GLIMPSES OF JOHN CHINAMAN.

When John Marshall picked up the first golden nugget in California, a call was sounded for the gathering of an immense gold-seeking army made up of many nationalities; and among the rest China sent a battalion some fifty thousand strong.

John Chinaman has remained with us ever since, despised and abused, being neither a co-worshiper nor a co-sympathizer in aught save the getting of gold. In dress, custom and language his is still a nationality as distinct from ours as are the waters of the Gulf Stream from those of the ocean.

It is possible that this may be but the second migration of Tartars to the American shore. It is possible that the North American Indian and the Chinaman may be identical in origin and race. Close observers find among the aboriginal tribes resident far up on the north-west American coast peculiar habits and customs, having closely-allied types among the Chinese. The features of the Aleuts, the natives of the Aleutian Islands, are said to approximate closely to those of the Mongolians. The unvarying long black hair, variously-shaded brown skin, beardless face and shaven head are points, natural and artificial, common to the Indian and Mongolian. There is a hint of common custom between the Indian scalplock and Chinese cue.

"John" has been a thorough gleaner of the mines. The "superior race" allowed him to make no valuable discoveries. He could buy their half-worked-out placers. The "river-bed" they sold him when its chances of yielding were deemed desperate. When the golden fruitage of the banks was reduced to a dollar per day, they became "China diggings." But wherever "John" settled he worked steadily, patiently and systematically, no matter whether his ten or twelve hours' labor brought fifty cents or fifty dollars; for his industry is of an untiring mechanical character. In the earlier and flusher days of California's gold-harvest the white man worked spasmodically. He was ever leaving the five-dollar diggings in hand for the fifty- or hundred-dollar-per-day claims afar off in some imaginary bush. These golden rumors were always on the wing. The country was but half explored, and many localities were rich in mystery. The white vanguard pushed north, south and east, frequently enduring privation and suffering. "John," in comparative comfort, trotted patiently after, carrying his snugly made-up bundle of provisions and blankets at one end of a bamboo pole, his pick, shovel, pan and rocker at the other, to work over the leavings. The leavings sometimes turned out more gold than "new ground," much to the chagrin of the impatient Caucasian. But "John," according to his own testimony, never owned a rich claim. Ask him how much it yielded per day, and he would tell you, "sometimes four, sometimes six bittee" (four or six shillings). He had many inducements for prevarication. Nearly every white man's hand was against him. If he found a bit of rich ground, "jumpers" were ready to drive him from it: Mexicans waylaid him and robbed him of his dust. In remote localities he
enclosed his camp by strong stockades: even these were sometimes forced and carried at night by bands of desperadoes. Lastly came the foreign miner's tax-collector, with his demand of four dollars monthly per man for the privilege of digging gold. There were hundreds and thousands of other foreign laborers in the mines—English, German, French, Italian and Portuguese—but they paid little or none of this tax, for they might soon be entitled to a vote, and the tax-collector was appointed by the sheriff of the county, and the sheriff, like other officials, craved a re-election. But John was never to be a voter, and so he shouldered the whole of this load,

and when he could not pay, the official beat him and took away his tools. John often fought this persecutor by strategy. In localities where no white men would betray him he signaled his coming from afar. From the crags of Red Mountain on the Tuolumne River I have often seen the white flag waved as the dreaded collector came down the steep trail to collect his monthly dues. That signal or a puff of smoke told the Chinese for miles along the river-valley to conceal themselves from the "license-man." Rockers, picks and shovels were hastily thrust into clumps of chapparal, and their owners clambered up the hillsides into artificial caves or leafy coverts. Out of companies of fifty the collector finds but twenty men at work. These pay their tax, the official rides on down the river, the hidden thirty Mongolians emerge from cover; and more than once has a keen collector "doubled on them" by coming back unexpectedly and detecting the entire gang on their claim.

John has been invaluable to the California demagogue, furnishing for him a sop of hatred and prejudice to throw before "enlightened constituencies." It needs but to mention the "filthy Chinaman" to provoke an angry roar from the mass-meeting. Yet the Chinaman is not entirely filthy. He washes his entire person every day when practicable; he loves clean clothes; his kitchen-utensils will bear inspection. When the smallpox raged so severely in San Francisco a few years since, there were very few deaths among his race. But John is not nice about his house. He seems to have none of our ideas concerning home comfort. Smoke has no terror for him; soap he keeps entirely for his clothes and person; floor-and wall-washing are things never hinted at; and the refuse of his table is scarcely thrown out of doors. Privacy is not one of his luxuries—he wants a house full: where there is room for a bunk, there is room for a man. An anthill, a beehive, a rabbit-warren are his models of domestic comfort: what is stinted room for two Americans is spaciousness for a dozen Chinese. Go into one of their cabins at night, and you are in an oven full of opium- and lamp-smoke. Recumbent forms are dimly seen lying on bunks above and below. The chattering is incessant. Stay there ten minutes, and as your eye becomes accustomed to the smoke you will dimly see blue bundles lying on shelves aloft. A non the bundles stir, talk and puff smoke. Above is a loft six feet square: a ladder brings it in communication with the ground floor. Mongolians are ever coming down, but the gabble of tongues above shows that a host is still left. Like an omnibus, a Chinese house is never full. Nor is it ever quiet. At all hours of the night may be heard their talk and the clatter of their wooden shoes. A Chinaman does not retire like an American, intending to make a serious business of his night's sleeping. He merely "lops down" half dressed, and is ready to arise at the least call of
business or pleasure.

While at work in his claim his fire is always kindled near by, and over it a tea-pot. This is his beverage every half hour. His tea must be hot, strong and without milk or sugar. He also consumes a terrible mixture sold him by white traders, called indiscriminately brandy, gin or whisky, yet an intoxicated Chinaman is the rarest of rare sights. Rice he can cook elegantly, every grain being steamed to its utmost degree of distension. Soup he makes of no other meat than pork. The poorest among his hordes must have a chicken or duck for his holiday. He eats it merely parboiled. He will eat dog also, providing it is not long past maturity.

The Chinese grocery-stores are museums to the American. There are strange dried roots, strange dried fish, strange dried land and marine plants, ducks and chickens, split, pressed thin and smoked; dried shellfish; cakes newly made, yellow, glutinous and fatty, stamped with tea-box characters; and great earthen jars filled with rottenness. I speak correctly if perhaps too forcibly, for when those imposing jars are opened to serve a customer with some manner of vegetable cut in long strips, the native-born American finds it expedient to hold his nose. American storekeepers in the mines deal largely in Chinese goods. They know the Mongolian names of the articles inquired for, but of their character, their composition, how they are cooked or how eaten, they can give no information. It is heathenish "truck," by whose sale they make a profit. Only that and nothing more.

A Chinese miner's house is generally a conglomeration of old boards, mats, brush, canvas and stones. Rusty sheets of tin sometimes help to form the edifice. Anything lying about loose in the neighborhood is certain in time to form a part of the Mongolian mansion.

When the white man abandons mining-ground he often leaves behind very serviceable frame houses. John comes along to glean the gold left by the Caucasian. He builds a cluster of shapeless huts. The deserted white man's house gradually disappears. A clapboard is gone, and then another, and finally all. The skeleton of the frame remains: months pass away; piece by piece the joists disappear; some morning they are found tumbled in a heap, and at last nothing is left save the cellar and chimneys. Meantime, John's clusters of huts swell their rude proportions, but you must examine them narrowly to detect any traces of your vanished house, for he revels in smoke, and everything about him is soon colored to a hue much resembling his own brownish-yellow countenance. Thus he picks the domiciliary skeleton bare, and then carries off the bones. He is a quiet but skillful plunderer. John No. 1 on his way home from his mining-claim rips off a board; John No. 2 next day drags it a few yards from the house. John No. 3 a week afterward drags it home. In this manner the dissolution of your house is protracted for months. In this manner he distributes the responsibility of the theft over his entire community. I have seen a large boarding-house disappear in this way, and when the owner, after a year's absence, revisited the spot to look after his property, he found his real estate reduced to a cellar.
John himself is a sort of museum in his character and habits. We must be pardoned for giving details of these, mingled promiscuously, rather after the museum style. His New Year comes in February. For the Chinaman of limited means it lasts a week, for the wealthy it may endure three. His consumption of fire-crackers during that period is immense. He burns strings a yard in length suspended from poles over his balconies. The uproar and sputtering consequent on this festivity in the Chinese quarter at San Francisco is tremendous. The city authorities limit this Celestial Pandemonium to a week.

He does not forsake the amusement of kite-flying even when arrived at maturity. His artistic imitations of birds and dragons float over our housetops. To these are often affixed contrivances for producing hollow, mournful, buzzing sounds, mystifying whole neighborhoods. His game of shuttlecock is to keep a cork, one end being stuck with feathers, flying in the air as long as possible, the impelling member being the foot, the players standing in a circle and numbering from four to twenty. Some show great dexterity in kicking with the heel. His vocal music to our ears seems a monotonous caterwaul. His violin has but one string; his execution is merely a modified species of saw-filing.

He loves to gamble, especially in lotteries. He is a diligent student of his own comfort. Traveling on foot during a hot day, he protects himself with an umbrella and refreshes himself with a fan. In place of prosaic signs on his store-fronts, he often inscribes quotations from his favorite authors.

He is a lover of flowers. His balconies and window-sills are often thickly packed with shrubs and creepers in pots. He is not a speedy and taciturn eater. His tea-table talks are full of noisy jollity, and are often prolonged far into the night.

He is a lover of the drama. A single play sometimes requires months for representation, being like a serial story, "continued" night after night. He never dances. There is no melody in the Mongolian foot. Dancing he regards as a species of Caucasian insanity.

To make an oath binding he must swear by the head of a cock cut off before him in open court. Chinese testimony is not admissible in American courts. It is a legal California axiom that a Chinaman cannot speak the truth. But cases have occurred wherein, he being an eye-witness, the desire to hear what he might tell as to what he had seen has proved stronger than the prejudice against him; and the more effectually to clinch the chances of his telling the truth, the above, his national form of oath, has been resorted to. He has among us some secret government of his own. Before his secret tribunals more than one Mongolian has been hurried in Star-Chamber fashion, and never seen afterward. The nature of the offences thus visited by secret and bloody punishment is scarcely known to Americans. He has two chief deities—a god and a devil. Most of his prayers are offered to his devil. His god, he says, being good and well-disposed, it is not necessary to propitiate him. But his devil is ugly, and must be won over by
offering and petition. Once a year, wherever collected in any number, he builds a flimsy sort of temple, decorates it with ornaments of tinsel, lays piles of fruit, meats and sugared delicacies on an altar, keeps up night and day a steady crash of gongs, and installs therein some great, uncouth wooden idols. When this period of worship is over the "josh-house" disappears, and the idols are unceremoniously stowed away among other useless lumber.

He shaves with an instrument resembling a butcher's cleaver in miniature. Nature generally denies him beard, so he shaves what a sailor would term the fore and after part of his head. He reaps his hirsute crop dry, using no lather. His cue is pieced out by silken braid, so interwoven as gradually to taper into a slim tassel, something like a Missouri mule-driver's "black snake" whip-lash. To lose this cue is to lose caste and standing among his fellows. No misfortune for him can be greater.

Coarse cowhide boots are the only articles of American wear that he favors. He inclines to buy the largest sizes, thinking he thereby gets the most for his money, and when his No. 7 feet wobble and chafe in No. 12 boots he complains that they "fit too much."

He cultivates the vegetables of his native land in California. They are curiosities like himself. One resembles our string-bean, but is circular in shape and from two to three feet in length. It is not in the least stringy, breaks off short and crisp, boils tender very quickly and affords excellent eating. He is a very careful cultivator, and will spend hours picking off dead leaves and insects from the young plants. When he finds a dead cat, rat, dog or chicken, he throws it into a small vat of water, allows it to decompose, and sprinkles the liquid fertilizer thus obtained over his plantation. Watermelon and pumpkin seeds are for him dessert delicacies. He consumes his garden products about half cooked in an American culinary point of view, merely wilting them by an immersion in boiling water.

There are about fifteen English words to be learned by a Chinaman on arriving in California, and no more. With these he expresses all his wants, and with this limited stock you must learn to convey all that is needful to him. The practice thus forced upon one in employing a Chinese servant is useful in preventing a circumlocutory habit of speech. Many of our letters the Mongolian mouth has no capacity for sounding. He invariably sounds like l, so that the word "rice" he pronounces "lice"—a bit of information which may prevent an unpleasant apprehension when you come to employ a Chinese cook. He rejects the English personal pronoun I, and uses the possessive "my" in its place; thus, "My go home," in place of "I go home."

When he buries a countryman he throws from the hearse into the air handfuls of brown tissue-paper slips, punctured with Chinese characters. Sometimes, at his burial-processions, he gives a small piece of money to every person met on the road. Over the grave he beats gongs and sets off packs of fire-crackers. On it he leaves cooked meats, drink, delicacies and lighted wax tapers. Eventually the bones are disinterred and shipped to his native land. In the remotest
mining-districts of California are found Chinese graves thus opened and emptied of their inmates. I have in one instance seen him, so far as he was permitted, render some of these funeral honors to an American. The deceased had gained this honor by treating the Chinese as though they were partners in our common humanity. "Missa Tom," as he was termed by them, they knew they could trust. He acquired among them a reputation as the one righteous American in their California Gomorrah. Chinamen would come to him from distant localities, that he might overlook their bills of sale and other documents used in business intercourse with the white man. Their need of such, an honest adviser was great. The descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers often took advantage of their ignorance of the English language, written or spoken. "Missa Tom" suddenly died. I had occasion to visit his farm a few days after his death, and on the first night of my stay there saw the array of meats, fruit, wine and burning tapers on a table in front of the house, which his Chinese friends told me was intended as an offering to "Missa Tom's" spirit.

We will dive for a moment into a Chinese wash-cellar. "John" does three-fourths of the washing of California. His lavatories are on every street. "Hip Tee, Washing and Ironing," says the sign, evidently the first production of an amateur in lettering. Two doors above is the establishment of Tong Wash—two below, that of Hi Sing. Hip Tee and five assistants are busy ironing. The odor is a trinity of steam, damp clothes and opium. More Mongolian tongues are heard from smoky recesses in the rear. As we enter, Hip Tee is blowing a shower of moisture from his mouth, "very like a whale." This is his method of dampening the linen preparatory to ironing. It is a skilled performance. The fluid leaves his lips as fine as mist. If we are on business we leave our bundles, and in return receive a ticket covered with hieroglyphics. These indicate the kind and number of the garments left to be cleansed, and some distinguishing mark (supposing this to be our first patronage of Hip Tee) by which we may be again identified. It may be by a pug nose, a hare lip, red hair, no hair or squint eyes. They never ask one's name, for they can neither pronounce nor write it when it is given. The ticket is an unintelligible tracery of lines, curves, dots and dashes, made by a brush dipped in India ink on a shred of flimsy Chinese paper. It may teem with abuse and ridicule, but you must pocket all that, and produce it on calling again, or your shirts and collars go into the Chinese Circumlocution Wash-house Office. It is very difficult getting one's clothes back if the ticket be lost—very. Hip Tee now dabs a duplicate of your ticket in a long book, and all is over. You will call on Saturday night for your linen. You do so. There is apparently the same cellar, the same smell of steam, damp clothes and opium, the same spurt of sprinkling water, and apparently the same Hip Tee and assistants with brown shaven foreheads and long cues hanging straight down behind or coiled in snake-like fashion about their craniums. You present your ticket. Hip Tee examines it and shakes his head. "No good—oder man," he says, and points up the street. You are now perplexed and somewhat alarmed. You say: "John, I want my clothes. I left them here last Monday. You gave me that ticket." "No," replies Hip Tee very decidedly, "oder man;" and again he waves his arm upward. Then you are wroth. You abuse, expostulate, entreat, and talk a great deal of English, and some of it very strong English, which Hip Tee does not understand; and Hip Tee talks a great deal of Chinese, and perhaps strong Chinese, which you do not understand. You commence sentences in broken Chinese and terminate them in unbroken English. Hip Tee commences sentences in
broken English and terminates them in pure Chinese, from a like inability to express his
indignation in a foreign tongue. "What for you no go oder man? No my ticket—tung sung lung,
yah hip kee—ping!" he cries, and all this time the assistants are industriously ironing and spouting
mist, and leisurely making remarks in their sing-song unintelligibility which you feel have
uncomplimentary reference to yourself. Suddenly a light breaks upon you. This is not Hip Tee's
cellar, this is not Hip Tee. It is the establishment of Hi Sing. This is Hi Sing himself who for the
last half hour has been endeavoring with his stock of fifteen English words to make you
understand that you are in the wrong house. But these Chinese, as to faces and their wash-
houses, and all the paraphernalia of their wash-houses, are so much alike that this is an easy
mistake to make. You find the lavatory of Hip Tee, who pronounces the hieroglyphics all
correct, and delivers you your lost and found shirts clean, with half the buttons broken, and the
bosoms pounded, scrubbed and frayed into an irregular sort of embroidery.

"He can only dig, cook and wash," said the American miner contemptuously years ago: "he can't
work rock." To work rock in mining parlance is to be skillful in boring Earth's stony husk after
mineral. It is to be proficient in sledging, drilling and blasting. The Chinaman seemed to have no
aptitude for this labor. He was content to use his pick and shovel in the gravel-banks: metallic
veins of gold, silver or copper he left entirely to the white man.

Yet it was a great mistake to suppose he could not "work rock," or do anything else required of
him. John is a most apt and intelligent labor-machine. Show him once your tactics in any
operation, and ever after he imitates them as accurately as does the parrot its memorized
sentences. So when the Pacific Railroad was being bored through the hard granite of the Sierras
it was John who handled the drill and sledge as well as the white laborer. He was hurled by
thousands on that immense work, and it was the tawny hand of China that hewed out hundreds
of miles for the transcontinental pathway. Nor is this all. He is crowding into one avenue of
employment after another in California. He fills our woolen- and silk-mills; he makes slippers
and binds shoes; he is skilled in the use of the sewing-machine; cellar after cellar in San
Francisco is filled with these Celestial brownies rolling cigars; his fishing-nets are in every bay
and inlet; he is employed in scores of the lesser establishments for preserving fruit, grinding salt,
making matches, etc. He would quickly jump into the places of the carpenter, mason and
blacksmith were he allowed, for there are numbers of them whose knowledge of these and
other trades is sufficient at least to render them useful as assistants. He is handy on shipboard:
the Panama steamers carry Chinese foremost hands. He is preferred as a house-servant: the
Chinese boy of fourteen or sixteen learns quickly to cook and wash in American fashion. He is
neat in person, can be easily ruled, does not set up an independent sovereignty in the kitchen,
has no followers, will not outshine his mistress in attire; and, although not perfect, yet affords a
refreshing change from our Milesian tyrants of the roast and wash-tub. But when you catch this
Celestial domestic treasure, be sure that the first culinary operations performed for his
instruction are correctly manipulated, for his imitativeness is of a cast-iron rigidity. Once in the
mould, it can only with great difficulty be altered. Burn your toast or your pudding and he is apt to regard the accident as the rule.

The young Chinese, especially in San Francisco, are anxious to acquire an English education. They may not attend the public schools. A few years since certain Chinese mission-schools were established by the joint efforts of several religious denominations. Young ladies and gentlemen volunteered their services on Sunday to teach these Chinese children to read. They make eager, apt and docile pupils. Great is their pride on mastering a few lines of English text. They become much attached to their teachers, and it is possible, if the vote of the latter were taken, it would evidence more liking for their yellow, long-cued pupils than for any class of white children. But while so assiduous to learn, it is rather doubtful whether much real religious impression is made upon them. It is possible that their home-training negatives that.

We have spoken entirely of the Chinaman. What of the Chinawoman in America? In California the word "Chinawoman" is synonymous with what is most vile and disgusting. Few, very few, of a respectable class are in the State. The slums of London and New York are as respectable thoroughfares compared with the rows of "China alleys" in the heart of San Francisco. These can hardly be termed "abandoned women." They have had no sense of virtue, propriety or decency to abandon. They are ignorant of the disgrace of their calling; if the term may be allowed, they pursue it innocently. Many are scarcely more than children. They are mere commodities, being by their own countrymen bought in China, shipped and consigned to factors in California, and there sold for a term of years.

The Chinaman has bitter enemies in San Francisco: they thirst to annihilate him. He is accustomed to blows and brickbats; he is legitimate game for rowdies, both grown and juvenile; and children supposed to be better trained can scarce resist the temptation of snatching at his pig-tail as he passes through their groups in front of the public schools. Even on Sundays nice little boys coming from Sabbath-school, with their catechisms tucked under their jackets, and texts enjoining mercy and gentleness fresh upon their lips, will sometimes salute the benighted heathen as he passes by with a volley of stones. If he turns on his small assailants, he is apt to meet larger ones. Men are not wanting, ready and panting, to take up the quarrel thus wantonly commenced by the offspring of the "superior race." There are hundreds of families, who came over the sea to seek in America the comfort and prosperity denied them in the land of their birth, whose children from earliest infancy are inculcated with the sentiment that the Chinaman is a dog, a pest and a curse. On the occasion of William H. Seward's visit to a San Francisco theatre, two Chinese merchants were hissed and hooted by the gallery mob from a box which they had ventured to occupy. This assumption of style and exclusiveness proved very offensive to the shirt-sleeved, upper-tier representatives of the "superior race," who had assembled in large numbers to catch a glimpse of one of the black man's great champions.
Ethiopia could have sat in that box in perfect safety, but China in such a place was the red rag rousing the ire of the Democratic bull. John has a story of his own to carry back home from a Christian land.

For this prejudice and hostility there are provocative causes, although they may not be urged in extenuation. The Chinaman is a dangerous competitor for the white laborer; and when the latter, with other and smaller mouths to feed, once gets the idea implanted in his mind that the bread is being taken from them by what he deems a semi-human heathen, whose beliefs, habits, appearance and customs are distasteful to him, there are all the conditions ready for a state of mind toward the almond-eyed Oriental which leans far away from brotherly love.

Brotherly love sometimes depends on circumstances. "Am I not a man and brother?" cries John from his native shore. "Certainly," we respond. Pass round the hat—let us take up a contribution for the conversion of the poor heathen. The coins clink thickly in the bottom of the charitable chapeau. We return home, feeling ourselves raised an inch higher heavenward.

"Am I not a man and brother?" cries John in our midst, digging our gold, setting up opposition laundries and wheeling sand at half a dollar per day less wages. "No. Get out, ye long-tailed baste! An' wad ye put me on a livil with that—that baboon?" Pass round the hat. The coins mass themselves more thickly than ever. For what? To buy muskets, powder and ball. Wherefore? Wait! More than once has the demagogue cried, "Drive them into the sea!"

PRENTICE MULFORD.