

EXCLUSIONISM AND BROTHERHOOD.

Great good or great evil may come from the mingling of East and West. It depends on the spirit of the mingling. Those who have associated with Eastern people in friendship or as students of their literature or art have no need to be told of the benefits of mingling. Moreover, the benefits are mutual. But our present mingling is, mainly, I believe, in the corrupting relationship of lord and serf. That relationship is not realised because its working is round-about and only rarely brought to view.

In fact, thoughtful people have been confident that this very evil had been averted by the exclusion policy. The motive of preserving our social life from the corrupting presence of a servile caste appeared good ground for exclusionism, even when it was apparent that our community would gain in material wealth from the labor of Chinese and other Asiatics.

But in reality, I believe, the bad influence has not been overcome by confining the Asiatics to their own lands, there to be employed under conditions that would appear intolerable to an Australian. The conditions are certainly very much worse than the same Asiatics would be asked to endure if they were admitted freely to Australia.

The effect of the depressing of Eastern workers is not confined to their own lands. It recoils upon our Western communities by at least three channels: (1) By the many millions of profits and interest that Western financiers draw from their foreign investments; (2) by competition of Asiatics in the world's shipping; and (3) by competition in the world's markets.

Britain is more directly affected than Australia by the financial tribute drawn from the peoples of the East and the tropics. British workers are frequently told that they must provide adequate return on industrial investments on pain of being deprived of the capital necessary for steady expansion. "You will drive capital out of the country," they are told when they make new demands. Certainly the British worker will suffer if industrial expansion is seriously checked. Already we have painful examples. For instance, the British-American Tobacco Company—with an enormous manufacturing business in the Far East as well as in Britain and America—gave notice of dismissal to its Liverpool staff early this year, just after it had announced dividends and bonuses equal to 37½ per cent., and a reserve of £2,400,000. Lord Leverhulme told his shareholders last year that he could dismiss all his employees at the great Port Sunlight works and still win undiminished profits; for he could rely on the investments in many other lands, including the wilds of Africa and the Solomon islands. Similarly in Australia we have seen Burns, Philp's Shipping Company shift a great part of its business from Sydney to Fiji, where cheaper and more docile labor is obtainable.

So the helplessness of colored workers in the hands of Western financiers tends to make our Western workers also helpless. Goldsmith saw this danger at a time when Britain had few foreign investments except in India. In "The Traveller" he wrote of Britain being corrupted by

The wealth of climes where savage nations roam
Pillaged from slaves to purchase slaves at home.

The workers at home are made "slaves" in two ways—firstly, as already shown, by being compelled to accept the employers' terms, or else see their industry languish through the exportation of capital; secondly, by being called into the personal service of those who have been placed farther above the poor in material wealth by their gains from other climes. Plunkivism and luxury services flourish in lands where wealth accumulates and men decay. J. A. Hobson, in his "Imperialism," has described these conditions as patently visible in the south of England.

Australia is in this regard in much the same position as British workers. Her industries are conducted largely with the aid of British capital. If that capital is withdrawn, or even if its inflow is checked, the consequences will involve cruel hardships for the Australian people and a setback to the development of the country. Such conditions are now threatening.

Coming to the second channel by which the ill-usage of colored workers recoils upon our Western life, it is hardly necessary to do more than mention the competition of Asiatics in shipping. How can we possibly apply the exclusion policy to the ocean? We may reserve our coastal trade for Western crews, but we cannot make the high seas a close preserve. In international shipping, if we forbid our own companies to employ those crews that are cheapest (efficiency duly considered), then we simply sacrifice our shipping to that of Japan and other lands.

So also in world commerce—the third channel of recoil abovementioned. If products from the East can be placed on the world-markets much cheaper than the products of Australia, then Australian industries must suffer—the workers along with the employers—and much more severely, of course.

The present world-wide distress makes it clear that no country can now live to itself. In the present intimate communications of nations and continents, our happiness and sorrow are plainly bound up with the happiness and sorrow of peoples the farthest removed. Because Central Europe is destitute, there is no good market for Australian wool, and our farmers are threatened with ruin. Our city workers are suffering from like causes.

Especially is it manifest that low wages and low standards of living in one region react upon other regions. Because Germany's underpaid and underfed workers are compelled to supply "reparation" coal to European consumers, the British coal industry suffers, and the miners are subjected to a crushing lockout.

In like manner, because of the low wages and living conditions in Europe and Asia, Australians are now compelled to reduce their costs of production, including labour costs.

In the present state of communications neither exclusionism nor its twin sister, the protective tariff, can save us from such reaction, if we rely at all upon world-markets, as we do very largely. Despite exclusion, our farmers compete with the wheat-growing peasants of India, who subsist on one meal a day and have few of the material comforts that even our hard-used country folk require; they compete with the peons bound in service to the sheep-run holders

of the Argentine. The tariffs by which our city industries are artificially maintained make it the more difficult for our exporting producers to compete in the world markets, since the effect of tariffs is inevitably to raise our price-standards all round.

For these reasons Australia's recovery from the slump now come upon us will be very difficult.

In their distress I fear our people may be tempted to open our doors to slavery in some veiled form. Finding that exclusion and "protection" have not availed to thwart the competition of sweated Oriental workers, they will be inclined to listen to men like Sir Henry Sammans, who recently advised that coloured workers should be brought into Australia to do all the manual toil, enabling all white men to live as "gentlemen." Almost all the Australians I know who advocate the admission of coloured workers wish them to come here under indenture. That means that they would be robbed of the opportunity of adjusting themselves to Australian standards of life. When indentures were running out in Samoa the wages of Chinese increased 400 per cent. There are many similar examples. We can see in Melbourne, in San Francisco, and elsewhere, how free Asiatics have adjusted themselves to Western standards. They are not worse paid generally than our own people. But under indenture their wages would be kept down; they would live in barracks, truly prisoners. They would be definitely a servile caste.

Already we have coloured labourers working for us in the bonds of indenture in the northern fisheries and in the island plantations of Australia.

East and West have met. However devoted we may be to racial repugnance, we are bound to rub shoulders with the Oriental peoples in the markets of the world and in ocean shipping. Though we may refuse to have them grow our vegetables, we live by the sweat of their brow even more when we draw tribute from investments in Asia and the Tropics.

I cannot regard seriously the suggestion that we should retire entirely within ourselves, leaving Asia to the Asiatics.—As well attempt to divide the waters of the Han and the Yangtse once they have mingled.

We shall go on mingling. We cannot escape the ills by driving the Asiatics out of Australia, nor by raising tariff barriers against their products. What we can do is to strive that our association with them, whether in their land or in ours, shall be in the spirit of brotherhood.

I have not space in this article to deal with the argument of the alleged ills of intermarriage. I would invite anyone interested in the subject to read the chapter on cross-breeding of races in Sir Ray Lankester's recent book, "Secrets of Earth and Sea." From that, one may learn how utterly unfounded is the notion that the offspring of mixed marriage inherits "the vices of both races and the virtues of neither."

The feelings of race-prejudice have been so well fostered that we who believe in another spirit find it hard to make any advance. A little we can do by personal influence. Our organised workers have a unique opportunity to

link up with the Chinese unionists here. In the way of public policies, I think we should aim at least at the following:—

1. We should clean our hands of the indenture system, now imposed upon the Japanese and Timorese in the northern fisheries, and upon the natives of New Guinea.

2. We should seek to encourage Asiatic students to come to our colleges. (The proposed remission of Britain's Boxer indemnity balance of £6,000,000 may give a unique opportunity.)

3. We should encourage round-table conferences of all kinds with Asiatic peoples.

4. We should assist educational, medical and other missions in the East.

Other methods of promoting the spirit of understanding will suggest themselves. Until a feeling of friendliness has to some extent taken the place of the present antagonism among Australians it seems of little use to advocate a change in the immigration laws. My own ideal would be to open the door to all people, and conduct a vigorous campaign of education among the immigrant workers. Keep them free from bondage, encourage them to bring their families, educate them! Under such conditions they would, I believe, not hinder, but help, the growth of brotherly co-operation, in place of the present strife in our industries.

We have everything to fear from association with Asiatics on a basis of domination, political or industrial, even though we drive them far from our shores.

We have nothing to fear if our association with them is on a basis of freedom and brotherhood, though we come in closest contact with them in our streets, in our clubs, in our churches, in our homes.

And by excluding them we deprive ourselves of many of the joys that God offers us.

—J. A. BRAILSFORD

[We hope to publish in future issues a short series of articles dealing with this vital question from various points of view.—Editor "Fellowship".]

SONGS MILITANT.

Songs militant are fertile seeds,
That blossom into valiant deeds.

Men tremble when a fearless song
Challenges the ranks of Wrong.

Above th' impassioned Poet's cry
Ever they hear the Martyr's sigh.

—R. H. L.