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China's Present Situation and Her Probable Future.

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ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on the subject: "Canada's Present Situation and Her Probable Future," Professor Harlan P. Beach said:

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Club,—I think if it had not been for the fact that I had the privilege of being with you here two or three years ago, I should have said "no" to your kind invitation to speak to you here to-day. In the States where we think we have many points of advantage over Canada, we are beclubbed to death. But we have nothing which corresponds, even remotely, with your organization. So I am here with a purpose. I want to get the inspiration of looking into your faces—an inspiration which may prompt us to go and do likewise.

Time is short, and I am going to omit the usual stories, which come at the beginning. Dr. Hodge, of Princeton, states that whenever he hears a pun he realizes that the punster is afflicted for the time being with a mental and moral rot. But Dr. Hodge, while a good theologian, couldn't get off a pun if his life depended upon it.

So I am going to dip right into my big subject. First, then, a few words as to to-day. And by to-day I mean anywhere within six months or a year of the present, for history is making rapidly in that country. We will take our present from the latest returns. I find I can only deal with two or three items. I had eight originally, but we have very little time at our disposal. First, then, what of China industrially? China industrially holds the great keys of future items of interest to us of the Occident. I can well recall the building of the first railway in China. It was regarded as a dangerous experiment. We were warned, while the surveys were being carried on, that it would be best for us to keep inside if we had respect

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for our lives. Yet the railways to-day are beginning to open up the possibilities of China. You are all aware of the mineral wealth of that Empire. There is coal and iron enough in that Empire to serve the Empire and the world for thousands of years. It is located in the great tablelands, and as yet no way has been found to get it out. It has been heretofore inaccessible. In 1883 it took me six days to travel eighty-three miles. When I returned a few years ago, it took me four hours to make the same journey. When time is being annihilated in that manner, see what it means for the nation. It means freer intercommunication between the great provinces; it means development and power.

And another thing: China is witnessing the beginning of industrial development. Note what has been done already in the centres of the Empire. Compare what is now being done there with the state sites at Pittsburg and other American industrial centres, and you note the beginning and can see something of the prophetic position of the future. They have their smelters and their mills for rolling rails. Their output is simply sufficient for China. True—at the present time. But what of the future? Even to-day a cargo of pig-iron can be shipped to the United States and sold for a lower rate than we can produce it.

China, too, has an enormous advantage in lines of employment where it is necessary for hands to join with machinery in manufacturing the output. The silk industry in China even now threatens a death blow to the industry in some parts of the States, in France and elsewhere. In cotton, too, you will note that Professor Parker has been telling them in Manchester that the increase in Chinese manufacture in 1907 over 1906 is 67 per cent. It will not take many years with such a ratio of increase to make its effect felt in the Occident. China has almost infinite possibilities for raising cotton, although she is not able to raise the sea island cotton, which, I understand, is the finest cotton.

China is the wealthiest country in the world so far as mineral wealth is concerned. Only recently a cargo of Chinese pig-iron from Hankow was sold in New York for a less price than it could be produced in the United States. If this new competition is efficient the United States Steel Corporation is the most interested concern, and it despatched one of its experts to study the situation and report. He reported that while the labor in the iron industries has only 90 per cent. of the efficiency of ours, it can be purchased for one-fifteenth the cost, so that even there she has the advantage.

These, gentlemen, are sample bricks—"gold bricks," if you will. But they must set us thinking.

Then let us look for a moment at political conditions there. You have been hearing of the death of the Empress dowager and of the Emperor, and the coming into the arena of an Emperor four years of age. With a ruler of such tender years the personality and character of the regent is all important. After the murder of the German Ambassador in Peking the present regent was the Prince chosen for the purpose of conveying China's sentiments to the German nation. When he visited New York, in the absence of Mayor Low, his secretary, a close friend of mine, was his host. He informed me that he never had to do with a man who was so keen after information or so ready in grasping ideas. I regard that, in the light of present and future events in China, as most important.

I remember Mr. Reynolds telling me that there was nothing he enjoyed more than to visit the fire house and see how quickly the firemen got down the pole when they were summoned. So, some time later, when my friend was called upon to visit China on a secret errand for President Roosevelt, he carried with him a great loving cup filled with representations of men coming down that pole. That was the Prince's pet diversion, but he had eyes and ears for everything. He was continually acquiring.

So you have to-day in China a man of great power, the practical emperor of four hundred millions of people. To some extent he is held back by the conservative element, but he is distinctively the friend of progress, anxious to see his country going ahead and attaining the position of eminence to which he is satisfied she can attain. He sees, moreover, the advantage of being on good terms with the west.

China is moving, make no mistake about that. This land of patriarchal government underwent a great change recently when under the new regime, on October 14th last, the first provincial assemblies gathered together. In the eighteen provinces the men of the aristocracy gathered together to discuss items of interest for the good of the country. One session of approximately forty days had demonstrated the great possibilities of the new regime. It has proved a great impetus to patriotism. It is a preparation for the time when China shall be constitutionally governed.

I am inclined to think that perhaps the army and navy of China have been over-estimated by the west. But China has made wonderful progress with them. It is quite true that she cannot yet begin to compete with western arms, or with what

she has termed her pigmy neighbor, Japan. But she is rapidly, more rapidly than is realized, preparing herself for the perils of the future and building up great protection for herself against foreign foes. During the last two or three months the regent Prince has started a subscription on a large scale for the betterment of her navy. The Chinese Debating Club, at Yale, discussing this issue, saw a difficulty in securing a naval base, but that point can always be secured by diplomacy when a nation is powerful enough.

But perhaps the most important factor of all is the new spirit that has come over the nation. In the war between France and China the strife had been raging in the south for some time, but there were parts in the north, where I was then located, where nobody cared, where practically no interest was taken in the war or its outcome. But by and by came the report that the foreign fleet was going to attack Northern China, and was hurrying towards the provincial capital. Then haste and interest were evidenced in the immediate order to throw up ramparts around the city. This meant something, for somebody had to dig, and somebody had to pay the bill. My point is this: there was no patriotism, simply the feeling of self-interest in the war. The action in Northern China was simply bringing the spirit of self-interest into the game. To-day is very different. Japan is not patriotic, but devoted to the Emperor, the representative of the Sun goddess on the throne. China is being filled with patriotism. There is a foreigner on the throne, who is not of the race of her people. She is less interested in the throne than she is in her country and its people. A spirit of patriotism is coming into existence after centuries.

Again, China is now worth studying intellectually and educationally. China has awakened educationally. In 1896 one of her advanced sons published a book that has a remarkable influence upon her national life. Translated, it is entitled, "China's Only Hope," but in the native tongue it goes under the name of the one word "Learn." It is this word that is burning its meaning in upon the nation. She realized that the west was at her doors and was bursting through. She set to work to learn and she has been learning ever since. To-day there is a public school system of education, not compulsory, but aided. There are 183,000 Chinese youths in the public schools in the provincial capital, and higher institutions of learning are busy with the work of training the youth. All western education until 1900 was received from Christian missionaries. To-day the teachers in the government institutions

are largely men who are Christians or who have been trained in the Christian institutions. One notable fact I must mention. I find that in 96 of the higher educational institutions the catalogues of the curriculum set forth what as the primary or first subject of their course? Science? No. History? No. Mathematics? No. The premier position is given to Practical Morality, the nearest approach that a Confucian people can get to Christianity. It speaks well for the nation under the new regime. They do not say Religion. That is understandable. They are a Confucian people. So they say Practical Morality.

Three years ago a young man graduated with the first third degree examination at Peking. To-day he is head of the First National Bank of China. He has recently ordered one million dollars' worth of plant for manufacturing species. Speaking to me he said, "The position of the west is foremost with us because it emphasizes religion. I am not a Christian, but at the same time I think that the Christian religion is the strongest point you have. Confucianism is as good as Christianity except for one thing. We know what to do, but we can't do it. Christianity can enable men to do the things Confucianism tells them they ought to do. If you men of the west are wise you will keep the religion of Jesus Christ in the forefront." And this is the tribute of an unprejudiced man who knows.

The sudden passion for education which has swept over China has had its influence upon her press. Daily papers have sprung up like mushrooms almost everywhere. There are now at least fifty-five papers that are worth while, and they are taking a keen and intelligent interest in public affairs. Anything that is deemed wrong gets "a hot racket in the paper." There are many things to criticize, but the criticism usually goes out in three popular channels. The Government at Peking gets all kinds of knocks. That, perhaps, is to be expected, for governments of all kinds—even governments in the west, in our own country, are regarded as being peculiarly subject to criticism. Then there are the Mandarins, they deserve a great deal of criticism, and they get it. But the principal object for criticism is the foreigner. All foreigners are good game, and the papers vie with one another in bringing them down. But the press of China is developing. The papers of Shanghai have seen the new light, and the provincial papers are following in the same steps.

My time is almost done, but I cannot close without a word concerning the future of China. What the future of China

may be is of importance to the whole world. It has a relation, and an important relation, to Canada and the United States and to all the world. Present conditions have come to stay. The development of the past few years is going to continue. Progress is manifest. China still has her problems. Her laws are important. Her affairs are permeated with graft. China can lead even the United States in graft. We groan at conditions in Pittsburg, Cincinnati, New York and Washington, but China can go us one better. China leads. I am reminded of a sign which adorned a Chinese shop where furniture was repaired and umbrellas were mended. The sign ran somewhat in this wise: "Wan Lee, repairs furniture and umbrellas, and any mortal thing can do." That's just the point I would impress. The Chinaman "any mortal thing can do."

I do not believe, and I understand that military men who have looked into the situation take the same view, that the yellow peril, so far as it is a peril, is one of arms. It is not impossible that China should acquire an army of thirty millions, as has been prophesied, but I do not think it at all probable. China is eminently peace-loving, and she has no desire to face the combined west. When you have four hundred millions of your own to look after you are not hunting a quarrel with the globe.

The yellow peril, so far as it is a peril, is an industrial peril, without doubt. Whereas our cost of living has advanced owing to the increased gold production, China is almost as stable as she was ten years ago. In China there has been very little advance in the cost of industrial production, and the industrial conditions are improving all the time. We can protect ourselves by putting on a tremendous tariff, but that will mean retaliation and consequent loss of trade. Canada is somewhat differently situated in this respect, in that she is a part of the British Empire, but the United States has no other outlook. The greatest market in the world is in China, and the industrial future must be faced from two standpoints. We can by legislation come to a general agreement of some ratio between standards, and we can establish better relations between ourselves and that great Empire. All told there are in Canada and the United States less than one hundred million people. In China there are over four hundred millions. It is important that the one hundred millions shall keep on good terms with the four hundred millions. To do this successfully we must not adopt the high and haughty spirit of lauding it over them. It can best be furthered by a wise diplomacy. It requires statesmen and diplomats of sterling character and

worth, men like Sir Andrew Fraser, who ruled in Bengal over as many people as there are in the whole United States. We want sterling statesmen and Christians, representatives who will give us hope for the future, who will reach the people. And no one can go out into the masses except the missionary, who has the opportunity not merely to carry the Gospel to the people, but to bring in the new order of affairs, to prove that the people of the west are their true friends.

The Chinese language has been likened to crow-tracks. There is a truth in that, for the written language was studied out from the heavenly constellations at night and traced in characters in the mud by day. There is a sign of friendship given by the hands. It needs both hands to make it. China has great traits, but she has only thus far shown us her left hand. Her strong right hand is still up her sleeve, and she is gradually bringing that hand out from the old sleeve. Let us remember that China has something to give us, and that we have something to give her. We ought to come together in a Christian spirit endeavoring to promote good relations with her. We should extend the best right hand, and join in a brotherhood of hands. The uniting of these two great hands would be helpful to China and helpful to us.