

## THE TIDE OF TURBANS

AGAIN on the far outposts of the western world rises the spectre of the Yellow Peril and confronts the affrighted pale-faces. This time the chimera is not the saturnine, almond-eyed mask, the shaven head, the snaky pig-tail of the multitudinous Chinese, nor the close-cropped bullet-heads of the suave and smiling Japanese, but a face of finer features, rising, turbaned out of the Pacific and bringing a new and anxious question to the dwellers on the so-called peaceful ocean. Nor is the apparition of a race different from that of the land it threatens, but of the same ancient Aryan stock. It is not, indeed, a question of the yellow and the white, but of the Oriental and the Occidental. It is nothing more nor less than a threatening inundation of Hindoos over the Pacific Coast.

The Pacific Slope, being the sea-frontier toward Asia, is the Western bulwark of America, and as such has borne and is still to bear the brunt of the invasion by the swarms of swarthy people from the ancient lands of the Orient.

The American, far removed on the globe, finds it difficult to accept the Hindoo as a brother of the blood. Between him and this dark, mystic race lies a pit almost as profound as that which he has dug between himself and the negro. The racial equality of the East Indian he acknowledges, but a closer affinity he unconsciously denies. The two civilizations will not mix. Hence the citizens of the Pacific States look askance upon the strange, new immigrants the steamers bring to them from over the Pacific, hence they speak, much perturbed, about the "yellow peril."

The agitation against the Chinese has long ago ceased in the Pacific States. The sons of the Celestial Kingdom have become, indeed, a valuable asset to the people of California. They have kept within the circle of their lowly labors and made themselves eminently useful as house-servants, vegetable-gardeners, laundry-men, cooks and laborers. They have helped to develop the State and to settle, in part, the eternally vexing question of domestic help. They walk no longer on the streets of San Francisco in deadly peril of the brickbat flung by the malignant gamin. John Chinaman is as useful in the Far West as he is in the coolie class in India. It is the Japanese, those brown, busy little men from Nippon who are now engaging the attention of the people of the Pacific States. In them they behold eager and intelligent rivals in business, ambitious prospectors for trade. Whether they "corner" the potato crop of the State, inflating the prices, whether they compete formidably with the white tailor, boot-maker, grocer, fruit-grower or farmer, they must

always be reckoned with as a factor strongly affecting the prosperity of the white inhabitants. They are gradually ceasing to be the servants of the Americans and are becoming dangerous rivals. It is to prevent the indomitable Japanese from becoming masters of the situation that sentiment and legislation are now directed against them. The Chinese were formerly a menace to native labor, as the Japanese are now a menace to native industry.

The Hindoo Invasion is yet in its infancy; only the head of the long procession has entered the Golden Gate. The question is one that abounds in interest to the statesman, the citizen, the student of economics and of history.

It is assumed that the unrest bred in the Far East by the Russo-Japanese War, a feeling that spread itself over the eastern confines of India, is the cause of the strange migration of a people who had seldom left the confines of their own land. Overcoming the fetters of caste and creed and their weird superstitions concerning the sea, thousands of Hindoos, their fancy on fire with the tales they had heard of the rich and wonderful land across the Pacific, left India and came to California, Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. Ready for any sort of work, they seized eagerly upon all that was offered them—and sent back golden tales of prosperity to their native villages—how a man might earn as much here in one day as in a month at home, how no famine blighted this fair land, how there was work for all. Some became toilers in mines and iron foundries, others pickers of fruit or workers in the canneries or lumber mills, but most of them found employment as section hands on railways.

For miles their turbaned figures may be seen wielding crow-bar or shovel along the tracks. Hundreds of them are encountered in the mighty lumber-mills buried in the thick fir forests along the Columbia River. They live in camps and colonies, and their usual expenses amount to little more than three dollars a month—a sum that would scarcely support a white man for three days.

The Hindoos who have come to the Far West to work are usually bachelors or widowers. There are no women among them. The reason for this may be sought in the peculiar reluctance of the Hindoos to expose their women to the shameless gaze of the western unbeliever. There are many Brahmins among them, humble workers in arduous positions. The restrictions and regulations of caste naturally cannot be observed among the groups of men, for that would entail intolerable confusion. The camps usually have their own cooks and a strict vegetarian diet is maintained, as in their own land.

"We eat no meat," said a stately Brahmin to a lady who visited the camp, "that is, no beef—the cow is sacred."

"But you drink milk?" she objected, "and your cow gives you the milk!"

He lifted his brows in astonishment as he replied: "Yes, we drink our mother's milk also, but we do not eat her!"

It was the same son of India who, wishing to become a citizen of the United States, refused to remove his turban while taking the oath and so remained a British subject. Always the turban remains, the badge and symbol of their native land, their native customs and religion. Whether repairing tracks on the long stretches of the Canadian or Northern Pacific railways, feeding logs into the screaming rotary saws of the lumber-mills, picking fruit in the luxuriant orchards or sunny hill-sides of California, the twisted turban shows white or brilliant, a strange, exotic thing in the western landscape.

No legal bar, under the present treaty, can be set up against the coming of the Hindoos. Being subjects of Great Britain, they possess an undisputed right of entry to the United States. In the Dominion, Victoria and Vancouver are the common destinations and centres for the Indians. Much dissatisfaction, as is known, has of late resulted in these two cities because of the influx of the Hindoos.

In New York an institution called "The India House" has recently been founded by a philanthropic gentleman named Myron T. Phelps. Its purpose is to encourage the immigration of the educated East Indian to the United States, to provide a home for students and young merchants who come to New York for the purposes of trade, and in general to advance the welfare of the Hindoo in the States. This project has, however, been looked upon with strong disfavor by the Indian conservatives at home, as being a centre for fostering the revolutionary spirit that threatens England in her great eastern empire.

Whatsoever aspect the Indian invasion may yet assume, it is, beyond doubt, an important one both to the United States and to England, affecting the possessions of the latter country especially, either for good or for evil in India and in Canada. In the meantime, students and statesmen will watch with growing interest the tide of turbans streaming Westward out of the congested land of India.

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