

Orientizing Our Pacific Province

The Problem of Assimilating Asiatics Seen Through British Columbia Spectacles

*"For East is East and West is West,
And never the twain shall meet."*

—Kipling.

WHAT is truly said is true no matter who says it, and Rudyard Kipling, who is not necessarily a good politician or an economist, long ago, gave profound expression to a profound principle. He saw much farther than others saw at that time; an unwittingly inspired prophet.

It is the "Oriental" problem that is troubling the people of Canada to-day. I am, perhaps, mistaken excepting in the assumption that the "people of Canada" are represented by the men whom they elect to Parliament. I am quite sure that people generally would like to have a reliable statement of fact as to the evolution of the resistance that has been urged against the admission of Hindus into British Columbia and as to the general and persistent objection to the admission of Orientals of every class into this country.

British Columbia, at the present moment, has, unfortunately, become the "storm centre" for all Canada, and for the whole empire as regards the question of Oriental immigration. This is not because British Columbia is not a part of Canada, nor because it is not a part of the British Empire, but because it is the part of Canada and of the British Empire which is most vitally affected by the incursion of Orientals. By the last phrase I mean much more than the "competition" of Oriental labour with that of other classes, both Anglo-Saxon and otherwise "European."

The conflict between European and Asiatic standards of living is the crux of the whole business.

It does not matter from which "European" country immigrants come into British Columbia. These immigrants have always seemed capable of "rising" to something approachable and recognizable as the "European" standard of living. It is true that some classes from several of the provinces of Europe have been able for a time, and are still able, to subsist, and to be content, with less wages than the recognized standard of Anglo-Saxon peoples. Those who would enter, critically, into an analysis of the labour situation and the labour problems of the West must take heed to this important item in the evolution of the present situation. But the "interlopers"—if I may be permitted to make a new application of an old term—have been the first to seize their opportunities and to "compel" wages and other emoluments which have enabled them to spend money (whether in vices or virtues) that have brought them within the pale of "Anglo-Saxon" civilization. Unfortunately, if a man will spend his money among the people from whom he earns it, there is little question asked as to his nationality or whether he is from here or there. If he becomes a "leech"—hoarding and sending away—he is an outcast, not of us nor belonging to us.

All "Orientals" have, therefore, placed themselves in a class by themselves. They earn money, earn it honestly, if that term is to be interpreted as the rendering of "comparative value" for the money they obtain as wages under our "wage" system.

MAKE no mistake! It is not idle fancy, pro-Oriental sentiment nor preference for the "Yellow" as compared with the "White" element in our labouring classes, that makes and establishes the hold the Oriental labourer has on the presently unhappy labour market of this province. It is the close deduction which the "industrial magnate" is always compelled to make "for value received" that gives the Oriental a preference over the white man.

But the Orientals spend their money among themselves. They maintain the most rigid racial distinctions. They establish their own stores for the negotiation of the commodities they need as the imperative perquisites of life, and they buy, within the limits of their need, from their own countrymen only. They are like, and unlike, the early Christians, "In the world but not OF the world."

Asiatics, without distinction of country from which they emigrate into Canada, do not fraternize. Claiming an indissoluble right under the unquestionable doctrine of human brotherhood, they limit their brotherhood to the class conscious and racially ostracized distinctions of the country from which they came. They buy from Canadian houses only those purchasable supplies which the "vices" of the White man have seduced them into buying, and they maintain the class distinctions, as between them-

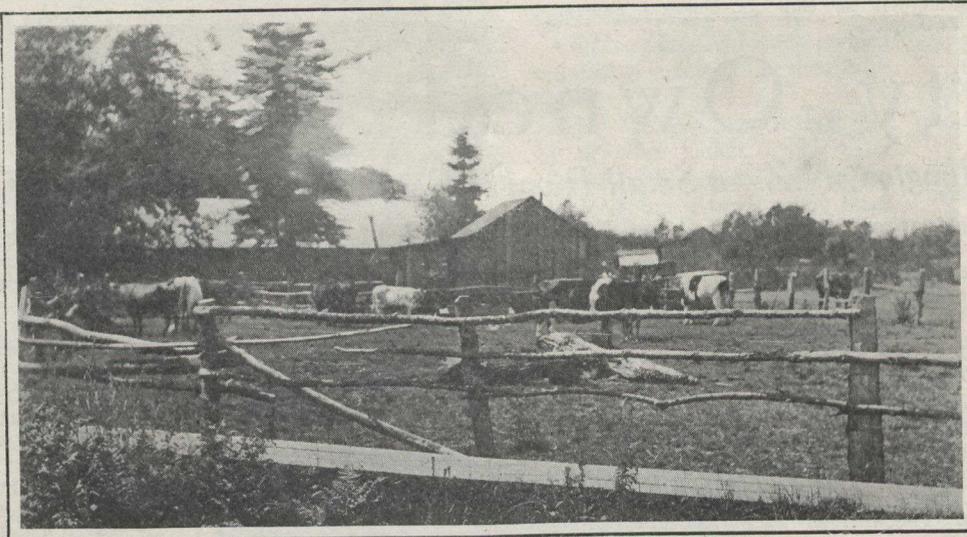
By WALTER W. BAER

selves and Europeans, which exist in their own country.

This sort of thing was all right in the early days in this province, when nobody cared or nobody really knew, but it is different to-day. The slant-eyed Oriental has been more far-seeing than his usually



Hotel owned by a Chinaman in Victoria.



A Dairy Farm owned by a Hindu near Victoria, B.C.

slower-visioned brother of the White class, but the awakening of the latter has come.

That is, perhaps, the explanation of the awakening of this Western country to its danger; an awakening which, unfortunately, is finding its climax and its culmination in a revolt against the invasion of that particular branch of His Majesty's subjects known as the Hindus.

Let me speak for British Columbia—and challenge me who will—the revolt of the Western people of the Dominion of Canada is NOT against Hindus, but against "Orientals," whatever nationality they may claim. The present impact of the Hindu subjects, or alleged subjects, of His Majesty, is not what the people of British Columbia are fighting about. The question is one too big to be made the subject of political badinage, although, unfortunately, it has been made so.

The solution, as far as the West is concerned, and, perhaps, as far as the Empire is concerned, is not one in which politicians may exclaim, "heads I win, tails you lose." My undertaking is to "show cause" or, in other words, to justify the attitude of the people of British Columbia against what is believed to be an "Oriental" invasion.

When, in the early '80's, during the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway through the Rockies, it was found advantageous to import "coolie" labour from China, there were few Anglo-Saxon people in the province. The Orientals, once having gained a foothold, saw their opportunity and have, ever since, assiduously prosecuted every advantage that the peculiar conditions and traditions of the province afford. The earliest populated part of British Columbia (Vancouver Island) was a Crown colony. Some of the traditions of the "feudal" system still remain with the "people of parts" in the former Crown colony and the distinction between "menials" and those of the "classes" is rigidly maintained. The

Oriental supplies a long-felt want, for he is peculiarly adapted to the role of a menial.

The term "menial" is rarely employed East of the Rockies for the reason that there is no such thought in the mind of anyone as the thought of a "slave." In the older provinces the term "wage-earner" means one of two things—either an industrial employee or an "hired man." The distinction is between the class of employment in industrial centres and in the rural districts. In British Columbia there are certain classes of employment which are never engaged in excepting by "menials." The term "helotry" is not understood in Eastern Canada, and most of your readers will have to go to the dictionary to get a clear idea of what it means. Yet in British Columbia helotry is the absolute condition and class status of the Oriental, no matter from what country he may hail.

WE have, in this province, that heritage of sentiment which survives from the days of the Crown colony, and the plutocrats are unable to relieve themselves of the swaddling clothes of that heritage. Many wealthy citizens employ Chinese gardeners because they will work for about a dollar a day, a place to sleep and their board. No Anglo-Saxon will do this.

But from a condition of helotry the more astute among the Orientals have evolved into something better. It is not altogether the "coolie" who has been a curse to the country; it is his "boss." One of the characteristics of the Oriental is that he sees no incongruity in being both a labourer and a capitalist at the same time. And he is both of these, not because he is all things to all men, but because he is all things unto himself. He is as

shrewd as the Anglo-Saxon in scenting a bargain in real estate, in speculative stocks or in a business opportunity. The Oriental capitalist invades every sanctuary of Anglo-Saxon plunder, and plunders as shrewdly and unscrupulously as his White brother. The labourers were the first to feel the competition made intolerable by the lower standards of living of the Asiatics, but during later years the business concerns of the province are beginning to realize that what has happened in other countries is about to happen here. Granted unrestricted admission into the country, the Asiatic is going to ply his wits, business talent, speculative genius, capital and everything else against the Anglo-Saxon. There can be but one result: the gradual crowding out of the Anglo-Saxon people and the gradual surrendering of the whole country to the Oriental hordes.

In Victoria city there is an immense hardware store owned and operated by Chinese capital, and there are Anglo-Saxons on the payroll of this Oriental hardware magnate. The government buys many of its supplies from this store to outfit its marine and other equipments in the public service of the country. There is also a magnificent hotel in the city owned by a Chinese capitalist.

Not far from the city is a Hindu dairy-farm, which affords the subject of another picture. The Hindu capitalists operating this dairy have fifty milch cows and one hundred hogs as constant stock. Fifty milch cows and one hundred hogs would keep an English-speaking—and Anglo-Saxon-acting—family in affluent circumstances. A large quiverful of sons and daughters could be educated in the best schools of the world on the proceeds of such a farm. Yet all that it does for the country in the way of development is shown in the picture. The "shack," easily noticed in the foreground, is the single building in which the herdmen, milkers, delivery drivers and entire corps of employees eat, cook, sleep and spend their leisure. The byres and outbuildings are as unkempt and as unclean as an Hottentot kraal.

WHEN Sir Ian Hamilton was in New Zealand recently, he told the story of how the Malaysians, a fine people, were being displaced in their own country by Chinese coolies—"low-class materialists." So, he had seen in Ladysmith, fine shopkeepers vanish before bunyahs and coolies who exist on a couple of meals a day. He concluded in terribly ominous words:

"If people with high ideals and standards are forced to live cheek by jowl with people of low standards and low ideals, they must either become slave drivers or sink to the level of those by whom they are surrounded and thus be beaten."

The sting of Sir Ian's deliverance is in its tail and
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