

WHY NOT?

What right have we to demand of any country that which we deny to it? The American government is informed that our people in China are alarmed because the authorities of that country have ordered the numbering of Americans in the empire. Well, what is that but what we are doing in the registration of the Chinese in this country?

But, say some, the Geary act only excludes workingmen, while our people in China are not workers. That is about the thinnest thing yet suggested. People who are doing no good for the country they are in have the least possible claim on hospitality. Or as Americans in China are either tourists, merchants or missionaries, therefore the government of that country cannot retaliate, as our laws apply only to laborers. A people with the acute common sense of the Chinaman will not be bothered with that special pleading very long.

The simple truth is, we have acted on the plane of ignorant and self-important assumption—that we, the youngest nation on the globe, were superior in all things to the oldest nation in the records of history. We have nothing that was not borrowed from China, or at least was old there centuries before we could even read or write or knew enough to make clothes.

All the so-called disabilities of Chinamen, as we know them, are from the needs and conditions of dense population. Take "Chinatown" in San Francisco, and the people live in comfort compared with "sweat dens" of London, New York, Boston and Chicago. What does this show? Simply that the long experience of China with dense populations has enabled them to manage things better than we do—with our want of experience and organization. That is all. And before we are a century older, unless we mend our conditions between labor and capital, we will have to become learners of this ancient people upon all economic questions. In a country where a partial failure of crops, from its great numbers, produces famine, the labor question has received attention that has made its labor organizations the wonder of our civilization. They have no strikes in China, yet the labor organizations control wages and employment far more absolutely than in any modern Western nation. In fact they control it altogether.

We have forced ourselves insolently upon them, using cannon as the first argument, looting and pillage and the torch in the next place—we might say the Western nations—and now we deny them domicile and then protest that they shall not refuse it to us. This is only the cowardly plea of the spoiler—the excuse of the wolf to the lamb—but down in the heart of all real Americans this is what we expect, and what the manly people of the country will commend China for doing. She will lower herself in our estimation unless she does so. And this every honest man feels. There is only one way left for us to do, and that is repudiate the wrong and do what is right.

The demagogue resort that the repeal of the Geary act means unconditional immigration is not the truth—for laws already existing regulated that matter satisfactorily. But that law was pure and simple demagogery before election, which the average politician had not the nerve to vote against. It was the duress of the coward, and the American people repudiate it. It is a lesson that we needed, and if China would send every American out of that country it would be an object lesson in civilization that we need and would profit by.

The real trouble with Chinamen is that they don't want to vote, and attend to their business too strictly, keep out of jail and the alms house so thoroughly that they have excited the enmity against a clean shirt that belongs to one grade of our politics and one class of our politicians.