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BY YAN PHOU LEE

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No nation can afford to let go its high ideals. The founders of the American Republic asserted the principle that all men are created equal, and made this fair land a refuge for the whole world. Its manifest destiny, therefore, is to be the teacher and leader of nations in liberty. Its supremacy should be maintained by good faith and righteous dealing, and not by the display of selfishness and greed. But now, looking at the actions of this generation of Americans in their treatment of other races, who can get rid of the idea that that Nation, which Abraham Lincoln said was conceived in liberty, waxed great through oppression, and was really dedicated to the proposition that all men are created to prey on one another?

How far this Republic has departed from its high ideal and reversed its traditional policy may be seen in the laws passed against the Chinese.

Chinese immigrants never claimed to be any better than farmers, traders, and artisans. If, on the one hand, they are not princes and nobles, on the other hand, they are not coolies and slaves. They all came voluntarily, as their consular papers certified, and their purpose in leaving their home and friends was to get honest work. They were told that they could obtain higher wages in America than elsewhere, and that Americans were friendly to the Chinese and invited them to come. In this they were confirmed by certain provisions in the treaties made between China and the United States, by which rights and privileges were mutually guaranteed to the citizens of either country residing in the other. No one can deny that the United States made all the advances, and that China came forth from her seclusion because she trusted in American honor and good faith.

So long as the Chinese served their purposes and did not come into collision with the hoodlum element afterwards imported to California, the people of that State had nothing to complain of regarding them. Why should they, when, at one time, half the

revenue of the State was raised out of the Chinese miners? But the time came when wages fell with the cost of living. The loafers became strong enough to have their votes sought after. Their wants were attended to. Their complaints became the motive power of political activity. So many took up the cry against the Chinese that it was declared that no party could succeed on the Pacific Coast which did not adopt the hoodlums' cause as its own. Supposing that no party could succeed, would the Union have gone to ruin?

Those who remember events of some thirty-five years ago will see nothing strange in the antagonism of one class of laborers to another. Opposition to the Chinese is identical with the opposition to the free immigration of Europeans, and especially of the Irish; for it was once urged against the transatlantic immigrants that their cheap labor "would degrade, demoralize, and pauperize American labor, and displace intelligent Americans in many branches of employment." There was a bitter conflict, but the sensible view prevailed. For it was found that a greater supply of unskilled labor made it possible for skilled laborers to command higher wages and more regular employment.

Why is it that the American laborer was soon raised to a higher social and industrial plane, and ceased to fear Irish competition, while the Irish still dread the competition of the Chinese? It is simply because the Irish are industrially inferior to their competitors. They have not the ability to get above competition, like the Americans, and so, perforce, they must dispute with the Chinese for the chance to be hewers of wood and drawers of water.

Such industrial conflicts occur every day, as, for instance, between trade-unionists and scabs, Irish and Germans, Italians who came yesterday and Italians who come today. Let them fight it out by lawful means, and let the fittest survive; but you do not take the side of one against the other—least of all, the side of the strong against the weak. Why, then, take the side of the European immigrants against the Chinese? But you say there are many objections against the latter which cannot be made against the former, and the Chinese stand charged with too many things to make them desirable. Ah, yes! I see. But it is only fair to look into these charges before we pass our judgment. It has been urged:

- I. *That the influx of Chinese is a standing menace to Republican institutions upon the Pacific Coast and the existence there of Christian civilization.*

That is what I call a severe reflection on Republican institutions and Christian civilization. Republican institutions have withstood the strain of 13,000,000 of the lower classes of Europe, among whom may be found Anarchists, Socialists, Communists, Nihilists, political assassins, and cut-throats; but they cannot endure the assaults of a few hundred thousands of the most

peaceable and most easily-governed people in the world. Christianity must have lost its pristine power, for, having subdued and civilized one-half the world, it is now powerless before the resistance of a handful of Chinese! Surely the Chinese must be angels or devils! If angels, they would go without your bidding. If devils, you would not be able to drive them out. The argument advanced against Chinese immigration by some members of Congress is substantially this “China has a starving (!) population of 400,000,000; she can spare 10,000,000 easily. It costs only \$60—a mere trifle—to come over here. Therefore, as Senator Sargent declared, ‘the Pacific Coast must in time become either American or Mongolian.’” The beauty of this argument will strike you at once, if you reflect that the Chinese are not a migratory people; that hardly 1,000,000 have left the country by sea in 100 years; that even to adjacent provinces their migrations have been limited; and that the disposition to lead a life of adventure is peculiar to the people of Canton and its outlying districts.

Moreover, the ten cents per day earned by a starving population, though sufficient to buy all the necessaries of life, will not warrant a saving of more than \$3 per year. At that rate, how many years will a man require to enable him to save enough for his passage?

II. *That the Chinese have a quasi-government among themselves.*

If I deny this, perhaps you will not believe me. Allow me to quote the testimony of a man of irreproachable character, the Rev. Pr. William Speer, who wrote to the New York Tribune that the Six Companies, credited with the government of the Chinese colony, were purely benevolent associations, and that he had frequently attended their meetings, and could, moreover, speak from many years’ experience as a missionary in China. It is a significant fact that the minister of the Gospel, who knew all about the subject, was not believed before howling, ignorant demagogues. It was laying a premium on ignorance.

III. *That the Chinese race seems to have no desire for progress.*

In the last fifteen years the Chinese Government has educated upwards of two hundred students in Europe and America, has built arsenals and navy-yards, established schools and colleges on Western models, disciplined an army that whipped the Russians, created a navy that would put the American navy to shame, put up thousands of miles of telegraph wires; and it is now busily opening up mines, building railroads, and availing itself of American capital and experience to put up telephones and establish a national bank. The Chinese are not ashamed to own that they appreciate the Americans.

III. *That the Chinese have displaced white laborers by low wages and cheap living, and that their presence discourages and retards white immigration to the Pacific States.*

This charge displays so little regard for truth and the principles of political economy that it seems like folly to attempt an answer. But please to remember that it was by the application of Chinese "cheap labor" to the building of railroads, the reclamation of swamp-lands, to mining, fruit-culture, and manufacturing, that an immense vista of employment was opened up for Caucasians, and that millions now are enabled to live in comfort and luxury where formerly adventurers and desperadoes disputed with wild beasts and wilder men for the possession of the land. Even when the Chinaman's work is menial (and he does it because he must live, and is too honest to steal and too proud to go to the almshouse), he is employed because of the scarcity of such laborers. It is proved that his work enables many to turn their whole attention to something else, so that even the hoodlum may don a clean shirt at least once a month. You may as well run down machinery as to sneer at Chinese cheap labor. Machines live on nothing at all; they have displaced millions of laborers; why not do away with machines?

Besides, are you sure that Chinese laborers would not ask more if they dared, or take more if they could get it?

It is the Chinese who are constantly displaced by Caucasians. As soon as an industry gets on its feet by the help of Chinese "cheap labor," Chinese workmen are discharged to make room for others.

IV. *That the Chinese do not desire to become citizens of this country.*

Why should they? Where is the inducement? Let me recite briefly a few of the laws and ordinances which, though couched in general terms, were made for their special benefit. The Foreign-Miners' License Law, which forced every Chinese miner, during a period of twenty years, to pay from \$4 to \$20 per month for the privilege of working claims which others had abandoned.

An act of the California Legislature, 1855, laid a tax of \$55 on each Chinese immigrant. Another, 1862, provided (with a few exceptions), that every Chinaman over eighteen years of age should pay a capitation-tax of \$2.50.

A San Francisco city ordinance, passed March 15, 1876, provided that all laundries should pay licenses as follows: those using a one-horse vehicle, \$2 per quarter; two horses, \$4; no vehicle, \$15. This is discrimination with a vengeance!

I maintain that a sober, industrious, and peaceable people, like the Chinese, who mind their own business and let others do the

same, are as fit to be voters as the quarrelsome, ignorant, besotted, and priest-ridden hordes of Europe. Are you sure the Chinese have no desire for the franchise? Some years ago, a number of those living in California, thinking that the reason why they were persecuted was because it was believed they cared nothing about American citizenship, made application for papers of naturalization. Their persecutors were alarmed and applied to Congress for assistance, and the California Constitution was amended so as to exclude them.

In view of the above-mentioned evidences of the fostering care of the State of California, you will not be surprised that very few ventured to bring their families to America. Many would have brought their families over, if they could have been assured of protection.

V. *That the Chinese live in filthy dwellings, upon poor food, crowded together in narrow quarters, disregarding health and fire ordinances.*

The Chinaman does not object to dainty food and luxurious lodgings. But the paternal government of California taxed him as soon as he came ashore; permitted its agents to blackmail him at intervals; made him pay \$15 a month for carrying his customers' washing in his hand; levied a progressive poll-tax, without providing a school for him; a road-tax before he began to travel, and, when he went to the mines, collected a water-rent of thirty cents a day, and a progressive license-tax from \$4 to \$20 per month. Even if he earned five dollars a day, he could not have fifteen cents left to live on.

Sensible people will, perhaps, ask: Why do you permit the Chinese in your city to disregard health and fire ordinances? Is it not the business of the municipal authorities to punish such infractions of the law? Must the Nation compromise its honor and disregard its treaty obligations because the officials of your city neglect their duty?

VI. *The Chinese neither have intercourse with the Caucasians nor will assimilate with them.*

Yes, just think of it! As soon as the ship comes into harbor, a committee of the citizens gets on board to present the Chinaman with the freedom of the city (valued at \$5). A big crowd gathers at the wharf to receive him with shouts of joy (and showers of stones). The aristocrats of the place flock to his hotel to pay their respects (and to take away things to remember him by). He is so feted and caressed by Caucasian society that it is a wonder his head is not turned (or twisted off).

In spite of such treatment, the Chinese will keep "themselves to themselves" and snub the American community. Did you know

that the Jews accused the Samaritans of refusing to have intercourse with them?

VIII. *The Chinese come and go as pagans.*

Mr. Beecher said in reference to this charge: "We have clubbed them, stoned them, burned their houses, and murdered some of them; yet they refuse to be converted. I do not know any way, except to blow them up with nitro-glycerin, if we are ever to get them to heaven." In spite of these doubtful inducements to become Christians, more than 500 have been admitted to the church.

IX. *That the Chinese immigrants are mostly criminals.*

It is not true. I admit that we have a criminal class in China, but the few that got over here came through the neglect of the officers of the Custom-House to enforce the laws.

In 1860 the population of California was:	379,994
Chinese population in California was:	34,933
The whole number of prisoners was:	616
Chinese prisoners was:	28

While the Chinese population was one in ten, their quota of criminals was only one in eighteen; and that, too, when judges and juries were more or less prejudiced against them. Every fair-minded man can testify that the Chinese are the most law-abiding people in the community, that they are not easily provoked, but are patient (oh, too patient!) under insult and injury. They seldom appear in court-rooms in the character of prisoners. You have never seen one drunk in your life. But, you say, he smokes opium. That, I answer, is his own affair. The law provides no penalties against private vices. You have never heard of Chinamen who organized strikes, stuffed ballot-boxes, and corrupted legislation at the fountain-head. Why, then, are they not as desirable as other immigrants? Is it a crime to be industrious, faithful, law-abiding? Wrong to coin one's honest toil into gold, and, instead of wasting one's earnings in drink and debauchery, to support wife and children therewith? This brings me to the next charge.

X. *That the Chinese drain the country annually of large sums.*

Indeed, the California Senate, in its memorial to Congress, November 15, 1877, said that there were 180,000 Chinese in California. The statistics of the Custom-House and the best authorities said there were (in 1877) only 104,000 in the whole country. Of course, while there were only 104,000 in the United States, there were 180,000 in California! The part is greater than the whole. The memorial also said that the 180,000 Chinese drained the country of \$180,000,000 annually. Isn't that enough to frighten anybody? Now, 180,000 Chinese sent home on an average \$1,000 apiece. Each must have earned \$1,250 per year; that is,

about \$4 per day. You call that cheap labor? Two dollars and fifty cents is fair wages for Caucasians there. You must not think that the august Senate of California meant to lie. Californians are only slightly given to exaggeration. I will now answer the last and most terrible charge.

XI. *That the Chinese bring women of bad character to San Francisco, and that their vices are corrupting the morals of the city.*

How serious a charge this is we cannot realize until we get at all the facts. Just imagine California, the most virtuous of States, and San Francisco, the most immaculate of cities, lying helpless under the upas-tree of Chinese immorality! Have you ever been to San Francisco? Unless you can endure paradise and Eden-like purity, you would better not go there. Why, the Sabbath stillness in that city is simply appalling. The people all go to church, and if you suggest whiskey toddy or a baseball game on Sunday, they will turn up their eyes, throw up their hands, and pray the Lord to have mercy on you. There are no drunken brawls at any time (except in Chinatown), and it is the policeman's picnic-ground (except in Chinatown). Besides churches, they have numerous temples dedicated to Venus, wherein pious persons work off their surplus devotion. Why is it that these fair vestals wear so little clothing? They are afraid to clog the things of the spirit with the habiliments of sense. Californians are pure, moral, and religious, in all that they do. As for having disreputable houses, or women with loose morals about them, I tell you they are as innocent as lambs. Indeed, Satan could not have made a greater commotion in Eden than the Chinese in California. One would suppose that such a model community would "clean out" those bad Chinese women. But it did not. It deputed a number of special policemen to watch them and arrest them, but it seems that these specials had the marvelous power of transmuting their brass into pure gold, and that, in the exercise of that power, they were as blind as bats. If the virtuous community of San Francisco permitted their morals to be corrupted, it is their own fault.

Such are the charges made against the Chinese. Such were the reasons for legislating against them; and they still have their influence, as is shown by the utterances of labor organs; by the unreasoning prejudice against the Chinese which finds lodgment in the minds of the people; and by the periodical outbreaks and outrages perpetrated against them without arousing the public conscience.

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