

## GOOD LUCK FOR CHINAMEN

The Chinese were early comers. Three arrived in February, 1848, and went to the mining section, and from this beginning, soon after the world heard of the discovery of gold in California, they began coming in hordes, by vessels, from Canton and Hong Kong. As soon as they arrived in San Francisco, they bought a pair of boots and loading their personal effects and tools in bundles tied upon the ends of a bamboo pole, they shouldered their burdens and trotted off to the mines. As they all seemed to move to different parts of the mining counties under direction, it was believed that some system of contract labor was bringing them here. One part of that agreement, which was faithfully carried out, was the return of the bones of those dying in California to the Flowery Kingdom. After being buried three years the dead Chinaman was exhumed, his bones scraped, boxed and shipped. It was not long after they began coming before there was a commercial exchange between China and California of live Chinamen, rice and sugar from China with gold and dead Chinamen's bones from California.

A deadly feud appeared to exist between those that came from Canton and those that came from Hong Kong. A number of pitched battles, with several hundred fighters on each side, were fought in different parts of the State, from Mariposa on the south to Weaverville on the north, resulting in the death of quite a few and the wounding of a large number. What it was about, "Melican man, no sabe."

The Chinese were usually in companies of ten to thirty and in charge of a boss. They seemed to prefer buying and re-working old diggings rather than finding new. This was probably due to their fear of being disturbed in the possession of ground they did not buy to mine. They took to the rocker method of mining placers like a duck to water, while a line of sluice boxes



appeared to be especially adapted to their use. They introduced the Chinese water wheel, also the bailing bucket, attached to ropes and manipulated by two men, to clear holes of water. By the use of these methods, they were able to work placers to bedrock, which the more impatient Caucasian would not tarry with, on account of too much water to contend with.

The "Boss" was developed from a Chinaman who had learned to speak some English and had an education in Chinese. He apparently was not expected to labor hard, but took charge of the clean-ups and transacted the business of the company.

One of the most intelligent and shrewd of these "Bossy Men" was a Chinaman, who called himself Ah Sam and who had a large company of coolies working on Auburn Ravine, near Ophir, in 1856.

In that year a partnership of six Americans, mining on the ravine, was dissolved. They had been mining for several years and occupied a log cabin built on a bank of the ravine. The cabin had a large mud and stone fire place at one end, with bunks arranged along the sides. The bunks were placed on posts about two feet from the ground. The cabin had a ground floor, which, as it frequently wore into small ridges, was made level again by removing the ridges, with a shovel, and the earth so removed was tossed beneath the bunks. On the day of their final departure, Ah Sam appeared at the cabin and proposed to buy it. He offered twenty-five dollars for it with the proviso they go to Ophir and before the justice of the peace there give him a bill of sale. "You give me paper, I pay," was his ultimatum. As it was like finding money, as these miners had no further use for the cabin, a bargain was struck. The next day, one of the miners having occasion to return to the cabin, found one side of it torn out and half a dozen of Ah Sam's coolies hard at work, removing the ground floor of the cabin to the depth of

three or four inches. They were carrying the dirt away in buckets to where a couple of rockers were being worked in the ravine, close by, and under Ah Sam's supervision the dirt was being washed. It then developed what the shrewd Mongolian had in view. It was the universal practice of placer miners to clean their gold dust at night before their fire places by placing it in a blower. This was a shallow piece of V-shaped metal with a rim turned up on three sides and narrowing to an unobstructed end at the other. The gold dust was placed in this blower and then gently shaken and blown upon with the breath to remove the fine particles of sand and dirt that adhered to it. It was thus cleaned before being offered for sale to the buyer. No matter how gently and carefully the cleaner would blow, there was sure to be some small particles of gold blown off with the sand, and the more careless or vigorous the miner would blow, the more gold dust would be blown out.

Ah Sam had correctly surmised that these miners had left some wealth on the cabin floor and in the dirt tossed under the bunks. That from the many blowings they had made during their several years of placer mining much had been blown out, and he was secure with his bill of sale in the gathering of it in. While it was current belief along the ravine that Ah Sam realized over \$3,000 from his clean-up, he would never acknowledge to over "tlee hundred dollah."

A reason existed for Ah Sam to persistently lessen the amount of his estimated profit in the fact, as it was afterward learned, that while he was busily engaged looking after his cabin floor investment and had his back turned on his claim in the ravine, two members of his company, working at shovelling into his sluice box line, half a mile distant, uncovered a nugget weighing sixteen pounds and worth about \$3,500. They con-

cealed their find and surreptitiously left with it during the night.

It was not until they had sold the lump in San Francisco and departed for China, that Ah Sam learned of the incident. He burned Chinese candles and punk sticks in front of his cabin door until the next Chinese New Year.

Ah Sam proved himself equal to any emergency during the same year. Owing to the lack of combative qualities in the coolies, they often became victims of highwaymen and robbers, who found that a couple of armed men, meaning business, could easily conquer a score of Chinamen. By tying their tails or queues together, they could place them in a position where they could do no harm and be easily robbed. A Mexican essayed to rob Ah Sam's company, and while engaged in tying together with their tails, a number of the Chinamen, Ah Sam appeared and securing the Mexican's gun, captured him. He then had his crowd tie the Mexican's hands and his feet with ropes, then slinging him on a bamboo pole in the same manner they tied and carried a pig, he was hoisted upon the shoulders of two Chinamen and a procession, headed by Ah Sam, started for Auburn about six miles away.

In due time the would-be robber was triumphantly delivered to the sheriff's office in the courthouse. The prisoner was suffering intensely in his tied position, but his groans and moans gained no compassion from Ah Sam.

As the laws of California would not consider the oath of a Chinaman binding and his evidence could not be accepted in any kind of a case, and in this case there was no other witness besides the Chinamen, there was nothing to be done but let the Mexican go free. He was liberated much against Ah Sam's vociferous "What for?" objections.