to reply that no economist holds that view.

Secondly, it is assumed that the Pekin authorities are anxious to get rid of its redundant population. Nothing can be more absurd. They have been always, and are still, averse to the emigration of

their subjects; so much so that they yielded only to the inducements and concessions offered by this Government, which are embodied in the Burlingame Treaty. Another proof is the readiness with which they consented to the limitation of Chinese immigration when the Angell Treaty was negotiated.

Thirdly, it is assumed that China's four hundred millions are only waiting for an opening to "inundate" this country. This is soberly asserted and has the effect of the Gorgon-head; for who is not stunned at the bare mention of this appalling and impending disaster? It would be terrible if it were possible--if it could be true.

But there is no cause for apprehension. The immigration of my compatriots has been exclusively from Canton and the region around it within a radius of a hundred miles. The population of this district is estimated at 5,000,000. Not a single immigrant has hailed from any other part of the Empire. The Mongolization of America, therefore, is an event as far off as the Millennium. For after twenty-five years of unrestricted immigration, your patriotic agitators could muster up only 200,000 Chinese laborers in all the States and Territories. Now place this figure side by side with the 3,000,000 of immigrant princes from the "English Poland," which has never had more than 8,000,000 inhabitants at any one time, and you will be struck with the contrast.

What reason can we give why so few comparatively come from China? The Chinese are by nature and from habit gregarious, but not migratory. They dislike to cut adrift from the ties of kindred, the associations of home, the traditions of fatherland. The belief that their welfare in the future life depends on the proper burial of their remains in home-soil, followed by sorrowing children and tearful widow, curbs their desire to go abroad, even with the hope of bettering their condition. But as only the poorest are tempted to lead a life of adventure, and as the good Emperor does not pay their passage money, the number that *can* leave their native land is very small. Thus you will find that Chinese immigrants are usually poor on landing, for they bring no votes in their pockets which can immediately be turned into money, and so they must rely upon their countrymen who have preceded them for assistance. This is afforded by the Six Companies, who accordingly have a lien on their prospective wages. From this practice of advancing money arises the terrible accusation that Chinese labor is contract labor--is slave labor. We know with what reluctance they first made their way to this country. Oftentimes they had to be drugged and kidnapped. It was thought necessary, for labor in those days was in great demand; the Western country was wild; its resources wanted development. Laborers were welcome irrespective of race or nationality.

But the times soon changed; California had grown rich and flourishing; the Pacific Railroad had been built; wages had fallen; the Chinese became superfluous, and the corals which constructed the reef must go or die. From being an economic question, the expulsion of the Chinese laborers was made a political question. Disinterested demagogues easily won mob-favor by advocating the cause of the sand-lot, and the Chinese workmen were sacrificed to the Moloch of political ambition. The matter was carried to the National Council, and you would suppose that Congress at least would be just and dispassionate, but it, too, was borne along the waves of prejudice.

In every such conflict might is right; the weakest goes to the wall. Two parties were bidding for the Pacific vote--that of great moral principles as well as that of no principles. The Chinese came in like cloth between the blades of the scissors, like Mr. Pickwick between the infuriated rival editors of Eatanswill. When 80,000 offices were at stake, and the hoodlums of California had to be petted, it was not hard to make the Chinese out to be *undesirable* immigrants and to hoodwink the public with charges against them which are false, or which may be preferred against all immigrants.

Sand-lotters were scandalized by the alleged immoral practices of the Asiatics; were in trembling and fear lest their Christianity should suffer by contact with Chinese paganism. I believe the cesspool once complained of the influx of muddy water. Californians prohibited the Chinese from becoming citizens and then accused them of failure to become naturalized. People in general were staggered at the imminent danger of the Mongolization of American and at the same time found fault with the Chinese for not making the United States their home. "Consistency, thou art a jewel."

Those who make America a catspaw to secure home-rule chestnuts proved most conclusively the non-assimilability of the Chinese race--said they came simply to make money which eventually found its way to the old country. I admit both points: I admit that they do not come to America for the good of *their* fatherland and mother church, and that they *do* come here to make money. So do Americans in China. They are wicked enough to send money home to support wife and children, but they give an equivalent in work. Gold and silver are things you can most conveniently spare; but if you must keep them at home, why then make a law forbidding their export.

I also admit that the Chinese laborer does not assimilate with your enlightened Hibernian citizens. Thank God for that! If he did, he would not be compelled to do menial work through fear of starvation. If he did he might have become a saloon statesman by

this time, or even a much-envied “boodler.” If he did, he might be even now luxuriating in Sing Sing at the public expense.

But why pursue this theme further? The bill was passed which excluded both skilled as well as unskilled Chinese laborers, though the Court of Peking diplomatically understood that the restriction was to affect common workmen alone. Natives of China are forbidden to become citizens of this Republic, which takes to its bosom the off-scouring, the garbage, and the dynamite of Europe. Never had there been seen such pandering to the worst passion of an insignificant faction!

Were it not for the tragic events which trod on the heels of the Chinese Immigration Bill, one might be inclined to laugh at the absurdities in the bill itself. If the law is faithfully executed (and to be worth anything it must be), all Americans born in China are disfranchised, and all Chinese natives of British colonies, like Hong Kong and India, have free access to this country. But who could laugh in the midst of indignant tears? By passing a discriminating law against an already persecuted class, the Central Government yielded to the demands of the mob, and to that extent countenanced its violence and lawlessness. The Anti-Chinese Act is a cause of all the outrages and massacres that have been since committed in Rock Springs and Denver, in Portland, San Francisco and other parts, which, if they had been perpetrated in China against Americans, would have resounded from Bedloe's Island (whereon stands the Statue of Liberty) to the Golden Gate. But the criminals in these cases were not punished, and even the pitiful indemnity was voted down until Congress could not withhold it from very shame.

I have stated facts which are well known. It is not necessary to exaggerate. I now ask you Christian people of America whether you have not failed in your duties as lovers of justice and fatherland, in *not* enforcing your opinions in public and in private, as well as in church as in State. I ask those who gallantly sided with the strong against the weak, whether they do not think they have done enough for glory and personal ambition?

If there is an avenging Deity, (and we believe there is), ought you not to beware of the retribution which is sure to overtake a nation that permits the cold-blooded murder of innocent strangers within its gates to go unpunished?

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