A Many-Sided Question.

[From the Pacific Rural Press.]

Editors Press:—Among the many topics of interest which have engaged the public mind for some time past, is the question of Chinese immigration and Chinese labor.

We will leave the problem of Chinese immigration to politicians to solve as best they can, and will deal only with the subject of Chinese cheap labor (which, as far as any experience of it goes, is anything but cheap) in its practical bearings.

Any person who has lived in the interior portions of California must have had some experience in the difficulty of getting hired help for either out-doors or in, particularly household help. And those who have escaped the actual experience of the difficulty must have had the subject forced upon their observation.

During the time of harvesting and threshing grain, hired men for the farm are paid from $2.50 to $6 a day. But even at these prices they are so scarce that much of the grain goes to waste for want of help to cut it. Scarcity of men was the great difficulty throughout the country two years ago; and as the same difficulty is anticipated the coming harvest, measures are being taken to secure Chinese help for the fields.

A girl to do general housework, or any part of it, for that matter, is something almost unknown in the country. So next to impossible is it to get a girl or woman of any age to do the work of a house in the country, that for all practical purposes it may be said to be out of the question.

I have never met with but one girl in California who "works out" in the country, and if she is a specimen of the kind of help we may expect this State to produce in her rising generation, I hope never to meet with another. Chinese are the only class of people then who can be depended upon for doing house-work; the only source from which such help can be obtained. And in the face of this fact, in a country like this, where there is so much hard work to be done in the house, where farming is carried on so extensively that some portions of the year there are from twenty to thirty men to cook for, the question naturally arises as to what element in society is to supply this need, if Chinese immigration be cut off? If Chinese immigration could be stopped at once, and every heathen banished from the State and sent to the land of his nativity, where he hopes at last to rest his weary bones, no matter where he may draw his final breath, it might be a benefit to the working classes left. But still the question presents itself as to who would be found to do cooking and washing then. The Chinese are the only class who can be hired to do such work in the country at any price, and though they do it but indifferently well, it is better than not having it done at all.

My introduction to country life in California was in a valley twenty miles from the railroad, and perhaps a hundred or more from San Francisco, to a good sized farm house, with a moderately small family part of the time and an immoderately large one the busiest portions of the year—"seed time and harvest."

Though so far in the country, I found the table as well supplied as it would have been from the best city market. Vegetables and fruit were brought to the door three and four times a week; a town, a short distance away furnished good meat; the rivers yielded their fish, and the choicest wild game was plentiful and easily procured. While the traditional farm luxuries were produced in abundance, the difficulty seemed to be to get the food which was bountifully supplied—cooked. A man had come in from his work in the garden, and was helping to do the work of the house for a few days for accommodation, until a cook could be hired.

Three trips to Stockton, a distance of thirty miles, brought a cook at last—a sleek, smooth-faced Chinaman, who carried a roll of red blankets neatly tied up across his shoulders, and whose name was Letung. He was duly installed; was neat and clean about his work to all appearances, and cooked passably well, better than any of his successors. But a crosser, more ill-natured, disagreeable heathen than he proved to be never breathed.

We—the feminine portion of the family—were cautioned by the lord and master of the house, not to interfere with cook's household arrangements; but to let him manage things to suit himself. "They don't like to be bossed around by the women," said the lord and master, "they believe women have no souls, and think it beneath the dignity of a Chinaman to be dictated to by women." Knowing as I did that the opinions of the lord and master on the woman question did materially differ from those of the heathen cook, I said nothing.

The first difficulty that arose between his cookship and the lady of the house was on the question of scrubbing the floors. "No!" he insisted, "me hired to cookie, me no sabe scrub." I suggested that he be made to scrub his kitchen floor or be turned out of doors.

But again I was reminded that "they" would not be controlled by a woman, in other words, that cook was master of the situation. "Don't interfere with him," admonished the gentleman of the house, "let him have his own way."

"But," I remonstrated, "look at these floors." "Never mind," he answered, "let them go, and say nothing about it, if the Chinaman will only cook."

The next cause of dissension which arose between the cook and the lady of the house, was as to who should wash table cloths and towels. This he refused to do at first, but by various methods of persuasion, he was induced to perform this part of the work.

Finally, a mutual understanding was established between this heathen and the rest of the house. He was systematic about his work, served his meals at regular hours, and never failed to indulge in his forenoon and afternoon nap.

But when some half dozen men were added to the family and harvest was approaching, he gave notice that he should leave. Would he not stay for 50 or 60 dollars a month (he had been getting 40 dollars) and a boy to assist him? No! he would not stay for any price. He did not mind the work, pay was good; but —"too much women, me no like him." So he took his bundle and departed; and another heathen was set down at the door by the accommodating stage on this road, who bore the civilized name of Jack. Unlike the other, he was pleasant and willing, but the poor fellow was old, half crippled, and altogether unsuited for the situation. He was so slow getting along with his work that he was heard plodding round at eleven o'clock at night, and again at three in the morning.

Another cook was sent for, and there arrived one as young and active as the first had been; and good-natured, with all. He "no sabe wash anything," and no amount of persuasion could induce him to learn; but aside from this he gave tolerable satisfaction. He kept his dominions in good order, and found time to walk to town, a mile distant, every day, and spend two or three hours. But this caused no complaint; if he chose to pass the time the other cooks had spent in sleep, in visiting his friends, it was his privilege, said the master. He stayed with us a month, when a letter arrived addressed in Chinese characters. Its contents held out inducements for the cook to leave. He could get more money some other place. "Forty dollars too little." So Tom left us after getting another cook to take his place, and Sam appeared in his successor. A veritable John was hired to help him, and he was a treasure! He did his work exceedingly well, for the modest sum of $1 50 per day. Sam was the fourth Chinaman who had been hired to cook within three or four months.

A week after his arrival, the master of the house gave orders that Sam was to reign supreme over the kitchen. "Show him where everything is, and let him have free access to all the cooking commodities about the house in the quantity. Give him his own way in everything, and, if he insists upon frying ham, sausage and steak in butter, never mind; so long as the men don't complain." Such was the decree, and it was obeyed.

Sam's orders for provisions were handed over to the master, and supplied with unquestioning promptitude for a month, when one morning there came an order from the kitchen for more flour. "What! more flour?" answered the master, "I have brought flour into this house at the rate of seventy-five pounds a day for the past two weeks, and the family during the time has numbered but ten!"

The last sack is empty, was the answer. The sugar, tea and coffee are all gone, cans and jars of fruit, etc., have disappeared from the cellar as though by magic, and there is not an ounce left of the provisions that were expected to last six months.

Both Sam and John were paid off that morning and discharged without ceremony; and the master swore an oath that not another Chinaman should ever again cross his threshhold.

Then there commenced such a search for a girl as was never before made. Stockton was explored, but without success. All the advertisements under the head of "Wanted—A situation as cook or to do general work," which appeared in the leading San Francisco papers for a month, were answered, and all to no effect. The country for fifty miles round was visited in hopes of coming across a woman cook, but none were to be found.

Finally, a letter came from a girl who had heard of the situation, and who would accept it conditionally. Negotiations were concluded on her own terms, and she came, stayed a month, was satisfied with the situation, but at the end of that time, gave notice that she should be obliged to leave for a six weeks' vacation including the holidays. The next morning after making this announcement, she left. The six weeks have not yet expired, nor has she returned.

If, among the hardworking women of San Francisco who are seeking work and cannot find it, there be one who is willing to cook or to do general housework, she can find steady employment with good wages.

Hagar.

When we were young, mother and sisters, sometimes with the help of one of the older boys for a few hours one or two days in the week, performed all the kitchen and household work for the family easily and cheerfully. And we would ask Hagar in the case referred to—during the intervals in which no help was in the house, and "too muche woman me no like"—Who did the work then? And would it not be better for all concerned that no kitchen help be called in? It is a crying evil of the times that women of the period are altogether above doing the kinds of work their mothers were able and willing to do, and do cheerfully, because contributing largely to the prosperity of the household.

Peanut Raising.

[From the Pacific Rural Press.]

Editors Rural Press:—I see in your paper of Jan. 10th, an article from a subscriber asking for information concerning the care and cultivation of peanuts. We also note your reply to him, with which in some items we agree.

But we will venture to make a few remarks concerning the subject; premising we have labored in the cultivation and shipping of peanuts for quite a number of years. A sandy loam or loose gravelly soil is best suited for their cultivation.

Plant as early as the frost will permit and the weather is uniformly warm enough for vegetables, generally, to grow thriftily, as the peanut plant appreciates a long season and continues to grow and perfect nuts, under favorable circumstances, as long as the season lasts.

Pulverize the soil five or six inches deep. Break the pods with a light wooden hammer if you have many bushels to hull, but be careful not to bruise any of the kernels. Reject all that are not fully matured.

There are two distinct varieties of peanuts; the white and the red. The white variety seems to be the kind referred to in the aforementioned article. The white variety branches out and runs along flat on the ground. The red variety grows upright in a bunch, except when grown upon very rich soil, and its growth is unusually rank.

The red peanuts should be planted in drills 12 to 18 inches apart, two kernels together, and the rows should be from 3½ to 4½ feet apart, depending upon the fertility of the soil; the poorer the soil the closer they may be planted, and they will grow on soil too poor to produce weeds. Yet a soil of medium strength is to be preferred.

Harrow the land level; lay it off with a coulter or bull-tongue plow; cover rather lighter than corn. To plant white peanuts, prepare the land as before, check it off 4 to 4½ feet one way to 2½ the other way as before. Put two kernels in each check. They should be well cultivated, keeping the soil loose and clear of weeds, and put a little soil around each plant, until they get to spiking; that is, shooting out small straight roots from each joint of the vines into the ground, on the end of which you will notice the young peanut forming. They should now be left to themselves, at least as far as the vines are concerned; and if they grow well they often shade the space between the rows so that no weeds will grow there.

In cultivation there should not be a large high hill or ridge made around the plants, but only a low, broad, flat hill or ridge. And none of the blooms or vines should be pressed down or covered up with soil, as we learned by repeated experiments, made in different soils, and with different varieties, that such procedure is injurious to the plants, and greatly injures and curtails the crop of nuts. They should be gathered before the frost bites the vines. One of the best ways of gathering them, is to run a furrow on each side of the row with a bull-tongue plow, close enough to loosen the soil around the plants. Then take a narrow, light grubbing hoe and loosen up the vines that the plow did not, and dig up the vine and turn upside down to dry. If they are of the red variety, after the plow has been run deeply on both sides, they may be pulled up by hand. They should never be gathered in rainy weather or when the ground is very wet.

After they have been turned up for one day in the sunshine, and while the vines are entirely free from dew, they should be put up in small hand stacks, which are made thus: Put a stake, 4 or 5 ft. long, firmly in the ground, put something such as dry grass, weeds or straw around it to keep the peanuts from the dampness of the ground; then proceed to stack the vines around the stake, with the roots to the center, leaving a small space in the center for ventilation, and when the stack is made as high as desired, cap it with grass or straw, to protect it against the weather and birds. Let them remain in the stack three or five weeks, when they will be ready to pick, stack and send to market. If the crop is large, and any prospect of rain, they (vines and all) should be hauled up and put under shelter, where they may be picked off at leisure. None of the premature nuts should be picked off, as they greatly injure the sale of the good ones, and they add greatly to the value of the vines as hay, which is choice food for milch cows, greatly increasing the quantity and quality of their milk.

The red peanuts are much easier cultivated than the white; both usually sell for about the same price in market. The white peanuts are more oily than the red and usually have only two kernels in one pod, while the red has often three or four. Sixty to seventy-five bushels is considered a fair crop, but sometimes more than a hundred bushels are raised per acre.

As soon as the peanuts are gathered in from the field and the vines put away for hay, turn the hogs into the field and they will glean it well, and sometimes get fat. The land is then in good fix for plowing for wheat.

I have thus given a brief outline of peanut culture, and hope it may be of service to some one who is earnestly following the noblest of labor—farming. And often amid the wearying duties of professional rounds do we feel:

"How brightly through the mist of years,
My quiet country home appears!
My father busy all the day
In plowing corn or raking hay;
My mother moving with delight
Among her milk-pans, silver-bright;
We children, just from school set free,
Filling the garden with our glee.
The blood of life was flowing warm
When I was living on a farm."

Q. C. Smith, M. D.

Scenes in the High Sierras.

[Written for the Press by J. G. Lemmon.]

No. VI.—The Great Comstock Lode.

Again, and for the last time on this excursion, we invite the reader who has accompanied us thus far to step upon a cage at the mouth of one of these shafts, and together we will descend into these deep mines and take a journey through their labyrinthiau streets.

Down, down we drop, nearly as fast as gravity would drag us, if unresisted. The hot vapors rushing past cause immediate perspiration at every pore. They are so loaded with effluvia as to be nearly suffocating. Our lanterns light up the clean-walled shaft with its continuous iron rods—one on each side—directing our cage. Our guide declares all is secure, but our hearts beat a lively tattoo for a few seconds, ere the welcome slackening of speed is followed by a sudden stop, which, nearly settling us in a heap, informs us that the first level is reached—400 feet down.

Stepping out of the cage, our guide nimbly leads the way along a rock-strewn passage, opening into a long, straight, seven-feet square gallery, timbered on all sides by heavy, squared pines.

Through the crevices our lights reveal above, below, to right and left, similar long, symmetrically arranged galleries—all empty, silent and gloomy, with their massive timber supports slowly crumbling before the constantly acting, irresistible force of swelling rocks exposed to the air.

This is the part of the mine first worked, from which as the rock was removed these galleries of sturdy pines cut in the forests around Tahoe and hauled here at great expense, were built, one under another and one tier beside another, forming story after story until the whole ledge 60 to 80 feet wide was honey-combed with galleries to a depth that required the sinking of the shaft some hundreds of feet deeper in order to facilitate operations.

Away our guide scurries over dilapidated floors and down worn-out ladders, slippery with grime and velveted with mould, turning, zig-zaging and diving, still hurrying, but always talking interestingly of shafts, drifts, tunnels, inclines, dips, breasts, adits, stopes, etc., till you think he is a vocal digging machine just wound up, and you shout for it to stop and define that last word.

A half hour of such meandering over many miles of dismal galleries, down innumerable shattered ladders, and through a still thickening and higher tempered atmosphere, brings us to the second level—800 feet down—and where a few miners may still be seen busily picking low grade ore from the white walls—the higher grade having been removed from this level before. Here our guide pulls a telegraph wire by the side of an incline that passes eastward under the city of Gold Hill, and in a moment a roaring sound in the far upper end, augmented and intensified every instant, approaches with deafening din and from the gloom emerges a sliding iron box car, like a huge road-scraper, back foremost, and, hushing its noise, carefully stops exactly on our level. "Jump in and keep your heads down," shouts our guide and telegraphing again, away we slide through the thick, hot air, accompanied by a cavernous roar that reminds of the story of the naughty schoolboys who took a ride with old Pluto to his sulphurous, noisy dominions.

Down, down, "will we ever stop? Really I'm not prepared," yelled the school master in the ear of our grim guide. At length, stunned, bewildered and nearly breathless, we are landed at the 1,200-foot level amidst a busy throng of miners, a glinting of lights and clinking of picks and sledges in every direction. Our guide says cheerfully, "Now, we have just reached the inhabited portion of our busy underground city." We approach the nearest group of miners and make a minute inspection. They are mostly thorough Englishmen from Yorkshire, a hardy race, whose brawny arms, full breasts and sinewy legs are fully displayed by their manner of dress—the upper part of a pair of drawers, or often a mere towel fastened tightly about the middle, being the only garment worn.

Their round, barrel chests, resembling the pouter pigeon, are made so by the necessity of inspiring large quantities of gases about them in order to obtain sufficient oxygen. The character of their work—very hard and performed in every variety of position—calls into play and develops every muscle. Perhaps no human beings at the present day are finer built as a class, or more beautifully proportioned than these underground miners. The statues of gladiators and athletes in our art galleries cannot be finer.

Each wears a cap for the purpose of holding a candle, the sweat constantly streams from their bodies, and whatever the occupation, whether yielding the pick with quick stroke, hammering a drill, either hand forward, with careful aim, or hoisting the heavy ore-lumps into the cars, all is done in an abstracted, determined manner that tempts no inquiries, nor brooks interruption.

Every five or six minutes they drop their tools and hasten away to where casks of ice-water stand in wide passages, through which passes pure air, driven down by blowers above ground; the ice-water being furnished and partaken of, in unlimited quantities. A large portion of the time is spent in respiring the welcome pure air, and cooling off beside the ice-water casks, yet the day is divided into three parts or "tricks" of 8 hours each, and one such "trick" spent in the mine entitles a workman to a day's wages—$3 to $5.

As far as the eye can reach in two directions, and for 60 to 80 feet sidewise, the glinting of myriades of lights tell where the miners are stationed. Some "breasting" the ore out of the ledge at the end of the galleries, some deftly fitting the timbers in continuation of the latter, others manning the ore-cars; here, there, everywhere, the clean, white, stalwart bodies and limbs of the workmen are seen posturing like animated statuary. The number of these human beings, expressionless gnomes toiling here away from the influence of the blessed sun, and in this stifling atmosphere, is almost incredible. You may travel for two miles north and south, and mount or delve for ¼ of a mile through the honey-comb work—the skeleton of the gutted Comstock—and in every place, on every hand, lights are flashing and labor strokes resounding. Some companies on the Comstock employ 600 and 800 hands, and altogether there are not less than 7,000 souls disemboweling the wealthy Mt. Davidson.

To us, as might be expected, the whole journey through this subterranean city was like wandering in a labyrinth, with no idea of directions or distances. The close, hot atmosphere weakened us excessively; but our guide hurried along, discoursing learnedly of argentiferous and auriferous ore, of cleavage, dips, stratifications, country rock, calcareous tufa, limestone horse, black dyke, crystals, pyrites, mica-schist, feldspar, hornblend, porphyry, silex, conglomerate, amygdaloid, etc., until you are sure he is but a talking geological cabinet, and feel like chiseling him for specimens.

Leading us to the side of the incline again, he pointed downwards and said: "There is a lower level down there, 1,700 feet from the surface, that is only visited by the superintendent and a few workmen under heavy bonds not to reveal what they had seen. It is hot enough down there, from the internal heat of the earth, to boil eggs"—a statement reiterated by the superintendent upon our ascent.

At last, after the lapse of two hours, tired, suffocated and also deeply humiliated at sight of so much unattainable riches, we beg to be taken out where the pure air and blessed sunlight were never more welcome. Conducting us at once to bath rooms, our guide directed us to remove our saturated garments, then filling the tubs with warm water, and supplying soap, towels, etc., he left us to luxuriate and meditate upon the wonderful trip we had made—and to fix at last upon the true description of our guide—a genial, well-bred, educated, communicative gentleman.

Mining Statistics.

I cannot forbear a few general statistics before leaving this last of the grand "Scenes in the High Sierras." The Comstock silver lode, extending for 2 miles nearly north and south under the eastern side of Mr. Davidson, was discovered in 1859. Its discovery caused an immense reflux of the tide of emigration that for ten years had flowed past it to California, and, as if by magic, uprose large towns with all the appurtenances in a mining region, of mills, saloons, theaters, dance-houses, etc., some of them furnished with a splendor unexcelled on this continent. The mines, worked now for 14 years, have yielded over $150,000,000, weighing 4,418 tons, if silver, or 276 tons if gold; and the product of these mines is both.

The average annual yield has been $10,714,000, but is increasing. This year it will amount to $15,000,000, and in all probability will average, or exceed that high figure for the next fifty years. No other lode in the world has done so well. The best one of the Mexican lodes has yielded about $666,000,000; but to raise it required 284 years' time. The lode that has yielded most of all others, the Potosi of Bolivia, in 250 years has yielded the incomprehensible sum of $1,200,000,000; but that is less than $5,000,000 a year. Our Comstock lode averages three times that amount already, and the improvements in machinery, aided by the monster Sutro Tunnel, may multiply that average by a high figure soon. The Sutro Tunnel, fast approaching completion, a stupendous enterprise, that a half-crazed miner only would project, is to be eight miles long; and to burrow into the base of Davidson 2,000 feet below the croppings of the Comstock, and ramify into all its lower mines. Ore-bearing ledges may be found on the way, as is most probable; then, with trains of steam-propelled ore cars, running on trestle-work over an out-flowing river of water draining the mines, and utilized at its mouth by crushing machinery, a magnificent agglomeration of mining operations may be seen here in the near future, the magnitude of which it hath not yet entered into the mind of man to conceive.

Conclusion.

The remainder of the homeward trip was concluded without other event of interest, except one of absorbing moment to the writer at the time: a severe, but brief illness, occasioned by the great difference in the labor of the lungs, between the cool, expanded ether of Davidson, so suddenly changed for the hot, dense efflu via of the mines.

We glided gently down the famous Geiger grade, made a brief visit to the startling Steamboat springs, thoughtfully wended our way through the new city of Reno, since reduced to ashes, and almost as quickly rebuilt, and along the historic old Dutch Flat road, with its ruins of hotels every mile, where once rolled the tide of commerce, now transferred to the railroad. Turning northward, through Sardine Pass, the beautiful Sierra Valley soon comes gladly to view, the largest of the emerald gems, a central brilliant in the glorious galaxy of glossy valleys that indent the eastern slope of the high Sierras.

Kind reader, your hand—I have done. I can guide you to no grander scenes, however imperfectly they have been depicted. Lake Tahoe, the Big Trees, Yo Semite Valley, and the Comstock Mines. What a quartette of wonders! Each matchless of its kind, and all connected by a pleasant ride of 200 miles.

Next season we travel northward to Shasta, Scott and Hood. Then you may witness more "Scenes *from*," not "*in* the High Sierras."

"Improved" Method of Propelling Boats.—We notice the following description of a propelling apparatus in general circulation. We recollect having seen already several models of this most valuable idea, and do not understand how it can be patentable: To the bar or lever of the paddle are hinged two blades in such a way that when moving forward through the water the pressure of the water will close them. These are kept from closing against each other by one or more stops, interposed between them and attached to the bar, so that as the paddle begins to make the stroke the pressure of the water may open or spread the blades so as to present the greatest possible surface. The upper ends of the bar are designed to be attached to the shafts, which are arranged so as to be operated independently of each other. The shafts are placed in line with each other, and a pintel may be attached to the end of one shaft to enter a socket in the end of the other shaft. Levers are attached to the inner parts of the shafts, extending above and below said shafts, and having handles attached to their upper ends and foot rests attached to their lower ends, so that the operator can apply hand and foot power.

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