

The Ranch



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A YELLOW PERIL FORTY THOUSAND STRONG

This yellow peril has been threatening Puget Sound, Oregon and California for half a dozen years. Indeed, it has actually been pouring in with augmented favor and force during all of that time. It is a real yellow peril from the real Orient—a vital, material, baneful incursion that is not only an economic scourge and a serious menace to American industry, but comes here by myriads, foul with disease, enfilmed with germs and alive with insidious parasites. It was a timely invasion; it was cheap; it was popular, and it was welcomed with a hospitality that seemed to know no bounds. The people demanded it; those able to supply the demand, had they guessed its limitations, might still be eager to gratify the clamor of their clientele.

At last a great avalanche of yellow peril poured its infectious largess into our tired and struggling arms. Where there was logical place and price for one, no less than four of the little yellow interlopers raced for fare and favor. The very men who originated the invasion in response to popular clamor were overwhelmed by the appalling enormity of the result. Then Uncle Sam took a hand in the game: It was decided to transport some of the surplus Orientals to British Columbia; but there the inspectors condemned them as diseased and not entitled to entry; they were returned to the Americans who transported them; and in order to allow them to again enter our country, Uncle Sam required the Americans to pay a considerable head-tax upon each company of the yellow peril from over the broad Pacific. The little fellows went begging, but could not be farmed out for enough even to pay back their head-tax and the cost of a berth on the Oriental liners.

Thus has the peril at last reached the doorway of swift and certain disfavor and decline. Thus perishes the yellow peril that for years has streamed upon our shores with every favoring, seasonable tide. A decided halt has been ordered; not by the government, not by the people, not by conscience, but by the inexorable law of economic advantage and the new development of an American resource now amply able to satisfactorily fill the bill.

MANY a time within the last five years the fruit inspectors, as well as the scientific fruit-growers of the Pacific coast, have called attention to the quite generally diseased condition of the little oranges that come from Japan by thousands of bundles every year. In the Pacific Northwest particularly this tiny orange has been widely popular in the markets and has reached perhaps every hamlet every year.

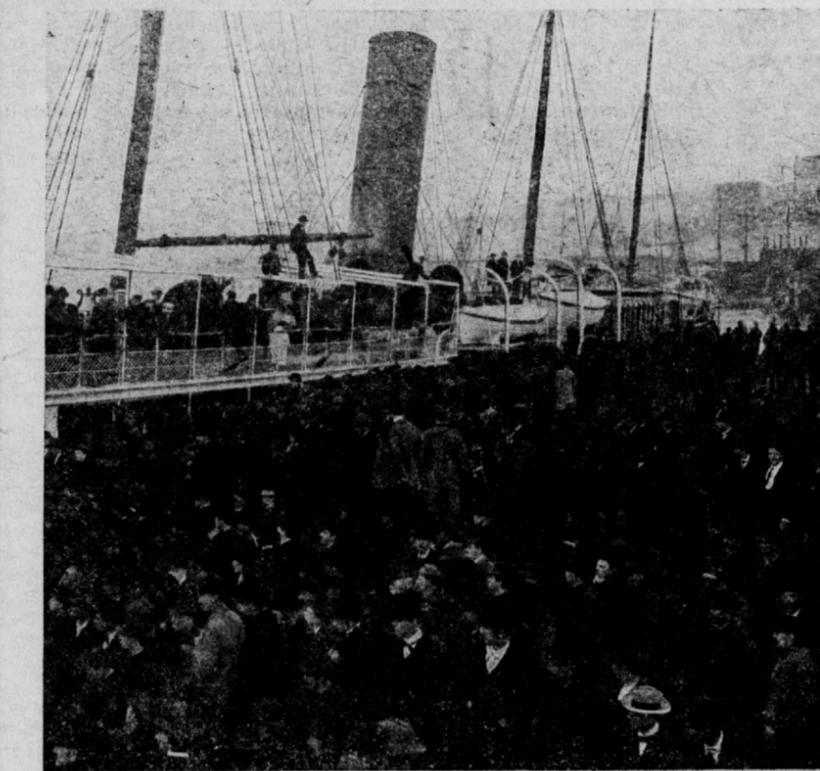
Fumigation upon arrival from the Orient was required by law, but it has been discovered that even this safeguard was insufficient to kill all the myriads of germs and parasites lurking in the pebbled skins of the little yellow devils. The produce dealers and commission men of Western cities dealt in them reluctantly, but there was a continuous and insistent popular demand, and the dealer who failed to meet it soon felt the loss of other business as well as the Jap orange trade. If he desired to remain in business he must meet the demands of his public.

Even with all these dealers buying and receiving Japs on consignment up to last year there were rarely enough Japs in sight to fill all orders. Last season there were too many, four times over, and then some. The condition of the fruit was worse than ever. Fumigation upon arrival, with the oranges placed in a tight car and thoroughly smoked, even this was not enough to prevent the fruit inspectors of Victoria and San Francisco from condemning every shipment sent them because the fruit was infected with living germs and destructive insects.

It was a regular blight of loss, loss, loss to the dealers on every bundle and box received.

North California Has the Goods.

That is why there will be few more Jap oranges handled extensively in the Pacific Northwest. But that is not the only reason for this checking of the yellow peril: Within the last six years Northern California has come into the market as an orange-grower. Its oranges are ready for market even earlier than the Japs. The principal reason for the Jap orange demand here was that it came into the market nearly a month earlier than any American competitor. The



ARRIVAL OF AN ORIENTAL STEAM SHIP DURING THE INVASION.

splendid oranges of South California do not usually arrive before Christmas.

Northern California is now able to supply all the early oranges required, and she can do it satisfactorily. It is entirely natural that the produce dealers and commission merchants of the Pacific Northwest prefer to give this business to the growers of Northern California, rather than to the inferior growers of far-away Japan, whose product is so bad, so negligently grown and so carelessly put up, not to speak of its intrinsic inferiority as a palatable fruit, that it is at all times received with fear and trembling by every dealer who has had any experience with it.

A prominent Western Avenue dealer, one who can be relied upon to voice the conservative opinion and sentiment of the street, said to me the other day: "I am confident that there will be few more Jap oranges han-

dled through Western Avenue. We have not only absorbed abundantly expensive lessons from that source, but we do not feel that there is now any further reason for considerable importations from Japan. We can get all the early oranges we require from first-class American growers, who properly spray, grade and pack their fruit; I refer to the new orchards of Northern California. Besides, there is a large element of justice as well as patriotism in such a course, and furthermore Northern California is entitled to our early orange trade before any other region so long as she can supply us satisfactorily, and of the latter we have no doubt, because we have eminently satisfactory experience there already, more or less for half a dozen years."

Western Avenue Swamped.

Last year there was a large crop of Jap oranges, how large no one seemed to know over here. Theretofore it had

been difficult for local dealers to secure a sufficient supply.

Therefore, everybody was quick to bid to the Japanese shippers, either to buy or to receive on consignment. Everybody wanted Japs, as they are colloquially called by produce and commission merchants. The Jap shippers and growers, unfortunately for Western Avenue and everybody else concerned, including the Jap growers and shippers themselves, were there with the goods, able to fill every order.

As a result of this stampede of the dealers and the ability of the little brown men to meet it, from December 4 till December 28, 1907, more than 40,000 bundles, or 80,000 boxes, of Jap oranges were tossed into the bulging warehouses of Western Avenue. At the same time it was well known to the competent operators in the local market that the street could not possibly handle profitably, at the very outside, more than 10,000 bundles.

Added to this disastrous outlook was the further discouraging fact that, with the exception of the first shipment, which arrived on the steamship Minnesota on December 4, all the shipments came to the dealers or consignees in very poor condition, thousands of boxes being practically a total loss. One shipment was badly injured by bilge-water in the hold of one of the N. Y. K. steamships, and owing to a loosely drawn insurance policy the Seattle merchants had to stand the entire loss.

Of the 40,000 bundles, more than 23,000 were bought direct from the growers and shippers in Japan, and less than 12,000 bundles were consigned here on commission. These oranges were bought in Japan for 42 cents a bundle; the freight charge was 22 cents per bundle and the import duty 23½ cents per bundle, making the net cost to local merchants, not including insurance premiums and damage in transit, a total of 87½ cents a bundle.

By the time the second steamship arrived with its yellow load and it became a matter of common knowledge that everybody, nearly, had plunged in the market, there was some fancy hustling on the street, and day after day brought slump after slump in the price of Japs. The price started with the Minnesota shipment, December 4, at 75 cents a bundle, and from that point

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