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# THE CHINESE QUESTION.

*A Paper read before the Berkeley Club,*

*by JOHN H. BOALT,*

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## THE CHINESE QUESTION.

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**Two Non-Assimilating Races Never Yet Lived Together Harmoniously on the Same Soil Unless One of these Races was in a State of Servitude to the Other.**

I do not think that in the whole history of the world from the earliest ages down to the present day one single instance can be cited where this proposition has proved untrue. Of course since there are degrees in assimilation there are degrees in the antagonism caused by non-assimilation; and there may have been cases where this antagonism was less than in other cases. There may even have been cases where it has in time finally died out, but never, as far as I have been able to discover, has the antagonism ceased until the cause was removed, and in every instance the extent of the one has borne a definite proportion to the degree of the other.

By the assimilation of two races is meant, the bringing or coming together of the individual members of these races in such intimate association that there ceases to be any race separation between them, and the two finally become blended into one nation. It is the breaking down of all barriers of race and color, and education and prejudice, the identification of interests, the acceptance of the same laws, the adoption of the same customs, and, in short, the admission of absolute equality as far as race is concerned, by all, for all, and among all, politically, morally and socially.

Without intimate social relations assimilation is impossible. The identity of business interests which has done and is doing so much else is powerless here. The Hebrews of Rome never became Italians; the Greeks of Constantinople never became Turks. But a drought in Turkey injured the Greek as much as the Ottoman; and a season of plenty in Italy was as welcome to the Jew as the Gentile.

where the distance from the mother germ has become so great, and the individuality of the different types has become so distinct, that assimilation between them is now impossible, just as it has become impossible to graft one distinct fruit upon another and procure an enduring progeny.

I propose rather to restrict myself to the mention of a few of the more prominent causes of non-assimilation, selecting those whose workings are familiar to us all, either as matter of history or as well-known existing influences. First in order are:

1. PHYSICAL PECULIARITIES.—Why it is that certain peculiarities of face, form, and color attract us, while others repel, is a problem far too deep for this paper. It is enough that the fact exists; and its importance in this connection will be appreciated when we remember that assimilation is impossible without intimate and cordial social relations between the differing races, and frequent inter-marriage between their members.

Again, these physical peculiarities tend to make other and less important divergencies conspicuous, and in this and other ways are constantly operating to isolate the race possessing them from all other races. I am inclined to think that physical peculiarities which now pass unnoticed might, if a prejudice were aroused against them, ultimately result in the separation and isolation of new races and septs now unknown. For example, suppose that red-headed men were rigidly excluded from general society, and compelled to consort together; the result would be, that in a few generations we should have a red-headed sept. The auburn tinge would gradually disappear from our heads, while it would grow more and more pronounced on theirs, until, after aeons of ages, it might be, or at least it might be believed, that there were mental as well as physical differences between us.

Upon the whole, I doubt if there is any obstacle in the way of the fraternization of races so difficult to overcome as this one of physical peculiarities, and the prejudices, sometimes very idle and senseless, which are begotten of them. These marked differences in color and physiognomy will remain forever, unless gradually modified and softened down by the slow process of amalgamation. But there can be no amalgamation worth con-

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DIFFERENCES OF TEMPERAMENT.  
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assimilation is :

### 3. DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE.

To these may be added differences in customs, dress, social peculiarities, local prejudices, and the like, all of which exert more or less influence in keeping up the separation of the races. That these differences may be gradually overcome by time and contact is, of course, true. But it may be worth while to remember that, after centuries of association, there still remains the old and apparently irrepressible conflict between the Indo-Germanic and the Slavonic Races within the Empire of Austria.

Another, and common cause of non-assimilation, is :

4. HATRED ENGENDERED BY CONQUEST, OR BY CLASHING OF NATIONAL OR RACE INTERESTS.—Examples of race antipathies from this cause will readily suggest themselves. From the very nature of the cause the antagonism created by it will naturally grow less with succeeding generations ; and instances are not wanting where it has finally died out altogether. But no species of national or race antagonism is so dangerous, so desperate, or so prolific of dissension and bloodshed while it lasts.

A fifth cause of non-assimilation is :

5. RELIGIOUS FANATICISM.—No better evidence can be given of the power of this influence in keeping races separate than the fact that, in several instances, it has been able to reconcile races otherwise antagonistic. Next to physical peculiarities, it is probably the strongest of all the agencies we have so far considered. It would seem that it is not essential that a nation should be united in favor of a creed, as were the Mahomedans ; the same force is operating when the nation is united against a religion, as were the Chinese. The impossibility of assimilation, when this powerful force is working against it, may be seen to-day in British India. It is idle to expect fraternization among men of different races when one considers the bare touch of the other as an ineffaceable profanation.

Having now briefly considered some of the causes of non-assimilation, we can better understand the bitter antagonism which it has called forth.

the "nominis umbra" remained. To them the community is everything, the individual is nothing. Insult them and you may be forgiven, but insult their sept and you have committed an unpardonable sin. Lost in such a generalization, they become morbidly sensitive as to the community's honor, fretfully irritable as to its grievances, and inordinately jealous of its rivals or competitors. For such small cattle, they are capable of a great deal of harm.

I may now re-state the proposition with which I began and give it place as the major premise of my argument.

*Two non-assimilating races cannot live together harmoniously on the same soil unless one be in a state of servitude to the other.*

It is not necessary to say that slavery is in this country no longer possible.

We are now ready for the minor premise:

*The Caucasian and Mongolian races are non-assimilating races.*

For, first, they are separated by physical peculiarities of the most marked and distinctive character. The Chinaman differs from us in color, in features and in size. His contact excites in us, or at least in most of us, an unconquerable repulsion which it seems to me must ever prevent any intimate association or miscegenation of the races. To this must be added that the difference in physical peculiarities makes the more conspicuous the many and radical divergencies which otherwise exist.

Second, the two races are also separated by a remarkable divergence in intellectual character and disposition. Our habits of thought are so entirely different that it seems impossible that they should ever become reconciled.

Of the European immigration which comes, to us the Indo-Germanic races and even the Slavonic races may be said to have in general about the same ideal standard of excellence as our own. As a consequence we have found that they readily assimilate with us and their national peculiarities and race distinctions soon die out and in a generation or two they become completely Americanized. But as far as we can judge, the ideal standard of

entirely different plan. His  
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Children are regularly bought  
 San Francisco to-day, and  
 imported from China, and  
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in which a young Chinese  
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 having been first proved and  
 her oath by the Rev. Otis  
 e Hon. Horace F. Page,  
 instrument, this girl was

indentured to serve as a prostitute, just as formally and with as  
 much precision and straightforwardness of language as we might  
 use in apprenticing a girl to a milliner, and careful provision was  
 made that she should serve an additional time to make up for  
 any sickness resulting from her peculiar occupation. It is  
 equally notorious that Chinese bravoos can be readily hired at  
 prices which cannot, under the circumstances, be considered as  
 exorbitant, who will undertake to maim, or even kill, any other  
 Chinaman obnoxious to his employer. Murders are constantly  
 occurring, which are clearly traceable to this cause, but although  
 the perpetrators may be well known, they cannot be brought to  
 justice, on account of the prevailing fear that any evidence  
 against them will be visited with severe and speedy punishment.

In my own professional experience, I have repeatedly known  
 cases where a Chinese witness would tell the truth to the attor-  
 ney in the case, but utterly refuse to state it upon the stand. If  
 he is nevertheless summoned, and called upon to testify in open  
 Court, he avows his utter ignorance of the whole matter.

Prominent Chinese merchants are constantly complaining that  
 a price has been set on their heads, and that their lives are in  
 danger from their own countrymen, and in one case within my  
 own knowledge a Chinese merchant paid a special policeman ten  
 dollars per day for several days prior to the departure of the  
 China steamer, to go about with him continually, and protect  
 him from these hired assassins. Even while he was giving an  
 elaborate supper at a Chinese restaurant to other merchants, he  
 insisted that his guardian should be at the door and within easy  
 call. It was noticeable in this case that the Chinaman was not  
 afraid of any personal attack from his enemy himself, but rather  
 from bravoos employed by that enemy.

But I do not wish to enlarge upon this portion of my subject.  
 I have endeavored to confine myself to facts within my own  
 knowledge, and they can easily be verified. The facts speak  
 for themselves. Summing them all together, they simply amount  
 to this: the Chinaman has brought China to America. Travelers  
 have enabled us to understand what that is.

A population so dense as to be over-crowded, our Mongolian  
 immigrants bring us all the evils of over-crowding. The China-

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 the other hand, industry and  
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 e government imposed upon  
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 But we are not a nation of  
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more difficult in this case by  
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 uch more easily assimilated to  
 a divergent civilization. For  
 a learns from his contact with  
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 himself. He sees that civiliza-  
 y seeks to acquire it for him-  
 arily assimilates himself more  
 earns it.

I never shall forget the time when I first became convinced of the truth of this proposition. Several years ago when the great eclipse of the sun occurred, which you all remember, I was living at Austin in the State of Nevada. I had just come out of my house with a piece of smoked glass in my hand when I noticed a Shoshonee Indian intently looking up into the sky. The day had been very bright. Suddenly an invisible veil seemed to cover the sun; a luminous pall fell upon the mountains and the valleys, softening the rugged outlines of the one and dimming the long distances of the other. Great vague shadows seemed to have dropped down into the cañons and gulches around us, where it had been dazzlingly bright but a moment before. Conscious of some great mystery, but utterly ignorant of its nature, the Indian stood with his eyes searching the cloudless sky. I handed him my bit of smoked glass and motioned to him to look at the sun. He did so, and when I asked him what he thought of it, he heaved a deep sigh and said, "Whitee man heap sabee." Continuing down the street with my bit of smoked glass still in my hand, I happened on a Chinese laundryman. I offered him my smoked glass, and advised him to look at the sun. But John only grinned complacently, and said, "Up my house got heap big tub water; you see 'em 'clip' heap better." I went home and got out my own tub of water and found that John was quite right. I could see the "clip" a heap better. I have always felt that I ought to have passed to John the laurels I had just undeservedly received and said, "Chinaman heap sabee." It seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, that in many branches of knowledge the Chinaman is as far advanced as we are, and it is precisely because he does not need our help that I think him less likely to adopt our ways.

Before leaving this branch of the subject, I desire to put in evidence the history of the Chinese in America, and more particularly in California, during the last twenty-five years. We are all tolerably familiar with it, and it seems to me conclusive on two points.

First—We cannot and will not assimilate with them.

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erally more industrious and economical than ourselves. No less distinguished a writer than George W. Curtis has denounced the movement as a crusade against the two virtues of industry and economy. Perhaps some of the speeches made on this coast may have given color to such an imputation. But its falsity is readily seen when we consider that no one thinks of opposing Scandinavian immigration, although the Scandinavian is, as a general rule, full as industrious and economical as the Chinaman. But the Scandinavian is in sympathy with us. He readily accepts our government, our customs, our habits, and ways of life. In a few years he becomes as much of an American as ourselves, and his devotion to our soil and his attachment to our institutions is as warm as our own.

On the other hand, an immigration of Malay pirates would be full as objectionable as the present Chinese immigration, although the Malays have even less industry and economy than our own people. We want no race which we cannot absorb. Our best immigrants are those whose race distinctions are soonest obliterated.

I do not pretend to claim, however, that the opposition to Chinese immigration is not made more bitter and intense among our laboring classes because the coming of so many Chinese has a tendency to derange our labor market and bring about a reduction in wages. It would be very strange if it did not have this effect. We do not expect that a laborer will look with kindly feelings upon the man who takes the bread out of the mouth of his children, even when that man is his friend or neighbor. It is difficult enough at all times to curb the passions of men, who, while resisting a reduction in their wages, see their places taken by others willing to work for the price they have refused. It was not found an easy task last summer in the Eastern States. But the task is made very much more difficult when the newcomers are unwelcome strangers, alien in race, in color, in creed, in customs, and in everything but the power to work. This presents only another bar to the assimilation of the two races, and excites still other and very bitter and dangerous antagonisms between them. It is no argument to tell the American laborer that if he would live as the Chinaman lives he might subsist on the Chinaman's wages.



ies to learn to live on so little. cities have gradually accom- earnings, until now very little . He has made a prodigious straw per day. Early educa- ed him to practice the closest become a habit, and no longer about him has graduated itself er, his baker, his candlestick hant and his common carrier, is measure. The doctor who buries his dead demand little afford to be cheap when every- not expect labor to be cheap

ause of China; the American t. Under the circumstances between them. You cannot ng line of Chinese ances- ditary tendencies and tastes, his birth never entitled him on the Mongolian pattern,

h other habits that are expen- believe that it is a good thing children, to contribute to eat clean food and wear clean ch other to think that over- plenty of air and sunlight are nd infirm must be properly nness compels expensive phy- d death brings an expensive system of life are modeled ossible to change it at once. will always beat us in a com- learned in China are pitted America. Under the circum-

stances it is no more surprising that a Chinaman can live cheaper than an American than it is that a horse can.

But is it worth while to change our system? While there may be many defects in it, still does it not, upon the whole, work better than any system we know of? Suppose that we had an immigration of 100,000,000 of Chinamen; suppose that their industry and economy were applied to our land and every acre benefited to its utmost; suppose that our productions were magnified until the possible height was reached—what then? Measured by acres, we should be much better off than we are now; but, measured by men, should we be any better off? Measured by the peace, prosperity, contentedness, cheerfulness, happiness of our people, should we have made any progress? I think not.

But I am asked how can this immigration be checked? The power to regulate commerce resides in the National Congress. Our Government has made a treaty with China in which the right to come here has been granted to her people. The Supreme Court of the United States has just decided that no State possesses the power of interfering with this immigration. All this is true.

But we have no right to assume that the National Congress will not do us justice. Perhaps their refusal to help us—I do not understand that they have as yet refused—is because they do not yet understand our grievance. There are many among ourselves who are still in favor of Chinese immigration. It has even been asserted, and prominent men and journals in the East have repeated it, that the opposition to Chinese immigration in California is confined to a few demagogues and discontented communists. As long as this is believed, there is little hope of anything being done.

I, therefore, make this suggestion: Let the Legislature of California, at their next session, provide for taking the sense of the people of the State of California on the question of Chinese immigration, at a general election to be held for that purpose. Let them next request the Legislatures of the other Pacific States to adopt a similar measure. I may be mistaken, but I think that

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