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CHINA IS NOT A NATION

A LOOSE UNION OF PEOPLES WITHOUT NATIONAL SPIRIT.

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Most people regard China as a country generally the same as other countries; differing, to be sure, in externalities and radically so in characteristics, but the country in some sense, at least, founded upon principles recognized as components of human progress.

Most people are wrong, for China presents no such exemplification by any stretch of the imagination. The talk of "preserving China's integrity" is the veriest humbug. She never had any integrity to preserve. China is not a nation, but a conglomeration. The Chinese are not a people, but a lot of people loosely continuous and without the cement of coalescence to make them into a mosaic.

There has never been anything of the kind in China. Patriotism is absolutely unknown. A Chinaman from the south is as much a stranger to the Chinaman of the north as he is to the Korean or the Japanese, language, customs and manners of ways being as variant in the one as in the other. The western Chinaman has far more in common with his Russian neighbor over the line in Central Asia than with those of his own race between him and the sea.

The war with Japan manifested the striking incoherence and heterogeneity of the Chinese millions. Only the comparatively few whose direct interests were at stake indicated the slightest interest in the outcome. The great bulk of the people cared nothing whatever whether the Japanese overthrew the Manchurian dynasty or not. Their only concern was the hiding of their possessions from the existing as well as from the possible rulers. All Orientals looked alike to them.

NO SENSE OF PATRIOTISM.

Chinamen in the straits settlements, Java, Sumatra, the Philippines, and, in fact, within the European lines in Hong-Kong, Shanghai and other treaty ports of China itself, gave no more thought to the conflict than had it been between Kamtschatkans and Alaskans. Association with many of these celestial-merchants of wealth and men of the highest business probity; not infrequently guest at their tables, where intercourse is freest and interchange of opinions unreserved; failed to result in drawing out a single patriotic sentiment. "The Manchus had brought on the war, let them take the consequences." Exactly identical would have been the tenet had the oligarchy been Mongolian or straight Chinese. In Japan the sympathy—if a Chinaman can be said to have any such thing about his person—was wholly with the Japanese. That is to say, among the Chinese there resident, as merchants and filling positions of trust in mercantile houses, banking institutions and representative European companies.

Were the "powers that be" of China expressed emblematically, perhaps no form would so well convey comprehensions as the pyramid. The oldest monuments of man's making extant are the Egyptian pyramids. The greatest perpetuation of man's machinations known is China, with its layer upon layer of officialdom, each in turn growing less in numerical constituents, until at the apex the four individuals comprising the Peking Yamen. Tapering off the whole—the Emperor, or what stands for him—pretty to look at, with his much brass and such sort of thing, but a weak-crook just the same.

Into eighteen provinces is the flowery kingdom divided, the viceroys, governors general and governors, as they may be variously termed, constituting strata of the pyramid which as they lessen in bulk increase in importance. The "squeeze" is the one national trait in China. From the "boy" who buys a pennyworth of tea to the chief of the Yamen who makes a monetary settlement with your ambassador for the killing of a missionary, there is the omnipresent omniscient "squeeze" dominating the transaction. "Take off," we would call it.

WILY LI HUNG CHANG. Your Chinese servant—they are all "boys," whether actually such or grandfathers—with whom you leave purse, luggage and personal belongings with perfect impunity, and who would not dream of appropriating a pin's value, could not buy a cigarette for you without his "squeeze" on the purchase. It is as natural to him as breathing. And this is all the way up in the scale. Li Hung Chang's immense fortune came to him through superior opportunities for the "squeeze" on deals he planned and executed for the coterie at Peking, who ran things, which, for the want of another comprehensive term, may be dubbed governmental. Of this crowd he was long the master spirit, and it at times he has appeared to be in disfavor, it has arisen only through his persistence in placing his large investments of money within the jurisdiction of the European reservations. Hence while his conferees cannot get at them. Among the highest, as well as the lowest it is attesting the cleverness, ability and keenest financial shrewdness to outwit each other in any sort of a transaction, and for a fellow who has absorbed everything within arm's length, as has Li Hung Chang, and put it out of reach, is enough to call down upon his devoted head maledictions innumerable. But whenever there is an especial emergency, a sad lack of somebody else's money to get the "squeeze" upon, old Li Hung is summoned. Like another father of his country, from Mt. Vernon at Tien-Tsin to the presence of the Yamen at Peking. He is given back his peacock feather and yellow jacket, told the fate of his dear native land rests solely upon him and—how much will he give to play savior again. So the bargain is struck in the self-same old way, Li Hung dictating terms which it is safe to assume from his record will not in the end deplete his personal coffers whatever may be the state of the Yamen treasury at the round-up.

Meanwhile, there is no change in the stratification of the official pyramid. Organization goes right on. The higher up the ladder, the heavier it presses upon the base. The less the number to divide among, the larger the individual share.

The viceroys, of course, have the direct whack at the masses. That is to say, as the main support of the official structure above them, they must have an unrestricted field for exploitation. And they have, for each as he looks upon his province may stretch forth his arms, Monte Cristo like, and exultantly cry, "the world is mine." Then proceed to pluck it.

VICEROY A KING.

The province has in turn its own imposing pyramid, with the viceroy the apex. Subdivisions of the field work of the "squeeze" have their little pyramids, with "prefects," district rulers and other petty dignitaries as pinnacles. In each instance the lower yield certain percentage of their "squeeze" to the upper. This in volume must be such as to permit the "squeeze" to be applied in the interest of self to the amount passing through hands to the next in order, as after the viceroy is reached, it is good-by to any chance of those below him to realize. His share, as to be supposed, is a substantial one, is indeed the lion's. The position is the most sought after of the empire. The viceroy is not a little king, but a big one, from the Chinese standpoint, and a combination of these province despots can at any time overthrow plans and purposes at Peking. They are the rulers of China, and from time immemorial have prevented any genuine unity and solidarity of the empire. As long as their prerogatives are not questioned or their perquisites disturbed by the Yamen at Peking they give up their plunder to it. Only, however, on such basis as they themselves fix, and always reserving the right to levy any special exactions on the masses it may be their own sweet will to decree.

There is no regularly organized system of taxation in China, no rule of procedure followed in any one province which another province is bound to respect. There is no plan or practice of appraising property, valuing business transacted or reaching basis for the imposition of revenue on incomes. No taxable basis of any kind; just getting what he can is the only law the collector knows. On what he secures his "squeeze" depends. It is true that in the immediate vicinity of the European reservations, there has been established a show of land valuation for taxable purposes, but the 25 cents to \$1.50 an acre levied in accordance is a mere bagatelle to the whole to which the property is subjected. This, as the "likin" tax on merchandise in transit and the monopoly on salt, came to have a simulation of system in enforcement of collection from the necessity of collaterals for foreign loans. Whatever of these taxes or imports are within the control of the representatives of the European creditors of the empire are systematically administered. Otherwise the viceroy's will is, as of yore, absolute, and he exacts what and when, as he pleases, and no one either to say him nay or demand an accounting. All the property owner knows as to what his contribution is likely to be depends upon his success in bargaining with the fellow, for the time being, may be set to find out what he owns. The storekeeper's experience is of similar nature, while the man who may have a large deal in hand is made to hustle far livelier to hide the fact than to consummate the trade itself.

IRREGULAR TAXATION.

In order to prevent the richer merchants and capitalists generally from removing their possessions beyond the clutches of viceroys and their coadjutors at Peking, the Yamen caused an imperial edict to be issued making the holders of property in the European reservations and treaty ports by natives illegal and subject to confiscation. But the Chinese, smart enough to make money, are as smart in keeping it. They are to-day the owners of the most valuable real estate, covered with the finest buildings and the biggest mills in the reservations and ports controlled by foreigners. Their property is in the name of others, Europeans acting as agents, who handle the details, pay the taxes, etc., etc. Li Hung Chang's cotton mills on the European reservation at Shanghai are the finest in China and worthy of comparison with the best anywhere.

We have it that death and taxes are the only sure things in this life. But taxes once a year let us out. Not so Mr. Chinaman on his native heath who, if some official wants money, pays his second tax and a half dozen more, perhaps, before the year is up. If it is discovered he had "struck it rich" in some scheme he's matured.

The usual rule followed is for the Yamen at Peking to notify the viceroys of the different provinces the lump sum each will be expected to insure the payment of by a specified time. This in bulk is presumed by the Yamen to provide for the four members of that body, their numerous relatives and countless friends, the subsidiary officials, their relatives and friends, not to forget the "take-off" or "squeeze" through the entire category. What may be left is for governmental purposes. To us this would appear as a very important item. It is not overly so in Peking, however, as by the time the Chinese official has come to the government in his calculations there is not very much of account to be heeded. About all worthy of being taken into consideration from his standpoint, and that is himself, has been provided for.

AN EMPTY TREASURY.

China never has any money. She owes a lot, but no one loans to her without collateral. Her customs service she has nothing at all to say about, it being entirely in the hands of outsiders who regulate it to suit their own ideas as to best insuring such receipts from import duties as will meet the interest upon and protect the principal of the loans made. In other words, the Chinese service is in pawn and England is the pawnbroker. Naturally she wants things to remain as they are. Some other obligations, not so embraced, are professed by like mortgages on collections, and whatever China may be debtor for, the creditor takes good care to assure payment through his own grip on source of revenue, else he would whistle for his money. He is clever enough not to have to, so, as intimated, the government, strictly as such, is no great shakes viewed from the financial standpoint. Only the Emperor, the old lady who personates him, a few ambassadors abroad and such. No Senate, no House of Representatives, no "nuffin," as the boy said.

There is no manner of arriving at a basis for the aggregate of the collections made by the viceroys as a whole, in the way of taxes, imposts and exactions, general or specific. Systems of accounting, regulations for reports, or any semblance of regarding public office as a trust, public or private, in so far as acknowledging the duty of affording information in detail or as a whole, is farthest removed from the average viceroy's sense of the fitness of things. It is no one's business but his own. Now and then he may go through the form of indicating the importance of his province by publishing a jumble of figures in the official organ, the Peking Gazette. Every car is taken that they shall not form a

basis of comparison with previous publications, and the whole procedure is so spasmodic and irregular that to attempt to make head or tail of the empire's finances from the Gazette would be to land a man in an asylum in a twelve-month.

Estimates, notwithstanding, have been essayed with such sources of information as possible to the trained observer as a basis. At the best they are considered nothing more than mere guesses. One of these, a former American consul general at Shanghai, Mr. Jamieson, made some years ago. He roughly calculated the total annually gathered in by native process at about \$60,000,000. Of this it was estimated that from 60 to 80 per cent. disappeared in the form of costs, presents to official superiors and remaining in the hands of collectors. These were figures based on estimates preceding the period of the Japanese war, and the general opinion was that \$100,000,000 would have been nearer the mark. A hundred and fifty millions in our money, it is believed, would be an under rather than an overestimate of the present sum total.

ROADMAKING FOR CONVICTS.

Sensible Reasons in Favor of This Work for Prisoners.

New York Evening Post.

By degrees there has crept into the understandings of good people a notion that nature, after all, is a pretty sensible and satisfactory teacher. When a man's reason gives way, they no longer can ban him to a grim and forbidding Bedlam, but to a home in the midst of a park, where he can walk about in the sunlight and breathe a life-giving air and feast his eyes on the colors of trees and grass and flowers, and hear the music of birds. It is now universally realized that the effect of such an environment is wholesome, and that environment has a great deal to do with restoring the proper balance of the mind. We can see the same idea carried out in another way in the fresh-air charities, where the children of the slums, and in some cases their mothers also, are taken for a few days every year into the country. There is no pretense that this makes them over at once into new beings, but it at least gives whatever is good in them a chance to expand. It is quite as much an encouragement to their moral health as a measure of physical refreshment.

What, then, is to prevent the application of a similar principle to the case of the convict? It may be impracticable, for reasons which will readily suggest themselves, to employ them at ordinary farm labor, spread over a large area; but what the whole country needs as much as anything else is good roads, and for roadmaking convict labor seems to be especially well adapted.

When this idea was first broached it was met by a loud cry of protest. Good people everywhere had long associated the idea of convicts working in the open with visions of the ball and chain, of task-masters standing over the men with whips, and the like. Then, again, the influence upon a community of the familiar sight of gangs of men in striped clothing was declared to be brutalizing. And in behalf of the convicts themselves the plea was made that the public degradation in this manner would tend to smelt out whatever feeble flame of self-respect might still remain in their breasts.

Now, let us see what experience has provided in support of the other side. The work of road-making is healthful. It is performed in the open air and sunlight, amid rural surroundings conducive to cheerfulness and moral encouragement. It brings all the muscles into play, cultivates a normal appetite, which makes plain food grateful, and assures a sound digestion, and leaves the laborer at the end of the day ready to enjoy his rest and sleep. It is no more derogatory to the convict's self-respect than work inside of a prison. The public are admitted to look at him there; how is he any more injured by having the same public look at him while at work on a highway?

It is familiarity with the sight of convicts engaged at hard labor in the open air, and not the sight of them in the prison, that gives the full view of every one who chooses to go by them. The criminal courts are open to all corners quite as much as any other public place. There is no reason for any other consideration of the fact that lawbreaking and crime are not any more a matter of practice to couple with this fact the reminder that offenses against good order are and must be punished. And while it is a fact that to inflame the morbid imaginations of youth, for instance, the spectacle of high prison walls, and the grimaces of the convicts behind them, with an occasional glimpse of a striped suit as it fits past a barred window, or the plain spectacle of convicts at their labor, is a matter of daily occurrence, it is no more a matter of daily occurrence to see a convict engaged in the work of road-making. The work of road-making teaches a convict how to handle a pick and a spade, a scraper, a tamping block and a screener, tools which are to be found everywhere, and with which he can earn an honest living later in almost any place where fate happens to throw him; which is a very different thing from standing all day in one place and feeding a mechanical heel-cutter, or cutting threads in a screw with a lathe, or sawing lengths of wood for broom-handles—occupations which are so restricted in scope that only good luck can ever give a man a chance to use his acquired knowledge after becoming a free man again.

It is the painful and degrading associations with working an open-air gang, the ball and chain went its way long ago, and is now seen almost never outside of imaginative pictures; the overseer with his whip belong in the same gallery of classic art and fiction. The keeper with his gun still exists. The gun is a Remington rifle, perhaps; it is loaded, and it is the keeper's business to be a good shot. But so does the sentry with his loaded rifle pace the wall of the penitentiary. Who complains of him there? If a convict tries to climb over the wall he gets a bullet in his leg; but his knowledge that he ran before he began his climb. Does this element of brutality condemn prisoners per se? Probably the prisoner himself would rather be shot than be brought to terms rather roughly by the police officer who arrested him; for that reason he would rather be shot than be brought to terms rather roughly by the police officer, or take away their arms? There is no reason for the keeper by the roadside, any more than for the sentry on the parade, to use his rifle except to preserve the peace or prevent an escape. And is the convict working at a wholesome task, amid cheerful surroundings, as likely to try to escape with his keeper as the convict who lives, and marches, and toils, and sleeps in a grim, shady, stuffy prison, with everything about him promotive of morbidity and despair?

What of the purely economical phases of the question? Convict labor is doubtless more costly, comparing results with free labor. The convict working on the roads practically competes with nobody; most of the roads would not be built if they depended on free labor, for few communities feel able to incur the expense of extensive improvements of that sort. What the prisoner does is simply to carry out the work of the community in another form, the cost of his conviction and of his board and lodging, and without taking one morsel of bread from the mouth of any law-abiding citizen. The roads, when finished, are a godsend to the public, not only in the comfort of travel, but in saving the expense of the maintenance of the roads. They have been procured by the mere utilization of labor which might otherwise have been lost altogether, or employed in some more wasteful enterprise.

FAMINE RELIEF WORK

HOW THE WHITE MAN'S HEAVY BURDEN IN INDIA IS MANAGED.

Much Is Done, but More Is Yet to Do—A Picture of Horrors to Which We Have No Right to Close Our Eyes.

Correspondence of the Indianapolis Journal. AHMEDABAD, May 25.—Things that are big are usually of interest to Americans. This famine in India is the biggest in the world's history. It is a thing of millions—millions of broken homes, millions of scattered families, millions of empty stomachs, millions of living skeletons, millions of deaths.

I have been looking over this colossal thing, as one might say, inch by inch. Early this morning I left the train at a station called Godhra and was jolted over the wretched roads in a two-wheeled cart to a place where they were burning the dead. Never shall I see a charnel house more dreadful. In a great basin among the hills lay heaps and heaps of ashes, still white, the ashes of a thousand human bodies. Here was a crematory where, as in a thousand others in the famine area, incineration was conducted on a mighty scale. Tons of wood were piled up in readiness. Other low castes were bringing still more dreadful fuel. And presently when all was ready a match was applied to a pile of wood here and a pile of wood there, and the funeral pyres of a score of people who had come to death by famine or cholera, were started. In the center of each burning woodpile were the bodies of the departed. To the mind, it was an awful holocaust, but the eye simply saw a number of bonfires. It is the way the Hindus throughout India dispose of their dead, and in time of famine and cholera, it is an especially good and sensible way.

THE FAMINE POORHOUSE.

I took the train next to a town called Dohad. An American missionary met me at the station with the usual mode of conveyance, a two-wheeled cart pulled by horse and called a tonga, in which we drove literally "over the hills to the poorhouse." All through that two-mile ride, through the scorching heat, the fierce glare of the sun, the blinding, driving clouds of dust, the air was laden with the horrible odor of the dead. We could scent the poorhouse, as stages scent danger while it is yet afar off. The poorhouse was not such an institution as Will Carleton had in mind when he wrote "Over the Hills." It was not the kind of "poorhouse" Americans know, with green blinds and white walls, standing amid green trees. This famine poorhouse was a thing of yellow matting, an inclosure big enough to hold more than a thousand people, divided into dormitories for sleeping, eating tents, resting tents, and hospital wards. It was built as in the middle of a desert. Not a green thing was anywhere to be seen. All the people not in the hospital slept on the ground, eat on the ground, lived on the ground in the dirt and dust. Of the thousand inmates, half were women and children, about three hundred were old men, and the remainder about 20 per cent. of all, were in the hospital wards. This poorhouse, like all the poorhouses in the famine district, was part of the government relief operations. It must be understood that at normal times there are no poorhouses in India. For at normal times people can beg enough to keep body and soul together. When the famine came, however, poorhouses had to be established to shelter the aged and decrepit, and those who are not strong enough to work at the relief camps. So every village and town in the famine area now has its poorhouse. A few are in charge of Englishmen, the majority are in the care of natives. Where the white man has taken up his poorhouse burden, all is well, the camp is well managed, sanitary measures are observed and the sick are cared for.

NATIVE MISMANAGEMENT.

Not so, the poor houses in charge of natives. Here all is mismanagement and absolute indifference to the suffering and the needs of inmates. This poorhouse at Dohad was in charge of a native, and it was the worst place of the kind I have yet seen in India. All the horrors of the famine, all the misery and suffering, resulting from starvation and neglect seemed to be concentrated here. The sick and the well, the weak and the strong were huddled together. The people had come there to die. Many of them could be saved, but the native in charge took no note of this. He simply let them die while he remained comfortably seated in his own tent with a man to fan him. The native hospital assistant was strutting around with an umbrella over his head, looking upon his patients from afar. The government sanitary inspector who happened to be present in his official capacity, upbraided the hospital assistant for his laziness and neglect. The man closed his umbrella and made a showing of bustling among the prostrate forms under the matting roof. Like all native officials, as soon as our backs were turned, he probably resumed his self-imposed and usual duty of keeping cool and avoiding his patients, leaving all the work to an ignorant underling.

LOOKED LIKE THE PICTURES.

The emaciated forms lying under the general gathering shed looked exactly like the pictures you have seen of famine sufferers. Some of these poor people crawled to our feet on hands and knees, and placing their heads in the dust, moaned their supplications; "O my king, help us, and it will be well with thee; for we are very hungry." Others called us kings of all kings and protectors of the poor, adding that we were their fathers and mothers and would surely give them food. Even little children begged thus. In the hospital wards the scenes might have represented all the forms of suffering depicted by Dante in the Inferno. Here was a father and son dying side by side, with never a hand to lift a cup of water to their fevered lips. Here were children passing away, alone, even unseen, lying under a heap of rags. Mothers addressed us saying: "Give us food, and the Gods will give thee many children." Every now and then bearers would come with a stretcher of matting, and carry off yet one more body to the burning place. Such is a poorhouse in the famine district, and such is the management when it is in charge of a native. Government would like to have put every relief camp and every poorhouse in charge of English engineers and English doctors. But not enough Englishmen for this purpose can be found in India.

While I was there, sickened in body and mind with the appalling scenes, and indignant at the heartless mismanagement, Dr. Louis Klopper, who has come here from New York to study the famine and observe government relief operations, was walking with the chief official of the town through all the fields taking notes and