THE OPELOUSAS COURIER.

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY.

OPELOUSAS, : LOUISIANA.

It is painful to think of the harvest of "reminiscences" of twenty or thirty years hence.

The decision of the Navy Department that the Merrimac is not worth raising closes the final chapter in the history of that ship. The pinnacle of its renown was inverted and had to be reached by sinking, that having been the most memorable incident with which it was ever associated.

Sheathing iron ships with an electrically applied coating of copper has proved so successful that it will be generally applied until something simpler is found. It is an American invention, but we feel sure that the true explanation of its effectiveness has not been reached. In realizing what causes the ship's bottom so treated to remain free of marine growths the greater discovery lies.

American trolley cars, built in Pittsburg, are to be run on a line connecting Cairo, Egypt, with the Pyramids. If ever the Sphinx is to break the silence of centuries, he may be expected to speak out in amazement when he sees the natives of the oldest country dodging the electric cars of the newest, while the Nile boats are left tied to the banks and the Egyptian donkeys are turned out to hunt for a living in the desert.

A sympathetic critic of our literature has said that the people of the United States have had to act their Iliad and have not had time to sing it. They have passed through several stages of political progress culminating in the position of a colonizing power, and the intervals between their crises of growth have not been long enough for the settlement of literary canons nor promotive of general literary culture. Until recently the territorial sections in which certain economical and political doctrines were more or less powerful, represented the antagonism of feelings and ideas which prevented unity of national aspiration. Since the Civil War the country has been developing industrial business by means of the railroad systems which have promoted the largest domestic trade in the world; and now, for the first time in its history, it has become politically one by reason of a war which has brought together North and South, as well as East and West, in an intimacy of national relation which did not exist a year ago, observes the New York Commercial Advertiser.

While the dress goods industry of this country is in a somewhat unsatisfactory condition, that of France appears to be far worse situated, observes the Dry Goods Economist. Manufacturers in Roubaix report a very unprofitable business, and though their confreres in Germany and England have also suffered from bad trade, the latter were undoubtedly better off than the Frenchmen. Want of adaptation to modern requirements is the cause ascribed by the Economiste Francaise. While there are establishments in France as well equipped as in Alsace or Saxony, on the whole a much larger proportion of the looms in Germany are of the best and most recent construction. This is largely because the German woolen manufacture is of more recent growth than that of France. It is also claimed by the Economiste that, because of the combination of spinning and weaving in the same mills, France cannot produce the immense variety of fabrics now required so economically as is done in Germany and England, where spinning and weaving are to a very large extent separate industries. This is a matter which has recently begun to receive attention from American manufacturers.

The multiplication of locomotive agencies goes on apace, and is realizing such a forecast with a rapidity never before known. Canal, steam engine, electric and cable cars, bicycle and automobile have not only combined against our four-footed friends for competition in long and short distances, but are competing among themselves for the largest share in the victory. In the most highly civilized countries the beast of burden for long distances has been eliminated by the railway, and for short distances the process will be practically completed by the street car and the automobile. The great trunk lines across this country, the Canadian Pacific Railway across Canada, the trans Siberian line in Asia, the coming railway from Cairo to Cape Town and other great lines yet to be built in Asia and Africa, portend the final displacement of the nomad life which originally gave animals their chief value. The work of elimination is thus being sketched on broad lines by colonizing necessities, and the filling-in process will go on with the development of trade and civilization. Minor details will be adjusted by local conditions, and the same principle that calls for great continental highways of steel will be operative in smaller areas wherever commerce is established.

THE PRETTY AH FONG GIRLS OF HONOLULU.

A Truly Wonderful Story That is Unparalleled Even in the World of Fiction

THIRTEEN CHARMING SISTERS WHOM WE ARE RAPIDLY ANNEXING.

ON BOARD STEAMER OCEANIC,
OFF HONOLULU, HAWAII.
January, 1899.

I WONDER if you ever hear of the pretty Ah Fong girls of Honolulu—thirteen charming daughters of a tremendously wealthy Chinaman and a Kanaka woman, each with a dowry of $350,000?

It is a truly wonderful story and entirely unparalleled even in the world of fiction. For no cause other than a Chinaman's ceaseless longing for return to his native country the father abandoned his wife and family and his millions and lives in seclusion in Pekin. His Sandwich Island wife lives in magnificent style in the sumptuous home which he built in Honolulu, and his numerous daughters are in the swellest society the islands afford and are plainly enough determined upon marriage alliances with the best of the white men who come their way.

Recent tidings from Honolulu give currency to a report that another daughter of Wing Ah Fong is to marry in that city a young American resident. The prospective bride's mother already has the dowry of $350,000 in cash, real estate and securities ready for the marriage day.

This time the bride will be Miss Jessie Ah Fong, and her choice is settled upon Howard G. Morton, a young newspaper editor who has lived in Honolulu for several years. He is a distant relative of ex-Secretary of Agriculture Sterling G. Morton, of Nebraska, and a first cousin on his paternal side of Mrs. Andrew Carnegie. He was a student at Cornell University, and later at Stanford University, at Palo Alto, Cal. He inherited a small fortune when he was twenty-five, and, abandoning reportorial work in San Francisco, sailed on a journey around the world. He never got any further than Honolulu. There, becoming infatuated with the climate and the easy life under the tropics, he decided to remain always. He bought stock in a local newspaper, invested in sugar company stock, and fell in love with Miss Jessie Ah Fong. The marriage, it is said, will take place shortly.

Story of the Ah Fung Girls.

The Ah Fong (written Afong since the family became leaders of fashion in Honolulu) group of thirteen girls is very interesting from several points of view. Everybody who has been in Hawaii, no matter for how brief a time, in the last decade has heard much about the Ah Fong family, and how it has borne the brunt of hospitable entertainment of all visiting naval craft in the harbor of Honolulu. Early in the sixties a young Chinaman named Wing Ah Fong settled in Honolulu. He was an unusually intelligent and genial Chinaman, and with a little capital he soon built up a prosperous business in Chinese pottery, silks and bric-o-brac. He learned the Kanaka and English tongues readily, and before anyone knew it he was the leading merchant in Honolulu. He spent money freely and was well liked by whites and blacks in the quaint old town. He married a young girl of uncertain Portuguese and Kanaka ancestry, but with a dash of English blood somewhere back in her confused pedigree. She was an attractive, energetic and ambitious person for that land of languor and siesta, and the young couple prospered. Ah Fong invested in sugar cane plantations, and in the old times, when sugar plantation stock paid thirty and forty per cent. dividends a year he grew very rich. In ten years Ah Fong was worth over $300,000 and was adding $35,000 a year to it annually. Mr. Ah Fong was a careful, prudent business man, and while his business associates were content to drowse and take no heed of the morrow he was watching chances to buy plantation land cheap from the improvident who abounded in Hawaii.

Swellest Home in Honolulu.

In time the Ah Fong family numbered seventeen—the parent, two boys and thirteen girls. People who used to visit Honolulu ten and fifteen years ago say that it was a memorable sight to see bowling along any of the lava-made roads in Honolulu Papa Ah Fong with his white duck suit and his long cue dangling down his back, driving the horses that drew his complete family circle. The girls always dressed in elaborate gowns of maroons, magentas and scarlet reds, and the wagon load of childish feminine loveliness of every hue in the rainbow made a charming spectacle.

Mr. Ah Fong built the most unique residence in Hawaii. It stands in the western suburbs of Honolulu on a lightly knoll. It is an enormous pagoda, with the oddest sort of piazzas about it. There are sixteen of the piazzas, and they are all over twenty feet wide. Envious parents of other pretty and marriageable daughters in Honolulu say that the Ah Fong parents had these many separate and distinct piazzas built in this fashion purposely to let each daughter in the family have a piazza solely to herself and her particular young men callers of an evening. Be the charge true or false, it is a fact that all the Ah Fong piazzas—so famous in Honolulu—are filled 350 evenings in the year with companies of young men callers, and there are impromptu concerts with mandolins, banjos and a dozen reed instruments not known outside the tropics on the piazzas almost every evening.

Mr. Ah Fong, true to the characteristics of his race, never abandoned his Chinese mode of life. His wife and his fast increasing family might think and do as they liked, for he was an indulgent father, but he never gave up his chop-sticks and his wooden shoes and flowing garments of gaudy silks. Occasionally when this wagon load of gaily gowned femininity drove down to the Honolulu wharf to give a welcoming hand to people from the steamer or man-of-war he would please his daughters by putting his long black cue under his derby hat. He was the soul of hospitality, and he loved to give big spreads at home.

Ah Fong Sails Away.

In the spring of 1892 Mr. Ah Fong planned a visit to China with his eldest son, about seventeen years old. The man had become very wealthy—in fact, one of the four richest men in the Hawaiian Islands. His investments in stock in the sugar companies had paid themselves out six and seven times over. He made over $300,000 in one deal in sugar stock to Claus Spreckels, of San Francisco. Hundreds of acres of land on the Island of Maui that had cost him a few thousand dollars had become worth many times more. He was popularly rated at about $4,000,000, with an income of over $70,000 a year, and the estimate seems to have been just.

In the summer of 1892 Mr. Ah Fong had so arranged his business that he and his son sailed away for Hong Kong. When six months had passed and the rich Chinaman had not returned there was some comment. But when a year went by and he was still absent all Honolulu was interested. Mrs. Ah Fong and her lovely daughters never spoke on the subject—at least, to outsiders. Then the Chinese in Honolulu began to get news from relatives and friends in China, and the information became general in the city that Ah Fong had gone to visit in Pekin, and that by the laws of China he came very near going to prison for a long term for going to a foreign land. The gossip had it also that Mr. Ah Fong had paid a fine of many thousands of dollars and had settled down with a good-sized fortune to live all his days in Pekin. How much of this is mere gossip and how much history no one can say confidently. At any rate the Ah Fong family in Honolulu believes the story as to the fate that befell Papa Ah Fong in Pekin. Moreover, the Honolulu and San Francisco newspapers published the gossip about Mr. Ah Fong and no one has yet contradicted them.

Mrs. Ah Fong and her children have gone right along, apparently heedless of the absence of the husband and father. The estate is well managed and is in such shape that it earns its dividends with little personal care of the family. When the first daughter was married to Captain Whiting it was decided that each girl should have her share of the family patrimony when she married. Mrs. Whiting got $100,000 in cash and $250,000 in property and securities. So it was then settled also that the dowries were to consist of money and property or securities to the value of $350,000 each.

Girls All Winsome, Some Beautiful.

Eight of the thirteen girls are unusually attractive and would be much observed in any general assemblage of young women the world over. All the Ah Fong girls are petite and have peculiarly graceful ways, winning voices and a certain vivacity that has no comparable counterpart in American life. They range in height from five feet two to five feet seven, with the average at about five feet five. All the Ah Fong girls are good singers, and have the love of the Hawaiians for string music. For years the girls have been famous for their waltzing. Many a naval officer has sailed away from Honolulu harbor with fond remembrance of his first appreciation of the soulfulness and beauty of Strauss' waltzes after a party at the Ah Fong house. Five of the girls are unusually handsome and would win attention for that reason alone in any society. Two or three of the girls have the Chinese almond-shaped eyes quite marked, and they feel dreadfully about it. But they are the very jolliest of the Ah Fongs, and by the graces and accomplishments that they have evidently studied to overcome any facial defect, they are particularly popular. Two more have a faint suggestion of slanting eyes, but their superb complexions and limpid dark eyes make them particularly prepossessing.

All the Ah Fong girls have dark hair. Four have deep olive complexions, five are as dark as American brunettes and four have light complexions. They all have small hands and feet. One or two of them are what would be called fairly fat, but none of the others can weigh over 130 pounds.

Stylish and Picturesque.

But it is the manner of dress and the chic style of the Ah Fong girls that make them such attractions to naval officers and prominent resident Americans in Honolulu. Possessed of great wealth and a natural genius for color effects, the Ah Fong girls have from the time the eldest first went out to dancing parties till the youngest a year ago made her debut in Honolulu society at the age of fifteen worn some of the most heart-crushing gowns man ever looked upon. A modiste from Paris has been kept at a good salary for over ten years to live near the Ah Fong house and devote her talents solely to the mother and the unmarried girls in the family. Once every two years she goes to San Francisco, thence across the continent to New York, thence to Paris, where she spends some thousands of the Ah Fong fortune in great boxes and cases of the latest Parisian feminine vanities and conceits.

Cultivated and Up to Date.

Unlike all other young women in Honolulu, the Ah Fong girls have cultivated the ways of the Americans and English. That is a characteristic they have inherited from their Mongolian ancestors—the knack of knowing what will please the Caucasian race and then setting about to accomplish it. The Ah Fong girls have become proficient tennis players. Hundreds of officers in the American and British navy know what good tennis players the Ah Fongs are, and a man-of-war no sooner touches Honolulu than the young men aboard who have been there before begin plans for getting early to the hospitable Ah Fong home.

The Ah Fongs' social position in Honolulu has been assured for ten years, and since the father went to China never to return to Honolulu the position of the girls has been settled beyond argument. The marked attention the naval officers have shown the girls has given them a prestige that their money could not buy even in mercenary Honolulu. The agreeability of Mme. Ah Fong, and her smiles of happiness upon all her daughters' attendants have been potential in making the Ah Fongs the favorites they are. The pagoda mansion has always been kept open to the girls' friends.

Captain Whiting's Happy Home.

Miss Henrietta Ah Fong, who married Captain Whiting, U. S. N., and now at Manila in command of the Monadnock, is considered the most charming in the family. She is a pretty brunette, and is the only book reader among the girls. While all the girls have had so much attention from naval officers, it was nevertheless a nine days' wonder in Honolulu and San Francisco when the announcement went out. Captain Whiting was to wed Miss Ah Fong. To be sure, she was very bright and pretty and would adorn any home, and—and she had an absolutely sure dowry of $350,000, and may get more. But then there is the persistent thought that possibly old Papa Ah Fong and his queue and his clattering wooden shoes may come out of China one day on a visit to his daughters. Then, too, one cannot suppress the wonder whether any of Mamma Ah Fong's Kanaka blood will ever assert itself in future generations. The naval officers, even those who had repeatedly been guests at the Ah Fong mansion, shook their heads and talked in whispers among themselves.

But the marriage, which took place in May, 1894, has proved a perfect union. Captain Whiting and his wife have a beautiful home among the cocoanut trees of Honolulu, and their devotion to each other is only marred by their common devotion to their three-year-old girl. Mrs. Whiting is one of the most beautifully gowned women among the naval circles anywhere.

Three Other Married Sisters.

Miss Alice Ah Fong, who married Arthur M. Johnstone (formerly a reporter in St. Louis), the Associated Press representative at Honolulu, is the tallest and most dignified of the girls—that is, if one may speak of dignity in connection with these jolly, singing bits of femininity of the tropics. Mrs. Johnstone owns a great block of stock in the Hawaiian Sugar Company, and the annual income from that alone is over $22,000. Besides, her dowry included a coffee plantation and business real estate in Honolulu. Mrs. J. Alfred Morgan, wife of a prosperous lawyer in Honolulu, who came from Leavenworth, Kan., was Miss Jenny Ah Fong until her marriage last January. Her dowry consisted of cash, a block of stock in the Maui Commercial Sugar Company and real estate at Waikiki, near Honolulu. Miss Helen Ah Fong married a young San Francisco lawyer named George Stewart in August, 1897, and went on a tour of the world with him. They will be back in Honolulu next spring. Meanwhile a very handsome home for the young couple is building in San Francisco.

But there are nine other Ah Fong girls to gladden the hearts and homes of youth and chivalry. Moreover, there is a vast amount of stock in sugar companies, interests in cocoanut groves, thousands of acres of fertile soil on the islands of Hilo and Maui, stock in Hawaiian steamboat lines and Honolulu real estate to be given in dowry to the girls as fast as they choose their husbands. And above all old Papa Ah Fong has recently sent word from Pekin that he will probably never leave there again, and Mamma Ah Fong is not at all likely to so much as sail out of Honolulu harbor.

THE TWO MR. SPRINGS.

Amusing Complications Which the Same Name Caused at Montauk.

There were two men of the same name in the Twentieth Infantry at Camp Wikoff, says the New York Press. One, hailing from Massachusetts, is a sergeant of Company I, while the other, a Pennsylvanian, is a private in Company M.

Soon after the regiment arrived at Montauk Point, Sergeant Spring began to get very flattering letters from a young lady living in a small Pennsylvania town; also express packages, which were none the less welcome for being unexpected. At the same time Private Spring was deciding that he must be able to charm at a distance, because a Massachusetts girl was writing to him in a particularly affectionate strain, and wanting to know if there wasn't something she could send him.

Private Spring thought of a lot of things that he could use if he had them, but as the fair correspondent had omitted to sign her last name, it didn't seem feasible to write for them. Presently both Springs began to get letters complaining that no answers had been received to questions asked in the writer's previous letters.

At the height of the tangle Sergeant Spring was walking along the road one day, when a comrade called his name. He and another man ahead of him both walked back, asking what was wanted.

"Is your name Spring, too?" asked the sergeant.

"That's what," replied the other man. "Francis Joseph Spring."

"Well, that's me, too," said the sergeant.

"Say," he added, as a thought struck him, "do you get letters from a girl named Mollie?"

"No, I don't," replied the other. "Not as many as I ought to."

"I do, more than I ought to," said the sergeant. "I guess they're yours."

"I've got some from Sarah that I'll trade for 'em," said the private, grinning.

"That's a go," answered the Massachusetts man, and all was satisfactorily arranged, except for the contents of sundry packages, which had been devoured.

After that the two Springs met every other day and held a mail exchange.

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