

"Homeward Bound"

By Frank Tallmire and H. J. Harrington

WHEN in the summer of 1925, question arose as to providing for the remnant of the once quite numerous Chinese population of Rock Springs, who had long given faithful and uncomplaining service to The Union Pacific Coal Company, it was decided, after careful deliberation, to send them back to their native land; not to have them 'out of sight and out of mind', but because it was recognized that Chinamen, perhaps more than any other race, like Goldsmith's "Traveler",

"Still have hopes, their long vexations past,
There to return and die at home at last."

So nine aged China "Boys", as they seem to prefer to be called, were given the opportunity to return. Early in November, 1925, they departed for China, bearing with them the good wishes and esteem of their many friends here. The story of that event is still too well remembered to be here repeated; suffice it is to say that these old men were not turned adrift penniless in that strife torn country. All except one are still living and from time to time send greetings to their old time friends and associates in Rock Springs.

During the past summer the few remaining houses in the old "Chinatown" district were demolished or moved and their occupants for many years transferred to more comfortable houses in No. 4 Town. It may be that with the passing of their old homes and their increasing years,

the desire to go home, grew; at any rate, four old men, Ah Him, Ah Jin, Ah Chee and Ah Bow, expressed a wish that the Company send them to China. The first two named came to Rock Springs in 1882, so were here during the troublesome days of 1885, of which the group of houses known as the "Barracks" is a reminder. Ah Bow and Ah Chee came in 1892 and 1894, respectively, and all four of them have spent many years in the service of The Union Pacific Coal Company. Their request was looked upon with favor, and arrangements made for them to sail on the steamship "President Pierce" on November 11th, the date of leaving Rock Springs being set as November 7th, in order to give them a few days to visit friends and relatives, and to enjoy the sights in San Francisco before embarking.

As was done when the nine men went home two years ago, each was given a complete outfit of clothing. The day of their departure from Rock Springs was spent in preparation for the long journey, in visiting and bidding farewell to old friends, and in having their pictures taken for the Employees' Magazine. In the evening a banquet was tendered them at the Grand Cafe, which was attended by the officers of the Company, the Mayor of Rock Springs, representatives of the United Mine Workers of America and of the Press, besides several old friends, including six of their own countrymen. The genial and efficient Lao Hoy, under whose direction the banquet was arranged,



"For Clothes doth oft times make the man." Dressed up and ready to go.



Upper Left—"Portals of the Past," Golden Gate Park, San Francisco.

Upper Right—At Sun Dial, Golden Gate Park.

Center—On Board the "President Pierce" Homeward Bound.

Lower Left—"Happy" Harrington bidding the departing Chinese God Speed just before sailing.

Lower Right—Near "Portals of the Past," Golden Gate Park.

with characteristic Oriental tact, saw that everyone was at ease, the Winton-Reliance Band under the leadership of Jim Sartoris, furnished appropriate music, and of course, there were the bang and glare of the "Flier Clackers" without which no Chinese journey can be safely undertaken.

After the feasting was over there was much talking, mingled with mirth and laughter. Mr. George B. Pryde fittingly acted as toastmaster, he being the only man present who could understand and speak all of the dialects, including Chinese, spoken by the speakers who followed him. He expressed the regrets of President McAuliffe, who was not able to be present, and on behalf of Mr. McAuliffe presented each of the old Chinamen with a beautiful traveling clock as a personal remembrance to take the place, in part at least, of the Union Pacific Mines whistle by which the daily acts of their lives had been regulated for so many years.

Mayor P. C. Bunning, from his long experience as a citizen and public office holder in Rock Springs, during which he came frequently in contact with the Chinese, attested to their honesty and their law abiding qualities. In fact, so filled with regret was he at their leaving that he offered, if, after spending two years in China, conditions were not found satisfactory to send them return tickets, even promising to have the street paving completed by that time.

The Hon. D. G. Thomas (Davey Tom), one time "bossy man," now friend and adviser, related the story of the coming of the Chinese to Rock Springs, told of the trials and hardships and misunderstandings to which they were subjected, and yet how through it all, they seemed to possess the christian (or is it pagan?) virtue of ill-will to no man. No one understands these Chinese people better than Mr. Thomas, and, after listening to him, one wonders whether their character has changed since the days of Ah Say, or whether Bill Nye was mistaken when he said,

"For ways that are dark, and tricks that are vain,
The heathen Chinese is peculiar."

John McTee spoke on behalf of the United Mine Workers of America, of which organization the honor guests had been members. And here it may be said that the Union Local to which these four men belonged, presented them with a substantial gift of money as a token of the esteem in which they were held by their fellow workers. John L. Dykes, Hugh McLeod, and Thomas Gibson (Safety First), in turn praised the Chinese Workers and stressed the fairminded attitude of the United Mine Workers of America in barring none from their ranks on the grounds of race, color or creed.

F. L. McCarty, Mine Superintendent at Rock Springs, and Thomas Foster, Mine Superintendent at Winton, both of whom since boyhood have known the Chinese, and have been associated with them either as fellow workers or "bossy men," spoke a few words of praise and best wishes to their departing friends. Mr. Foster recalled that many innocent pranks were played on the Chinese in his early mining days. Mr. W. K. Lee, Office Manager for the Superintendent when Chinatown was a large sized colony, gave them fatherly advice, wished them "God-speed," and admonished them to keep out of trouble when they reach their native land.

And then on behalf of the Chinese guests, Lao Chee, familiarly known as "Jim", and Lao Hoy, Manager of the Grand Cafe, thanked The Union Pacific Coal Company, more particularly Mr. McAuliffe and Mr. Pryde, the United Mine Workers of America, and all others who had joined in making the farewell to their four countrymen, an event of life-long happy memory. At the conclusion of the meeting, "goodbye" was said, and best wishes expressed for a long life and happy journey, after which the four honor guests were left to spend their last few hours with their Chinese friends, until the arrival of the train at midnight.

On their trip to San Francisco they were accompanied

by H. J. Harrington, Supervisor of Compensation, who looked after the business affairs and entertainment until they sailed on Friday, November 11th. "Happy," who acted in a similar capacity on a former occasion, expects, with the experience he has gained in such matters, to be favorably considered as American Ambassador to China (after the war).

The history of the Chinese colony in Rock Springs is interesting, indeed, at times colorful. Brought to America on account of scarcity of labor to assist in building the Central Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads, many of them were transferred to Rock Springs to work in the mines, the growing traffic on the railroads having created an increasing demand for coal. At first, it is said, their numbers reached to almost a thousand. Houses were built for their accommodation until "Chinatown" became quite a flourishing colony. With the advent of miners from Eastern or European mines, the Chinese gradually drifted away or engaged in other occupations, the records showing approximately only 225 employed in the mines in 1890, and about fifty houses occupied. Today some of the most beautiful streets and residences in Rock Springs are located in what was once Chinatown, and not more than a half dozen Chinamen are employed by the Company. Lao Ah Say, who died in 1898, and for whom Ah Say Street in Rock Springs is named, was the last leader of the Chinese Colony here.

Of the many kind expressions from newspapers and magazines, when the first Chinese contingent went home two years ago, perhaps the most significant was an editorial which appeared in the Cheyenne Tribune, quoted in part as follows:

"They will give testimony, these nine returned travelers, concerning the spirit of Americans—a spirit so generously considerate of others that it took cognizance of the distaste of nine aged Chinese and spared neither pains nor expense that there might be gratification of the yearning of ones even so humble as these.

"That is the message of these 'missionaries' from Wyoming to the Chinese—a warming message of kindness, generosity, fraternity. Only nine weak voices—the voices of grateful old men—testifying amid the clamor of four hundreds of millions of the distraught and distrustful, but some will hear and repeat, will repeat and others will hear. Who may say how far that message may be spread, how potent it may be."

When this magazine reaches its readers, no doubt the latest group of "missionaries" will have reached their homes in far-away China. Let us hope that after the joy and excitement of rejoining their loved ones will have subsided, and their thoughts turn to America, they will remember only our spirit of kindness, generosity and fraternity, and not our too often displayed faults.

After noisily frightening away any individual devils or bands of devils that might have been lurking in the vicinity of the Union Pacific depot at Rock Springs, the party was gotten safely on No. 19, with their various pieces of hand baggage. Everything went off quite smoothly except that one particularly mischievous devil managed to get by the firing line and aboard the train, and just as it was leaving Green River spilled all the tea, the party being tealess then until Ogden was reached. At Ogden the party alighted from the train to meet several of their friends who had been advised of their coming and were at the depot to meet them and give them packages of fruits and "goodies." Here the supply of tea was replenished. As soon as the waiter sounded the first call for breakfast the entire party was ready for their first appearance in a dining car. Through the kindness and attention of Mr. A. J. Andrews, steward, they were very shortly enjoying a breakfast of ham and eggs and hot cakes with plenty of coffee and butter. After breakfast, with a good supply of cigarettes, the party gathered in



Banquet given departing "China Boys" at the Grand Cafe by their friends and Union Pacific Coal Company and U. M. W. Officials.

the Smoker to talk over old times. The rest of the day was uneventful with the exception that Ah Jin and Ah Bow developed a bad case of drug store "cowboyitis" and consumed a number of plates of ice cream, both for dessert and between meals. Ah Chee and Ah Bow were satisfied with good old American apple pie for dessert and refused to have anything to do with ice cream between meals, in fact everything in the line of refreshments except tea.

Shortly after leaving Sacramento the next morning they were called for breakfast, but, upon talking the matter over among themselves and being informed that they would arrive in San Francisco shortly after eight o'clock, they decided to wait for breakfast until they got to the Oriental Hotel. At Oakland Pier the party was met by Mr. Donald B. Johnson, of the Bank of Canton, Limited, who accompanied them across the Bay to San Francisco. When leaving Oakland Pier there was some difficulty in getting them to surrender their hand baggage to the porter, as they couldn't quite understand how any one could identify their boxes in the young mountain of hand baggage that was ready for transportation across the bay, and they were not again at ease until their hand baggage had been placed in the taxi with them on the San Francisco side.

The party was taken in a taxi to the Oriental Hotel at 859 Stockton St., where a good Chinese breakfast had been prepared and was awaiting them. The remainder of the day, with the exception of the short time required for the trip to the Chinese Consul's office to obtain permits to leave the country, was spent in calling on their old friends in Chinatown, with an occasional side trip for Ah Jin and Ah Bow to the ice cream parlors. In the evening they were guests at the great Chinese Theatre on Jackson Street.

On the following day they were introduced at the Bank of Canton, Ltd., and all arrangements regarding

their financial affairs were satisfactorily made, after which they again departed on an extensive sightseeing trip to the various points of interest in and around San Francisco. Later in the afternoon the party was joined by Mr. Sponegal, of the firm of Sponegal and Hermann, commercial photographers, for a trip through Golden Gate Park and to obtain photographic evidence to carry back to Canton with them to convince any doubting Thomases as to their standing in these United States of America. A number of fine group pictures were taken in the Park with such backgrounds as the Portals of the Past, the Old Sun Dial and the Japanese Tea Garden. Before going on the boat each man was given copies of the various pictures, which will no doubt be retained among their most cherished possessions.

It was the intention to show these Old Timers as many beautiful places in Golden Gate Park as the short time at their disposal would permit, but, unfortunately, the first place to which they were directed was the aquarium and there was no getting beyond that spot for the remainder of the afternoon. Their eyes fairly danced while they watched the many different varieties and species of fish which are displayed there. They had no difficulty in recognizing the different members of the trout family, which speaks of times when their friends in Rock Springs remembered these old "boys" with a mess of trout after a successful fishing trip. Passing by the glass tanks in which the fish are displayed there was considerable argument when they happened to find a certain variety with which they had been familiar. They did not think that there was any reason to be afraid of sharks if the samples on display were the best and biggest that could be procured on the western coast and were sure that China had it all over us for real man-sized sharks. The mosquito fish created some argument as to its possible food value, Ah Chee finally settling the matter by stating that a quart of these