

THE CHINESE SLAVE WOMEN

Tales of Degradation from the California Mission Records.

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

Societies that Control the Traffic Invoke the Aid of Law and Highbinders, and Have Also Appealed to Their Consul.

PASADENA, Cal., Sept. 15.—When the slaves were emancipated during the civil war it was supposed that slavery had ceased in the United States, yet within a short time a missionary in California has asked aid for a most peculiar purpose. The recital was as follows:

Ah Kam, an honest Chinaman of the State of California, in 1898 desired to marry a woman who was the property of another Chinaman. The latter agreed to sell the wife for \$1,000, on the installment plan, taking part down and a note for the balance, secured by the first children the pair might have. The singular marriage was solemnized, and as a result of the union a girl was born. Times were hard, and the husband defaulted in his payment, putting off even the interest until the child was six or seven years of age, when the creditor seized his security, took the girl, and prepared to sell her to the highest bidder. At this juncture the missionary interfered, and endeavored to save the child by selling her picture and in this way raising the amount of the mortgage and interest. It was urged that the child be taken by force, but the reply was that this would have a disastrous effect upon the religious work that was being done among the Chinese in that section of California.

The incident is cited to illustrate the fact that slavery still exists in the United States and within ten years has flourished in all communities where Chinamen congregate. It exists to-day, though carried on with great secrecy. The history of the slave trade in this country during the past twenty years is an extraordinary chapter which has never been fully ventilated, and which, if probed to the bottom, would show the Chinese in America as adepts in the art of defying American laws and traditions.

The preponderance of males among the Chinese in this country is suggestive of the insecure tenure of their residence here. But few Chinamen bring their wives with them, as they are here merely to earn a competency, when they will return, and all their money, or the greater part of it, is sent to China. Yet there is a demand for women, and about it has grown up a business which a few years ago was the most valuable traffic in which the Chinese were engaged in America. It was fostered and carried on with the greatest care and secrecy; thousands of dollars were involved and thousands of dollars have been employed in buying the women, bribing officials, defending suits, supporting fighting men, and in defeating the missionaries.

THE CHURCH'S FIGHT.

If the law had been left alone to fight slavery on the Pacific Coast it is fair to say that almost nothing would have been accomplished and the trade would have flourished; but its decline is due to the efforts of the various churches—the Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopal, Congregational, and others that have persistently arrayed themselves against it and maintained on the firing line a garrison of workers who devoted their lives to the cause often while under sentence of death or threats of the incensed slave dealers.

Such a trade carried on in direct defiance of American law required no little degree of finesse, and it has a special society, known as the Kwang Tak Tong, to foster and protect it. It was organized to attend to the importation of the women slaves, while another society, the On Leong Tong, concerned itself more particularly with the barter and sale of the slaves after they had landed. It was this society which for some time supported a sale room, known as the "Queen's Room," where women and children were knocked down to the highest bidder. These societies were well equipped and are in existence to-day. They had a perfect organization, issued commissions to men who fought for them, who were as well cared for as soldiers, inasmuch as they received a salary and were pensioned if wounded or killed, and defended and protected in every way. They were soldiers, yet if a novice could prove that he was an expert blackmailer, liar, false witness, or murderer he was sure of high honors in the On Leong, as this was the work cut out for these valiant soldiers.

The methods of the work in the United States were so numerous that to give them all would be impossible, but the slaves were of two general classes, those who were abducted in China and were brought to the slave room in ignorance of their fate, and others who were bought outright by bill of sale, many of whom would be consigned to the Wa Ting Shan Fong, which means "flowery arbor mountain booth"—a society for the conduct of speculation in slaves.

That slave dealers should have a regular salesroom, or exchange, would seem almost incredible, but the well-known "Queen's Room," on Dupont Street, San Francisco, was the slave mart, and here members of the Leong Tong and others interested in this traffic could be found, and here the slaves were exhibited and sold, the prices ranging from \$300 to \$3,000, the latter having been paid for a handsome girl of eighteen years. Sales were not the only transactions carried on here. Brokers, go-betweens, hatchet men, and highbinders had slaves to rent, a printed contract being given with such a slave. The majority of the valuable slaves were obtained by kidnapping in the following manner, the instances quoted having been obtained from the records of one of the Chinese missions referred to:

HOW GIRLS ARE ABDUCTED.

A young girl, who may be called Ah Kim, though this was not her name, was betrothed at the age of fifteen to a man in Hongkong. She had never seen him, as her mother made all the arrangements, according to Chinese custom. The man was an agent, or member of the On Leong Tong, on the lookout for young girls, and doubtless the mother was deceived; yet, according to the Chinese custom, she probably sold her daughter to the man for a certain sum after being assured that he was a merchant, a good man, and that he would treat the girl well. This is the supposition, yet the girl in question could not prove that money had been paid for her. While the mother was away from home a woman called on the girl, stating that she was a friend of her betrothed and had been delegated to take her to him. The girl desired to wait until her mother returned, but the woman was insistent, and she was finally persuaded to go.

They went to Hongkong, but the husband did not appear, and the man with whom the girl was left explained that he had been called to California and that he and the girl would follow. The man took passage for her and others on the steamer Belgic, and all the way across taught them a lesson to repeat to the officers of the customs, the girl in question being threatened with the devil's prison if she made a mistake. She was told to say that her husband was a merchant on Jackson Street.

So terrified was she that she swore to these facts, and was finally released by the court. She was then taken to a boarding house, where she was approached by a procuress, but, as she insisted that she was waiting for her husband and resisted, they finally threw off the cloak and informed her that she was the woman's property and must go with her. In her presence the woman paid the importing agent \$1,530, and the girl, now a slave, was carried to the woman's den. Here she was starved, beaten, tied with ropes within a few inches of food and water until nearly dead, when she fortunately escaped and found a retreat in one of the missions maintained for the purpose.

This is a typical instance, so far as the methods are concerned, but, unfortunately, the average bride in search of her husband does not escape. A number of interesting statements are found in the records of the Methodist mission. One girl, seventeen years of age, stated that she was sold as a slave by her parents when she was ten years old, the sum paid being \$300. Another girl was rescued by the mission people from a man who had concealed her in an underground den, keeping her stupefied with opium until the trouble should blow over. He had paid \$2,970 for her, and had rented her to a den keeper, who demanded the return of the rent money when the slave escaped.

CHINESE CONSUL INTERFERES.

That the Chinese Consul can be called on by the On Leong Tong, or similar societies engaged in the slave trade, is illustrated

by the case of the slave of Ah Ong. She had a child six years of age, and the master, being in need of money, decided to sell it. The poor creature resisted, and carried the child to the "Jesus woman," as she called the women of the mission. Ah Ong tried by every means to retake her. Soldiers were detailed to kill her, the mission people were threatened with death, and doubtless the sentence would have been carried out by the soldiers of the society had not the greatest care been taken. The late Rev. F. J. Masters stated that he had been sentenced to death a number of times by the highbinders. Ah Ong finally tried to make the case an international affair, and took the matter to the Chinese Consul, who had the temerity to go officially to the mission, with his suite, and demand the girl. His request was refused, and he was told that if he wished to make a diplomatic question of it, the United States would be glad to know whether he was interested in encouraging slavery, which was unlawful. The matter ended here, the Consul undoubtedly advising the man to that effect, and the child was adopted by Grace Episcopal Church, and ultimately was married to a Christian Chinaman.

The case of another girl rescued by the Methodist Mission illustrates the pecuniary profit in the trade. The girl stated that she was kidnapped in China and brought to America by a man under threats, who sold her to another slave dealer for \$400. He in turn sold her for \$1,700. She supposed that she was to find a husband in San Francisco. Miss Culbertson of the Congregational Mission stated that as much as \$3,000 has been paid for a girl. The efforts of the missionary to save these women is a chapter in itself, and the records abound in exciting episodes. The following is the experience of Ah Yung, who was rescued by the Rev. N. R. Johnson, a missionary of Oakland:

Born in Sun Ning, she was kidnapped from home by an On Leong member, who sold her in Hongkong for \$185. She was shipped to San Francisco and brought ashore on a writ of habeas corpus. Here she was sold to an up-country California Chinaman for \$600. She finally met a Chinaman who agreed to marry her, and this man, Woo Yuen Chee, paid back the purchase money. Some time after he went to China on business, leaving the wife in care of his two brothers. These men, being in need of money, concluded to sell their brother's wife, but failing, attempted to kill her so that the brother would not hear of it. A soldier of the Chee Kung was hired to commit the deed and made the first attempt as the woman was passing into the shop of one Wong Ting Hing. Another man was then engaged to put her out of the way, but he told the woman, and ran away to China with the bloodmoney and she escaped. In the meantime the brothers had sold her oldest child, and with the other she escaped to the mission. The late Dr. F. J. Masters related many such instances, and on more than one occasion raided the places where women were forcibly kept and rescued them.

HIGHBINDERS ATTACK RESCUERS.

That the highbinders who are in the slave trade do not give up their spoils readily was well illustrated by the experience of the Rev. Thomas Filben of the Methodist Church. He had rescued a slave from her owner in Sacramento and started with her on the train, intending to take her to the mission in San Francisco, but when the train reached Davisville it was evident that the highbinder owner had telegraphed ahead, as a white constable and a number of highbinders forced their way into the car and attempted to take the woman. The clergyman, however, was too much for them, and they retreated, but telegraphed to another constable at a station down the road, and when the train pulled in the clergyman was met by a burly constable and more highbinders who demanded the woman on the strength of the telegram. The woman's protector demanded to see the warrant, and the passengers on the train joined him in ordering the men out. The owner did not give up and telegraphed to San Francisco, and when the train arrived there a crowd of On Leong Tong soldiers were on hand, determined to take the woman. Mr. Filben fought them off and finally got the woman into a coupé, and she was landed at the mission with clothing torn and without shoes, which had been lost in the struggle at the ferry house.

A girl named Woon T'Sing has an interesting record on the pages of the Methodist mission, illustrating the fact that American law is used to further the designs of the slave dealer. It appears that a notorious female had loaned money to a Chinaman, who gave his only daughter as security for his note. The latter fell due, and the woman foreclosed and took the girl, who was finally found in a den in Dupont Street. She was arrested as a minor by Detective Cox at the suggestion of Miss Culbertson, who adopted her, and all the power of the slave trade societies was brought to bear to regain her. The services of an American lawyer were obtained and a novel suit was begun.

It was claimed that the girl was worth \$1,000, and that in two years more she would be worth double that sum. The case was fought for weeks in court, attracting the attention of the press of the entire coast. Many American women attended court, and the Occidental Board of Women kept a large committee there daily, despite the fact that the lawyers made it disagreeable for them. The mission won and the girl remained in the Presbyterian home.

In his decision, Judge Reardon, referring to the tears shed in court by a bogus mother, who was attempting to gain possession of a child to rent her to a den owner, said: "In these Chinese cases of maternity claimed, there always lurks a suspicion that the claim is made because, according to Mongolian methods, the is valuable property. Yet a few years and this infant will, as prices in the slave market rule, be worth from \$1,500 to \$2,000; and it might well be that the grief, real or simulated, of the mother has a money basis, 'Hinc illae lacrymae.'"

These instances, selected at random from the records of missions related by the men and women who are making the fight, inadequately present the picture in its true colors, but sufficient is shown to demonstrate that the slave trade has flourished wherever there are Chinese within ten years, and that it still exists to-day is well known by those who are in a position to follow the contemporary history of the Chinese in America.

GREEK CRUISER COMING HERE.

Fetes in Honor of Her Officers—A Silver Vase to be Presented.

The Greek cruiser Nauarchos Miaoulis is to come here from Philadelphia to-morrow. After staying here for a fortnight, she will go to Boston, and thence home. During the vessel's stay in this harbor there are to be numerous dinners and receptions in honor of her officers, and a valuable silver vase will be presented to the ship by the Greeks of America.

This is said to be the first time a Grecian warship has ever visited the United States. The Nauarchos Miaoulis, commanded by Capt. Paul Courdouricte of King George's staff, is a second-class iron cruiser, sheathed in wood. She can make fifteen knots an hour, carries a crew of about 200 men, and has an armament consisting of four large and four small Krupp guns and two rapid-fire guns. Greek Consuls from various cities of this country will be here to welcome the cruiser.