

The Japan Daily Mail.

YOKOHAMA, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1907.

THE IMMIGRATION QUESTION.

IN a recent number of the *Boston Transcript*, there were reproduced, without comment, from the *New York Globe and Commercial Advertiser*, the following paragraphs, under the title, "Schoolmaster Japan."

If Tokio despatches are to be credited Japan is assuming the role of schoolmaster to the world—is seeking to secure, on the pain of her displeasure if denied, the recognition of an entirely new international principle.

It is that no nation has the right to limit, regulate or control immigration. The Ottawa Government, worried by the Vancouver disturbances, having taken steps to induce Japan to agree formally to a limitation on the number of Japanese yearly entering Canada, the Japan Foreign Office says that it will be impossible to consider such proposals. The reason assigned is that to consent to restriction would be to lower Japan's status as a world Power. This implies that it is the Japanese doctrine that her citizens—and inferentially citizens of every country—have an indefeasible right unsubject to the veto of an existing population, to domicile themselves anywhere. The notion that the receiving country into whose territory there is intrusion has any authority to prescribe terms and conditions is repudiated.

Under this novel doctrine the buildings at Ellis Island are an offence—might rightfully be considered by other nations as a *casus belli*. Nevertheless it will take time to secure recognition of this universal right of emigration. One of the things making against its acceptance is Japan's recent action in deporting Chinese coolies that she did not want.

It would be difficult to frame a more unjust perversion of Japan's contention in regard to restrictions upon immigration such as are called for by a certain portion of the communities on the Pacific Coast of America. It is entirely safe to say that no utterance on the part of Japan's official representatives justifies in any degree this flagrant misrepresentation. It is equally safe to say that no responsible man, no one who could fairly be said to give voice to public sentiment in Japan, has for a moment disputed the right of any State to restrict immigration into its territory at its sole discretion; provided only that the restriction, whatever its nature, does not subject immigrants from Japan to a different treatment from that to which immigrants from other countries are subjected. In other words, they simply contend that if Japanese are to be excluded from foreign countries, it should be by means of general and not special legislation.

All intelligent men in Japan recognise the extreme difficulty of the labour question. They understand perfectly well that the introduction into any country of a large number of labourers, content with a scale of wages greatly below the prevailing rate would complicate that question and produce a serious, possibly a distressing, disturbance

of labour conditions throughout the region affected. They freely admit that any humane government must view such a situation with deep concern and must be accorded the right to determine what remedial measures will best protect the interests involved.

There is no reason to suppose that Japan would officially oppose the most stringent restrictions upon immigration which the British Colonies or the United States might care to adopt, provided they did not impose hardship upon her people from which others were exempt.

Her own regulations, by virtue of which certain Chinese coolies have recently been deported from Japan, cannot be advanced as proving that she asks of other nations what she herself is unwilling to grant; for it so happens that those regulations are framed on the precise principle which she maintains should be embodied in all similar legislation. They apply alike to all foreign labourers, Malays, Australasians, Hindoos, Europeans and others. There is no taint of invidious specific legislation about them.

Unfortunately the tide seems setting strongly in the direction of racial discrimination in the supposed interest of the labouring classes. It is hard to see how it can be applied to restrictive measures against immigration without creating international distrust and suspicion, the very soil out of which wars grow. All reasonable ends might be attained by a general system of well-considered tests which would bear equally upon all immigrants, whatever their race, and which would keep the volume of immigration down to suitable limits. Why should not a trial of some such comprehensive scheme be made?

However this may be, it is well to bear clearly in mind what Japan really claims. Could she consistently with decent regard for self-respect contend for any less?—*Communicated.*