

# Effect of Jap Invasion on American Labor

**T**HAT the Japanese problem is ripe for settlement there can not be any question whatever.

It would have been well for California as a State, and especially for San Francisco as a city, had it been settled long ago before its roots had sunk so deeply into the soil of commercial life; before it had so strongly disturbed the sensitive barometer of wages and employment.

Some attempt has already been made to show the intricate machinery that has been devised to control Pacific Coast trade in the interests of the Asiatic. The extraordinary cohesion that exists among the Japanese invaders and the perfection of their organization have been indicated and it has been pointed out that their trades unions are none the less trades unions, and most efficient ones, because they lack the democratic character that distinguishes the labor organizations of America. The American union governs itself, while the Japanese union is governed by a boss whose functions range from those of a slave driver in the case of the coolie laborers to those of a capitalist in the case of the mechanic and the skilled workman.

## FACTS ABOUT SHOE TRADE.

Of these facts some considerable evidence has already been furnished, but it may be well to clinch the rivet by citing a definite instance of a trade that has thus been passed under the the harrow and of which the fate is an illustration of the various processes of Japanese combination. It will also serve as an example of the treatment meted out to other trades, and if it be also recognized as a prophecy of what still awaits the remaining industries of our cities, the purpose that we have in view will be doubly served.

The trade in question is that of boot and shoe repairing, and it may be something of a revelation to many to know that in San Francisco alone there are nearly 200 establishments owned and operated by Japanese. This, of course, means that a precisely corresponding number of American skilled workmen have been dispossessed, that wages have been lowered throughout the whole industry and that an American organization has been disorganized and discouraged. These are serious matters and they become still more serious when we realize that the Japanese boot and shoe repairers practically constitute one single trade unit and that their calamitous activities are directed and governed by one brain and in one interest.

## ALL UNDER ONE HEAD.

It seems that there is in Japan a certain capitalist named Nishomura who had amassed a fortune in the boot and shoe trade and whose factories were numerous throughout the whole country. Practically controlling the trade in Japan he sought for further

fields to conquer and naturally decided that the conditions in America were precisely adapted to alien trade invasion. His emissaries arrived forthwith in California and the Japanese boot and shoe repairing industry, as we now find it in San Francisco and elsewhere throughout the State, is practically the property of the Japanese capitalist, controlled by him in every detail and governed with that paternal solicitude under which the Asiatic thrives and grows fat, but which the self-respecting white man could not tolerate for ten minutes.

The method of Nishomura and others of his type—and they are increasing and multiplying in the land—is simplicity itself. The new man who wishes to do business in San Francisco applies, in the first place, to the representatives of the Japanese capitalist and indicates the location in which he would like to settle.

If this location would involve competition with some other Japanese tradesman the application will be refused. There must be absolutely no competition except with white men. If it seems, however, that no competition with his countrymen will ensue the application is granted, a fee of \$25 is extracted, as well as 50 cents per week for sick benefits, and the new shop is opened.

## LIVES IN HIS WORKSHOP.

No matter how small it may be it will be a combination of workshop and bedroom, and a roughly hung curtain will be the division between the two. The wants of the Japanese are "few and simple," as we have already seen, money being the chief among them. He has neither wife nor family, and so long as his bedroom is just a little bigger than he is himself he can still call his life a luxurious one, compared with the conditions from which he has come.

The Japanese capitalist has, however, by no means finished with him. In addition to his regular contributions to the union he must purchase all his trade supplies from his commercial godfather. At first these supplies were bought in the ordinary manner from the local dealers, but that Japanese money should be allowed to enter American pockets was in every way contrary to the guiding commercial spirit of that interesting nation and a Japanese establishment for the supply of trade material was accordingly opened, so that no money whatever might leave Japanese channels after it had once entered them. The country, the laws, the customers and the competitors were all American. The profits alone must be Japanese.

## THE APPRENTICE SYSTEM.

The next step is to furnish the shop owner with a Japanese apprentice in order that the process may not languish for the lack of human raw material. As soon as the apprentice is taught the rudiments of his trade he is started on his own account with his own shop and his own apprentice, and so the game is played in ever-

widening circles and to the ever-increasing profit of the capitalist and precisely commensurate loss to the American.

The Japanese repairer will always work for a little less than the white workman, who has his own union and his own standard of prices. The result is that the white man in his desperation, and perhaps with thoughts of his wife and family, is finally tempted, and indeed compelled to depart from union prices and union rules, and his organization is at once threatened with dissolution. The 200 Japanese repairing shops flourishing in San Francisco to-day are alike witness to the success of the marauders, as well as to the patience of the white man, under a provocation which long ago reached a point where patience ceases to be a virtue.

#### **GALLAGHER'S EFFORTS.**

This Japanese success was not, however, won without an effort at self-defense. In 1903 Mr. Gallagher, of the Boot and Shoe Repairers' Union, issued an appeal to the public with a view to enlisting its sympathy against a competition as unjust as it was un-American. Some portions of that appeal are reproduced here, inasmuch as it may yet be instrumental in touching the public conscience and arousing public support.

Extracts from the appeal follow:

We have in our State and city a class of objectionable shoe repairers who have of recent years opened shops in our midst which are liable to become disease-producing spots equally as bad as those established by the Chinese. The little brown man from Japan, like his cousin from China, has no respect for the health laws of our land. Each shop is made the habitation of as many as they can crowd therein. The establishment of these shops is a detriment to the American people, because they are under the control of a trust having its headquarters in Japan and operated entirely in the interests of a wealthy Japanese by the name of Nishomura, who controls one thousand shoe firms in Japan and is now making an effort to control the shoe making and repairing business of the Pacific Coast.

#### **MONEY GOES TO JAPAN.**

Unlike the white shoemaker, who makes his home in the country, rears

and educates his family in accordance with American institutions and spends his money in the community in which he resides, a Japanese acquires all the money possible and is then compelled by the trust, which controls him, to remit a large percentage of the money he secures to the headquarters in Japan. Each one of those Japanese shops established in our midst deprives an American citizen of the means of making a livelihood, and has a tendency of forcing him into questionable pursuits, and he becomes either a pest to society or a burden to the taxpayers. Therefore for these reasons we appeal to you, if you have been patronizing the Japanese, to in the future refrain from doing so and patronize those of your own race. By complying with this request you are protecting your own interests as well as those of the white shoemakers, because if the Japanese are encouraged they will soon enter other branches of trade and perhaps be in direct competition with yourself. Let the slogan be that the Japanese must go.

#### **EVERY TRADE THREATENED.**

Now the facts that we have cited in regard to the boot and shoe trade are representative of the conditions that threaten many another trade and many another industry. The remedy that they demand must be sought for if it is to be found. It will not come uninvited, and it will be the reward neither of apathy nor of complaisance. The California workman must formulate his demands and he must express them in season as well as out of season, and he must express them in such a manner that there may be no question of his earnestness nor of his determination.

It is not a matter only for such trades as have been already attacked, but for all trades, because there is not one among them whose turn is not approaching. Had Mr. Gallagher's efforts received the support to which they were entitled in 1903, an immense amount of American money that is now in Japan would be in American pockets and distributed throughout the whole community.

How much longer shall we tolerate this depletion and endure an unmitigated evil that could be ended at once by one united and expressed sentiment?

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