

THE DECAY OF RED MOUNTAIN BAR.

AN IDYLL OF CALIFORNIA.

The California mining camp was ephemeral. Often it was founded, built up, flourished, decayed and had weeds and herbage growing over its site and hiding all of man's work inside of ten years. Yet to one witnessing these changes it seemed the life of a whole generation. Of such settlements Red Mountain Bar was one. Red Mountain lay three miles above Swett's Bar, 'up river.' I lived 'off and on' at the 'Bar' in its dying days. I saw it decay gently and peacefully. I saw the grass, trees and herbage gradually creep in and resume their sway all over its site as they had done ere man's interruption.

I lived there when the few 'boys' left used daily, after the close of an unsuccessful river season, to sit in a row on a log by the river's edge and there, surveying their broken dam, would chant curses on their luck. The Bar store was then still in existence. Thompson was its proprietor. The stock on hand had dwindled down to whisky. The Bar and one filled bottle alone survived. On rainy nights, when the few miners left would gather about the stove, Thompson would take down his fiddle and fiddle and sing, 'What can't be cured must be endured,' or 'The king into his garden came; the spices smelt about the same,' a quotation of unknown authorship. Of neighbors living in their cabins strung along the banks for half a mile above the store, there was Keen Fann, an aged mercantile and mining Chinaman, with a colony about him of lesser and facially indistinguishable countrymen of varying numbers. Second, 'Old Harry,' an aged negro, a skilled performer on the bugle and a singer, who offered at times to favor us with what he termed a 'little ditto.' He was the Ethiopian king of a knot of Kanakas gathered about him. Third, 'Bloody Bill,' so called from his frequent use of the sanguinary adjective, and as may be guessed, an Englishman. Fourth, an old Scotchman, one of the Bar's oldest inhabitants, who would come to the store with the little bit of gold dust, gathered after a hard day's 'creviling,' complaining that gold was getting as scarce as 'the grace of God in the Heelands of Scotland.' Fifth, McFarlane, a white bearded old fellow, another pioneer, who, after a yearly venture into some strange and distant locality to 'change his luck,' was certain eventually to drift back again to the Bar, which he regarded as home. Down the river, nestled high up in a steep and picturesque gulch, stood the buckeye embowered cabin of old Jonathan Brown, the ditch tender, a great reader of weekly 'story papers,' who lived like a boy in the literature of the Western Frontier Penny Awful, and who, coming to the store and perching himself on the counter, would sometimes break out in remarks about how 'Them thar Indians got the better of 'em at last,' to the astonishment of the 'boys,' who imagined at first that he referred to Indians in the locality, suggesting possibilities of a repetition of the great Oak Flat uprising of 1850.

At the top of the hill, a mile and a half way, stood the 'Yankee ranch,' kept by a bustling, uneasy and rather uncomfortable man from Massachusetts, aided by his good natured, easy going son-in-law. One rainy winter's day the 'boys' congregated about Thompson's store became seized with a whim for the manufacture of little pasteboard men turning grindstones, which, fastened to the stove, were impelled to action by the ascending current of hot air. So they smoked their pipes and wrought all day until the area of stovepipe became thickly covered with little pasteboard men busily turning pasteboard grindstones. Then George M. G., the son-in-law of the Yankee ranch, came down the hill to borrow an axe.

George was of that temperament and inclination to be of all things charmed with a warm stove on a cold, rainy day, a knot of good fellows about it, a frequent pipe of tobacco, maybe an occasional punch and the pleasing manufacture of hot air driven little pasteboard men turning pasteboard grindstones. He forgot his axe, sat down and began with the rest the manufacture of pasteboard men and grindstones. And he kept on till a late hour of the night, and stayed at the Bar all night and all the next day and that next night until the stovepipe was covered to its very top with little men, all working away for dear life turning grindstones; and on the second day of his stay the exasperated father-in-law suddenly appeared and delivered himself in impatient invective with regard to such conduct on the part of a son-in-law sent forty-eight hours previously to borrow an axe. Such was the circle of gathered on the long, rainy winter's eve about the Thompson store stove. All smoked. Keen Fann frequently dropped in. He stood respectfully, as a heathen should in such a Christian assemblage, on its outer edge or humbly ap-

propriated some unoccupied keg and for the rest—grinned. From his little piggy eyes to his double chin Keen's face was a permanently settled grin.

Keen Fann had learned about twenty words of English and would learn no more. In his estimation these twenty words, variously used after a sort of grammatical kaleidoscopic fashion, seemed adequate to convey every thing required. One of his presumed English expressions long puzzled the boys. Asking the price of articles at the store he would say, 'Too muchee polly-foot.' At last the riddle was correctly guessed. He meant 'Too much profit.'

For protection Keen Fann built his house opposite the store. The Mexicans were then attacking and robbing isolated bands of Chinamen. At one Bar a few miles below, then deserted by the whites, the Chinese had inclosed their camp with a high stockade of logs. Yet one night they were attacked. The Mexicans besieged their fortress for hours, peppering them from the hillside with revolvers, and at last they broke through the Mongolian works and bore off all their dust and a dozen or more revolvers. Keen Fann's castle was in dimensions not more than 12 by 15 feet and in height two stories. Within it was partitioned off into rooms not much larger than dry goods boxes. The hallways were just wide enough to squeeze through and very dark. It was intensely labyrinthian, and Keen was always making it more so by devising new additions. No white man ever did know exactly where the structure began or ended. Keen was a merchant, dealing principally in gin, fish and opium. His store was involved in this curious dwelling, all of his own construction.

In the store there was a counter. Behind it there was just room for Keen to sit down and in front there was just room enough for the customer to turn around. When Keen was the merchant he looked imposing in an immense pair of Chinese spectacles. When he shook his rocker in the bank he took off these spectacles. He was a large consumer of his own gin. I once asked him for the amount of his weekly allowance. 'Me tink,' said he, 'one gallun hap' (half). From the upper story of the castle protruded a huge spear head. It was made by the local blacksmith and intended as a menace to the Mexican bandits. As they grew bolder and more threatening, Keen sent down to San Francisco and purchased a lot of old pawnshop revolvers. These being received, military preparation and drill went on for several weeks by Keen and his forces. He practised at target shooting, aimed at the mark with both eyes shut, and for those in its immediate vicinity with a most ominous and threatening waver of the arm holding the weapon. It was prophesied that Keen would kill somebody with that pistol. None ever expected that he would kill the proper person. Yet he did.

One night an alarm was given. Keen's castle was attacked. The 'boys,' hearing the disturbance, grabbed their rifles and pistols and sallied from the store. The robbers, finding themselves in a hornets' nest, ran. By the uncertain light of a waning moon the Bar was seen covered with Chinamen gabbling and wildly gesticulating. Over the river two men were swimming. Keen, from the bank, pointed his revolver at one, shut his eyes and fired. One of the men crawled out of the water and tumbled in a heap among the boulders. The 'boys' crossed and found there a strange white man with Keen's bullet through his backbone.

I experienced about the narrowest escape of my life in a boat during a freshet on the Tuolumne crossing. I counted myself a good river boatman, and had just ferried over a Swett's Bar miner. He had come to purchase a gallon of the native juice of the grape, which was then grown, pressed and sold at Red Mountain Bar. When he crossed with me he was loaded with it. Some of it was outside of him in a demijohn and some of it was inside. Indeed, it was inside of us both. I set him across all right. On returning, by taking advantage of a certain eddy, one could be rushed up stream counter to the current coming down for a quarter of a mile and at a very rapid rate. It was very exciting thus to be carried in an opposite direction within ten feet of the great billows well coming down. It was a sort of sliding down hill without the trouble of drawing one's sled up again. So I went up and down the stream. The Red Mountain wine meantime was working. Night came on, a glorious moon arose over the mountain tops and I kept sliding up and down the Tuolumne. I became more daring and careless, so that suddenly, in the very fury of the mid-stream billows, I slipped off the stern sheets at a sudden dip of the boat and fell into the river. I was heavily clad in flannels and mining boots.

Of my stay under water I recollect only the thought, 'You're in for it this time. This is no common baptism.' The next I knew I was clinging to a rock half a mile below the scene of the submergence. I had been swept under water through the Willow Bar, the walls of whose rocky channel, chiseled by the current of centuries, were narrower at the top than on the river bed, and through which the waters swept in a succession of boils and whirlpools. Wet and dripping I tramped to the nearest cabin, a mile and a half distant, and stayed there that night. Red Mountain Bar, on seeing the mishap, gave me up for lost—all but one man, who was negative on that point for the reason, as he alleged, that I was not destined to make the final exit by water. I reappeared the next morning at the Bar. When I told the boys that I had been swept through the Willow Bar they instituted comparisons of similarity in the matter of veracity betwixt myself and Ananias of old. It was the current impression that no man could pass through the Willow Bar alive.

Chinese Camp, five miles distant, stood as the metropolis for Red Mountain Bar. It contained but a few hundred people. Yet in our estimation at that time it bore the same relative importance that New York does to some agricultural village a hundred miles away. Chinese Camp meant restaurants, where we could revel in the luxury of eating a meal we were not obliged to prepare ourselves, a luxury none can fully appreciate save those who have served for years as their own cooks. Chinese Camp meant saloons, palatial as compared with the Bar groggery; it meant a daily mail and communication with the great world without; it meant hotels, where strange faces might be seen daily; it meant perhaps, above all, the nightly fandango. When living for months and years in such out-of-the-way nooks and corners as Red Mountain Bar and as were thousands of now forgotten and nameless flats, gulches and bars in California, cut off from all regular communication with the world, where the occasional passage of some stranger is an event, the limited stir and bustle of such a place as Chinese Camp assumed an increased importance and interest.

Chinese Camp justice presided at our lawsuits. Chinese Camp was the Mecca to which all hands resorted for the grand blow out at the close of the river mining season. With all their hard work what independent times were those after all! True, claims were uncertain as to yield; hopes of making fortunes had been given over. But so long as \$1.50 or \$2 pickings remained on the banks men were comparatively their own masters. There was none of the inexorable demand of business consequent on situation and employment in the great city, where, sick or well, the toilers must hie with machine-like regularity at the early morning hour to their posts of labor. If the Red Mountaineer didn't 'feel like work' in the morning he didn't work. If he preferred to commence digging and washing at ten in the morning instead of seven, who should prevent him? If, after the morning labor, he desired a siesta till two in the afternoon, it was his to take.

Of what nature could give there was much at the Bar to make pleasant man's stay on earth, save a great deal of cash. We enjoyed a mild climate—no long, hard winters to provide against; a soil that would raise almost any vegetable, a necessity or luxury, with very little labor; grapes or figs, apples or potatoes; land to be had for the asking; water for irrigation accessible on every hand; plenty of pasture room; no crowding. A quarter of a section of such soil and climate within forty miles of New York city would be worth millions. Contrast such a land with the bleak hills about Boston, where half the year is spent in a struggle to provide for the other half. Yet we were all anxious to get away. Our heaven was not at Red Mountain. Fortunes could not be digged there. We spent time and strength in a scramble for a few ounces of yellow metal, while in the spring time the vales and hillsides covered with flowers argued in vain that they had the greatest rewards for our picks and shovels. But none listened. We groveled in the mud and stones of the oft-worked bank. Yearly it responded less and less to our labors. One by one the 'old timers' left.

The boarding house of Dutch Bill at the farther end of the Bar long stood empty, and the meek eyed and subtle Chinamen stole from its sides board after board; the sides skinned off; they took joint after joint from the frame work. None ever saw them so doing. Thus silently and mysteriously, like a melting snow bank, the great ramshackle boarding house disappeared until naught was left save the chimney. And that also vanished brick by brick. All of which material entered into the composition and construction of that irregularly built, smoke tanned conglomerate of Chinese huts clustered near the Keen Fann castle.

'Old Grizzly' McFarlane went away. So did Bloody Bill. So the Bar's population dwindled. Fewer travelers, dotlike, were seen climbing the steep trail over Red

Mountain. Miller, the Chinese Camp news agent, who, with mail bags well filled with the New York papers, had for years catered from Red Mountain to Morgan's Bar, emptying his sack as he went at the rate of fifty and twenty-five cents per sheet, paid the Bar his last visit and closed out the newspaper business there forever. Then the county supervisors abolished it as an election precinct and its name no longer figured in the returns. No more after the vote was polled and the result known did the active and ambitious partizan mount his horse and gallop over the mountain to Sonora, the county seat, twenty miles away, to deliver the official count, signed, sealed and attested by the local Red Mountain election inspectors. Finally the Bar dwindled to Thompson, Keen Fann and his Mongolian band. Then Thompson left. Keen Fann grieved at losing his friend and protector. He came on the eve of departure to the dismantled store. Tears were in his eyes. He presented Thompson with a basket of tea and a silver half dollar and bade him farewell in incoherent and intranslatable words of lamenting polyglot English.

LABOR LEGISLATION.

What the Trades and Labor Congress Desire to Become Law.

The executive committee of the Trades and Labor Congress, with the exception of Mr. J. T. Carey, of St. Catharines, who was called away by telegram, waited upon the Cabinet ministers at Ottawa on Monday afternoon. The Premier was accompanied by Hon. Messrs. Carling, Bowell and Tupper, and the deputation were introduced by Messrs. Lepine, McKay, Ryckman, McDougald, Ingram, Stairs, Taylor, Daly, Sproule, Prior, Ross, MacDowall and Mars, M.P.'s.

President Lafontaine was the first speaker and he briefly reviewed the measures which the Trades and Labor Congress had decided to press upon the attention of the Government and Parliament. They desired, he said, to have a stop put to assisted immigration, to abolish the bonuses paid to steamship agents in Europe, to prohibit the immigration of Chinese, to abolish private detective bureaus, to ask that citizens be put upon the same footing as aliens in the matter of free land grants, to give sailors the right to appeal in criminal cases, to ask that all gear and tackle used in loading and unloading vessels be efficiently inspected, and that Mr. Wallace's bill to amend the Anti-Combines Act might become law. Mr. Lafontaine argued with considerable ability in favor of each of these propositions, and was followed by Messrs. John Armstrong, Dower and Jobin, who all endorsed the president's remarks. When Mr. Dower complained about the iniquity to which seamen were subjected as regards the right of appeal, Hon. Mr. Tupper reminded him of the act passed by the Minister of Justice last session, which gave the right of appeal by certiorari.

When the delegates had presented their views the Premier replied. It was, he said, always the duty and pleasure of the Cabinet to receive their fellow-subjects of whatever class or rank and ascertain their views. Proceeding to discuss their propositions, he confessed that he did think that the former system of assisted passages had interfered with the citizens of Canada, but the Government had come to this view and had abolished the practice. Now there were no assisted passages to any of the older provinces, the Maritime Provinces, Quebec or Ontario, and even to a large extent so far as respects the Northwest Territories, but at present immigrants did not get any assistance until they had settled upon their location. Then they only received \$10 per capita upon production of their certificates that they had their land. All the citizens of the older provinces were interested in building up the Northwest Territories, for 99-100ths of all who went in there were bound to be farmers and would become customers of the manufacturers and the artisans of older Canada. The system now in vogue was calculated to benefit every resident east of Lake Superior. Referring to the Chinese question, the Premier said that it must be considered from various standpoints. Except for a few Chinese laundries in the back streets of older Canada, no Celestials had yet reached here, and even in British Columbia the overflow of Chinese was very small, the great proportion of the Mongolian arrivals there only seeking an opportunity to cross the border into the United States. Sir John agreed with those who were opposed to taking off the present tax on Chinese, but in considering this question the interests of all classes should be taken into consideration. Our Pacific coast was favorably situated for Asiatic trade. The United States had prohibited Chinese immigration, and all the bad feeling caused by this action was going to inure to the benefit of Canada. We had constructed the greatest continental railway in the world; we had secured a large share of the trade of Europe over that line, and we had a right to hope and expect that we

should get a large portion of Asiatic trade. The relations between China and the British Empire were friendly, and we might expect to get that trade which the Chinese men of business had declined to send to the United States. He would, however, be willing, in case of an unprecedented rush of Chinese into British Columbia, to forego this valuable trade rather than forestall the Pacific province to a legacy of future trouble. As regards the land law their request was already granted. Any one of their sons or daughters who desired could go to the Northwest and get 160 acres of land free, with the right of purchasing 160 acres more. There was no discrimination in this matter between citizens and new comers. He believed that the bill to be introduced by the Minister of Marine upon the subject of the inspection of gear and tackle would prove satisfactory; and as regards the suggested amendment to the Anti-Combines Act he would confer with Mr. Wallace and see how best their complaint could be remedied. If they had any complaint against the working of the law of last year respecting the right of appeal for seamen the Dominion Government was not to blame. The Federal authorities merely enacted the law, but it lay with the provincial governments and the justices of the peace to enforce that law.

The delegates having expressed themselves as satisfied with the law of last session if it could only be enforced, Sir John promised to look into the matter and see if the Government could not arrive at some decision which would expedite the carrying out of the law.

HE WEARS AN IRON COLLAR.

A Jail Breaker Whose Profession of Religious Interest has Ceased.

William Wellworth is the slipperiest prisoner ever confined in a Maryland jail. He has escaped three times in as many months, and came very near succeeding in a fourth attempt. When it was found that brick walls and bars could not hold him, Jailer Brimer put handcuffs on him. This precaution was taken after he had broken jail a second time. He laughed at the keeper while they were being put on, and told him he was a fool for his pains.

One day Wellworth sent for the jailer. As the latter entered the cell the prisoner, who had slipped the cuffs from his wrists, threw him down, and in a twinkling had passed out, pulling after him the door, which was provided with a spring lock. Barefooted, and without coat or hat, Wellworth dashed out into the road, and though snow had fallen a foot deep, succeeded in making his escape. Not until the following morning did a posse start in pursuit, and after a ten hours' search Wellworth was found in a barn ten miles from the city, more dead than alive.

When put back in his cell he again told his jailer that he could not keep him, but Brimer had in view a plan which he thought would prevent his man from getting out again. He had made an iron collar to fit Wellworth's neck. Attached to the collar was a heavy iron chain, one end passing through a ring and the other being fastened to a beam in the ceiling. Wellworth was also provided with a brazen new set of handcuffs, which fitted him snugly. Thus secured, escape appeared impossible. To the surprise of Brimer, however, he received on the following day, with the compliments of his prisoner, the handcuffs which he had unlocked. They were immediately replaced, but from day to day Wellworth amused himself by sending them to the jailer. He could slip them off or unlock them at will.

The chain baffled the prisoner for about a week. Wellworth, who had noticed that Brimer was a devout churchman, became himself seized with remarkable religious zeal, and asked to have religious reading sent to his cell and a minister to give him spiritual consolation. He seemed to read with great zest the Bible and the Sunday school matter presented, and as he kept asking for a minister the sheriff, whose heart was melted by this new born zeal, consented to remove the iron collar upon Wellworth's fervent promise to show his gratitude for the relief.

He manifested his appreciation by making strenuous efforts to get away. The jailer, however, was vigilant, and caught his prisoner in the act of sawing his way out. The iron collar has now been replaced, and in addition Wellworth is weighted with a ball and chain. His religious enthusiasm has disappeared.—Cor. New York Sun.

IN HARD LUCK.

Anxious Wife—What's the matter? American Doctor—Matter enough. I'm ruined. That's what the matter.

Wife—You? Why, it isn't a week since you proved conclusively that you were the original discoverer of Koch's lymph, and everybody is talking about what a wonderful scientist you are. Why do you look so blue?

Doctor—It has just been discovered that Koch's lymph isn't good for anything.

Nearly all the large cigar factories at Key West, Fla., are closed. Four thousand cigarmakers are out of employment.