OUR JAPANESE QUESTION

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Arrival of Southern Foreigners, Portuguese or Spaniards, in Japan, as Shown on a Folding Screen.

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W HAT is all this hullabaloo about the hostile feeling between the United States and Japan? Can two countries be found with a longer record of international friendship? For half a century Japan has welcomed Americans, while the United States has been a land of pilgrimage for Japanese. The two countries have been bound together by twelve successive commercial treaties, and the United States in 1854 was the first nation to accept Japan as a full member of the family of nations.

The policies and interests of the two lands are not naturally antagonistic. By the Root-Takahira note of 1908 and the Lansing-Itoh note of 1917 we admit Japan's Asiatic Monroe Doctrine. There is no unassigned territory that both nations covet, except the island of Yap, around which Japan has waged a long war of investment, and neither nation need interfere with the trade of the other except in open commercial competition. The Pacific offers abundant opportunities for both these great maritime powers.

Nevertheless, there has never been a time of such uneasy and hostile feeling between the two nations. It all goes back to the question of the right of the people of one country to settle in the territory of another, translated by Japan in the Peace Conference of Paris into the phrase "equality of races." That claim is positively denied by the action of the State of California. That denial aroused and threatens to embitter Japan. Is it a just claim? Would it be good for the United States of America to allow it?

The Federal form of our Government makes possible this singular triangular difficulty in which the desires of Japan and the Pacific States collide, and the Federal Government acts as a sort of umpire. The legal and international difficulty is, after all, simple. The President and Senate of the United States, by treaty with Japan and China, have secured mutual freedom of movement of persons from one country to another, as travelers or as immigrants. Congress has, by statute, limited, and later prohibited, the immigration of Chinese, except the four privileged classes of merchants, travelers, diplomats, and students. Congress has also fixed the conditions of naturalization of immigrants, and in 1894 enacted that no person of "the Mongolian race" could be naturalized; that provision has been applied both to Japanese and Chinese. On the other hand, under the Fourteenth Amendment, the children of Orientals, if born in the United States, are full citizens of the United States and the State in which they reside. By the "gentlemen's agreement" of 1906, which was recognized by the Treaty of 1911 as reasonable, Japanese immigration of laborers is checked so long as the Japanese Government refuses to grant them passports.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the number of Japanese in the United States has grown steadily. In 1900 there were 35,000; in 1910 there were 153,000. California contains 10,000 in 1910, 41,000 in 1917, and 70,000 in 1920, besides about 120,000 of the Japanese race in the Hawaiian Islands. This increase is due in part to smuggling in Japanese immigrants, still more to the ease with which "students" form their attention to farming and the industries. Another source is the thousands of "picture bridas," that is, Japanese women admitted contrary to the spirit of the "gentlemen's agreement," because they promise to marry resident Japanese and thus increase the American citizens of the Japanese stock. The immigration authorities of the United States are directly responsible for this method of increasing the present and future Japanese population.

At this point comes the authority of the States. They cannot prevent the admission of anybody accepted by the United States Government, and cannot exclude any man or woman from the suffrage upon race grounds; but they can deny to aliens the privileges of voting and of taking part in corporations of certain kinds. This right has been exercised in many States against aliens in general, California by statute, and also by a recent referendum, has prohibited aliens who are not capable of becoming citizens (that is, in effect, Chinese and Japanese) from holding land directly or through forms of trust. Whether a State may legally thus discriminate against aliens is not yet settled by the courts, though there are precedents.

Here then is the case in a nutshell. The National Government prohibits Chinese immigration but not Japanese. It restricts Japanese immigration by a roundabout and makeshift method which allows thousands to sift through. The Pacific States are powerless to shut these people out, but are alarmed at their acquirement of land, as an evidence of intention to form a permanent settlement. The Japanese Government dislikes any restriction, and formally protests against treatment of Japanese which is not precisely the same as that of other immigrants.

This legal side of the question is the lesser part. The authority of the United States to shut out immigrants for any reason that seems good to Congress has been often exerted and cannot be doubted even though it arouses another nation's hostility. The Coast States would like to see all Oriental immigration shut off, and the Japanese Government desires no current of emigration which carries people too far away from the oversight of their
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