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FRIDAY - - FEBRUARY 4, 1898

**THE CHINESE SITUATION.**

Trade is the key to the situation in the far East; and very critical the situation is.

All the greater powers but Great Britain want to possess the whole or a part of China. They want it, except it be Russia, for their trade. Russia wants it in part for pride of greatness. Whenever any one of the three, Russia, Germany or France, gets possession or control of new territory, the first thing done is to close its ports to foreign commerce. French commerce is free in French Africa, German in German Africa; but the commerce of other nations is excluded by high duties. This fosters their own manufactures and their own shipping at the expense of all others. But Great Britain does no such thing. When she takes possession of India, she opens every port equally to all nations. Canada or South Africa or Australia, as soon as they have parliaments of their own, put their tariffs on British as freely as on French imports. Great Britain believes in free commerce, asks no favors, but trusts solely to the enterprise of her people to create and preserve markets. She has succeeded better than any other nation. She has three-fourths of the commerce with the far East, and she wishes to keep it.

In order to preserve an equal right with other powers in Chinese markets—and China, with her immense population, is expected to be the great market of the world for European manufactures—Great Britain has her treaties with China granting her privileges equal to those of the most favored nation. Those treaties would lapse if portions of China should be alienated to other powers. They would not properly lapse under terms of a lease, such as that by which Germany has taken the magnificent port of Kiao-chau; and Germany under English pressure yields the point.

Great Britain has now declared that her trade in China shall not thus be excluded. Great Britain lives on her trade, and she can protect it. She has publicly declared, with the direct threat of war, that she will not allow Russia to close any Chinese ports. What she asks for is more open treaty ports where all commerce shall be equally free to enter, subject only to the equal tariff which China puts on all commerce. She offers a great and needed loan to China, but on this condition, among others, that three new open ports shall be created, one of them Tientsin, which is in Northern China, which Russia proposes to secure for herself. To this Russia strenuously objects, because she wishes to be able, before long, to control its commerce for herself. Great Britain has the fleet; she has Japan behind her; she has behind her the moral support of the United States.

All these powers wish free commerce with China; and Great Britain and Japan have a fleet in the Chinese waters big enough to allow them to do what they please. It looks like a show of force. The European powers have imagined that Great Britain was such a lover of peace that she would submit to anything. But the British government has spoken, and behind it is the total sentiment of the empire, and with it is Japan; and it seems probable that Russia and her allies, Germany and France, must yield.

Besides the combined navy of Great Britain and Japan, with its

overwhelming superiority, Japan can put a well equipped army in the field, much superior to anything that Russia can supply. Japan has not forgotten how, under the threats of these three combined powers, she was compelled to evacuate China, holding only Wei-hai-wei until the indemnity should be paid. Since then she has enlarged her navy; a determined cabinet is in power; and the chance may have come which seemed to be hers at the close of her war with China, when China and Japan will unite against foreign aggression, and with Great Britain to help them. It is true that still China is but an eggshell that can be cracked by the slightest blow; but this may not long be so. The regeneration that has come to Japan may yet come to China; and it may come rapidly if the pressure of foreign aggression throws China into the arms of Japan and Great Britain.

The impending partition of China seems just now to be delayed by the act of Great Britain, who declares that she will fight rather than allow other powers to shut her out of the Chinese trade to which she has, and to which she will insist on having, equal rights. This is the key of the situation. A few weeks will show whether Russia will back down, or whether we shall have war. We prophesy peace, for Russia is not ready to fight in Chinese waters.

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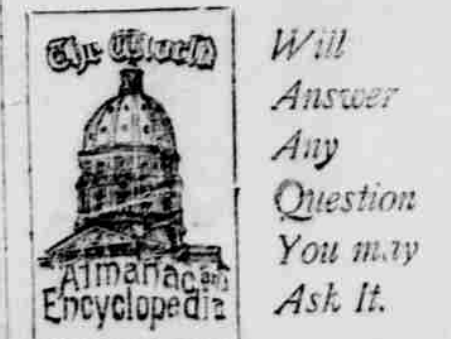
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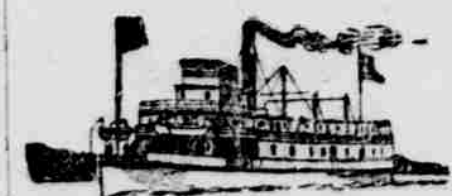


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