

THE YELLOW PERIL.

BY THE EDITOR.

NEWSPAPERS of the European continent show in many of their comments a fear of what is commonly called "the yellow peril." They see in Japan the representative of the East Asiatic nations and dread the rise of a new power in the world which would not be European but Asiatic. Before the war began, the opinion prevailed that Japan had no chance of winning, for Asiatics cannot beat Europeans and pagans cannot defeat Christians; moreover Japan is poor while the resources of Russia are inexhaustible. But the progress of the war has upset the argument and proves that poor little Japan is quite a match for gigantic Russia with its unlimited wealth, and now again the fear of the "yellow peril" pops up in the minds of the people with renewed force.

Suppose that Japan would take the lead of the Asiatic nations, that it would Westernise the East and educate the Chinese not only in modern industrial methods but also in the science of war. What would be the result? Would not a non-European nation practically come in control of Asia, and would they not be able to compete and cope with the Western powers?

Japan's power is growing, but we can hardly assume that it will ever overtake England and Germany and the United States, not to mention France and other Western nations, combined. It cannot be denied that there is indeed a peril that may threaten to upset the social conditions of the West, if the multitudes of China could as rapidly be educated in Western methods as has been the case with Japan; however, the danger is not military but economical. We may further grant that the Japanese might succeed in taking possession of several points of strategic importance and even hold their own against the intrusion of the Aryan races, and finally there is a possibility that the Chinese and Japanese might turn the tables, and, instead of having foreigners come to their countries, would in the

future settle in America, Europe, and Africa. The probability of the Mongol race taking possession of the entire world lies still in a very dim future, and we do not see that they could easily crowd out the Aryan nations from their own homes. For argument's sake, however, we will grant that the fear of the yellow peril is justified, and we only inquire into the means by which alone the enormous increase of power among the people of Japanese and Chinese nationality can come about. Japan has in its institutions and social conditions actually become a Western nation; it has surrendered several of its most essentially Asiatic features and has broadened out into an international development. It has accepted from the West many methods and principles that are good and recommendable, and to that extent introduced Western civilisation more quickly and more thoroughly than could have been done if it had been colonized by Western settlers. Japan has become like ourselves and this likeness is growing more so from day to day. What do we want more? Trade and commerce is protected in Japan not less than in America or in Europe. Japan has adopted our methods of warfare; it has adopted our views of international law, our views of religious toleration, our views of humane methods in warfare. Why then should we be afraid of the increased power of Japan? It is an obvious truth that Japan has become more European or generally Western than is Russia. Russia is more Asiatic than its Asiatic enemy. Japan has a constitution which closely resembles the constitutions of England and Germany. Russia is purely autocratic. Japan has been more considerate in respecting the rights of neutrals than Russia. Japan favors "the open door" while it is well known that Russia is bent on excluding all other nationalities. Why then should we be afraid of a power that has adopted our own methods and has been schooled in our own civilisation? All that we Americans or Europeans may expect in Asia is to have the freedom of trading and to be sure to have the rights of foreign residents protected.

You may answer that at present Japan exhibits a liberal spirit, but it will change its policy as soon as the Japanese nation has acquired sufficient strength to oppose the Western powers; and I answer that from the day on which Japan would swerve from the liberal course which she pursues at present, her strength will wane again.

But the yellow peril is not so much a fear of the Asiatic civilisation as of the Asiatic race. Our pessimists see in the distant future the world colonised by Chinamen, and an excited imagination represents them in the shape of coolies and haggard-looking laundrymen,

who are expected to pour in to take the place of Western laborers. This fear is in so far justified, as Chinese workmen are more frugal, more trusty, more industrious, more intelligent than Western laborers; and if that be so, the Western laborer will not be able to compete with the coolie.

But is not the truth here rather a warning and a lesson than a real danger to the interests of humanity? Our fear is based not upon a recognition of any fearful quality of the yellow race but upon a recognition of their many virtues, and so we believe that the future will take care of itself. Perhaps we Western races will find it wise if the yellow races have learned from us, to learn in our turn also from them. Perhaps we may deem it best, instead of having a contempt for other races, to understand what gives them their strength, and by appreciating their good qualities we may be in a condition to prevent future defeats by adopting their virtues.

It is true that the destinies of mankind are not entrusted to any one family or to any one race of any one state of the representatives of one special type of civilisation. We have seen how the lead of mankind has changed since the dawn of civilisation. There was a time when the black heads of Akkad and Sumer in lower Mesopotamia developed the foundation of civilised life. Of what race they were we know not; we are only sure that they were neither Semites nor Aryans, and may have been Turanians or members of the great Mongolian family. These primitive people who had settled in the valley of the two rivers were not so numerous as the Semitic tribes, born of the Arabian desert, and they must have recognised the threatening danger when Babylonians crowded them out of their homes, when they supplanted their language by a Semitic dialect and finally inherited their country and civilisation. It may be that the Semitic Babylonians saw the threatening clouds of a yellow peril when the yellow-haired race of Aryans took possession of the empire. The Persians, an Aryan race, took possession first of Iran, then Elam, and finally acquired dominion over Mesopotamia. They became acclimatised in Babylonia and became soon like them in appearance and habits of life. They again saw a yellow peril in the purely Aryan Greeks. The Greeks again were defeated by the Romans upon whom they looked as barbarians, and Tacitus is very pessimistic when pointing out the yellow peril of the North, where the yellow-haired Teutons lived beyond the Rhine. However, when Rome was at the mercy of the barbarians of the North, they took hold of the Roman civilisation and carried it to a higher plane, developing what is now called European civilization.

American civilisation is considered as a purely European development, and yet Europe is afraid of "the American danger" that threatens their holy institutions and may in time Americanise their business and also their public and private life.

All these several fears are blind alarms, and whenever they were well founded, the change that came was for the better. The god of history gives the lead to those nations which in the general struggle for life prove to be the best, the most energetic, the ablest. If the leading nation ceases to be progressive, if she refuses to learn, he calls another one to take its place. There is no nation that ever fell from its dominant position but deserved its fate. Changes in history (at least when we consider all the conditions that lead to them) were always for the better in the general interest of mankind and the evils of the transitional periods were small if compared to the progress that was finally attained.

Now the Western world looks with fear upon the yellow peril that might threaten the world from East Asia. The West need not be alarmed, for China is too conservative to be transformed so suddenly, and then one other thing is sure, that there is danger only if the yellow nations possess sufficient virtues to make themselves formidable, and if they should in the future really become the predominant race, they can take the lead only by excelling and surpassing the representative nations of the West. We believe that this assumption lies at such a distance that the cry of alarm seems unwarranted, but even if there were an actual danger, a possible change in the present balance of power, there is no need of fear, since the sole condition for the yellow race to rise into prominence would consist in the great task (which is by no means an easy one) of outdoing all other nations, not only in military accomplishments, but also, and mainly, in the industrial pursuits of peace.