

Appendix C

"The Heathen Chinees"

BRET HARTE'S poem entitled "That Heathen Chinees," written in 1870, is a humorous and subdued satire of the "American selfishness," which was, to use the words of *The Spectator*, "the main strength of the cry against the 'cheap labor' of the Chinese," who at that time were emigrating in large numbers to the Pacific Coast States. In it he represents Bill Nye and himself playing at euchre with Ah Sin, "that heathen Chinees," who pretended not to understand the game. Despite "the state of Nye's sleeve which was studded full of aces and bowers" to cheat the Chinaman, the Americans were not only outwitted but outplayed as well. Ah Sin won by practising the same artifice of deception which the others were foolish enough to think they were concealing from him, the *pseudo*- "soft" Oriental,—for "in his sleeves which were long, he had twenty-four packs." The concluding stanza runs thus:—

"Which is why I remark,
And my language is plain,
That for ways that are dark,
And for tricks that are vain,
The heathen Chinees is peculiar —
Which the same I am free to maintain."