

AD INTERIM REPORT (No. II.) OF THE CHINESE IMMIGRATION COMMITTEE.

Report on the Petition of 2,400 Gold Miners of the Province of Otago.

(Referred to the consideration of the Select Committee on Chinese Immigration on recommendation of the Private Petitions Committee.)

THE Petitioners represent (for reasons set forth) the necessity of placing an effectual bar to the further influx of Chinese.

I am directed to report that the Committee are of opinion that it is unnecessary at the present moment to make any specific recommendations with regard to this particular petition, as they propose shortly to lay before the House a full Report upon the whole question.

W. J. STEWARD,
Chairman.

11th October, 1871.

FURTHER MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WEDNESDAY, 11th OCTOBER, 1871.

The Hon. Colonel Brett, M.L.C., in attendance, and examined.

1. Witness stated: I have had seven years' experience amongst the Chinese in Burmah, where there was a large population of them, and I always found them exceedingly sociable, orderly, and amenable to the laws of the country. A very large number of them were engaged in ship-building as their regular occupation; but they all seemed to have little patches of garden, which they cultivated with great care, though done in a great measure as an amusement and to fill up profitably their idle time. The Chinese population I refer to numbered between 1,500 and 2,000. From my experience of the race, I would regard them as an acquisition to the population of any country. During my intercourse with them, I never knew of one solitary instance of a Chinaman being brought before a Magistrate for breaking the laws of the country in which he was residing. Of their mechanical capacity in the art of ship-building I can speak in the highest terms; and as far as my experience goes I have always found them trustworthy, or as much so as the average. As to the charges made, so wide-spread, as to the vicious moral character of the Chinese, I can only say that I know of nothing in proof specially deserving of mention; and I am of opinion that the Government, in taking steps to increase the population of this Colony, should not only give every encouragement to the Chinese who are already here to remain, but should offer reasonable encouragement to others to come. I consider their general conduct and character equal to that of any nation with which I am acquainted, and I do not think that their immorality is worse than that of any other nation. I have had experience of them employed as domestics, and found that they make capital servants, especially cooks and gardeners. I certainly know of no objectionable trait about the race that would call for legislative interference to prevent their admission into this country; in fact I should prefer to have all my servants Chinese, even to farm labour. I never discovered that they were any more liable to attacks of disease than any other races, or than the population among which they were living; and I found them less liable to cholera than the Burmese, and also less liable to infectious and contagious diseases generally. They are, however, liable to leprosy a good deal; but that disease I consider as peculiar to the East, as I have seen much more of it there than in any other part of the world in which I have been; and I always attributed the presence of that disease to the people living so largely on fish. I think that cutaneous diseases generally are superinduced by an excess of fish diet. I should not entertain any dread of the probable spread of that disease from Chinese introduced into this country. I have seen a great deal of their domestic habits, as myself and brother officers frequently amused ourselves by visiting the Chinese houses, and we were led to do this the more from the fact that we found the Chinese singularly free from prejudice, and exceedingly sociable in every way—far more so than any other natives of the country. We dared not enter the houses of Mussulmen or Hindoos as we did those of the Chinese, as such an act would be looked upon as a defilement of the dwelling; it would be, besides, a violation of regulations. The Chinese, however, never made the slightest objection to our visits, and always endeavoured to make us as welcome as possible. In their domestic arrangements I found them tidy and cleanly, except perhaps in their food, as they eat the coarsest descriptions of food, such as cats, rats, and other things of a like character, with as much gusto as we would enjoy a rabbit or hare. They are Bhuddists in creed, but are tolerant and not delicately sensitive in their religious matters; for instance, they had no objection to our sleeping in their joss-houses. I should have observed, when speaking of the Chinese as farm labourers, that they are not physically the equal of the Europeans, but otherwise I consider them the best agriculturists in the world. As regards their character for unvaracity and a proneness to perjury when their interest is concerned, I consider them as truthful as any other Eastern nation. Amongst them we never put a witness upon oath; we merely took his affirmation, and he was supposed to make that in the presence of his God.