There Will Be No Civil War!

Lincoln paced the halls of the White House late at night. He paced rapidly with lanky legs, his long arms swinging carelessly. He was worried, deeply worried. He usually could ask the counsel of his cabinet, excellent men, judicious men, men of divergent opinions carefully considered. This time he couldn't ask. The question was too explosive. He told himself he wasn't yet sure what his decision would be but in his heart he knew. The decision was made and it was roiling in his breast, lengthening his long strides, his arms flailing as he paced the halls. He was going to accept the dissolution of the Union. He was going to accept the secession of South Carolina.

The bombardment of Fort Sumter was the event that required Lincoln's decision. It was the turning point, the greatest crisis in America's short history, the crisis a consequence of the imperfections in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Joseph Henderson had been at Sumter. He was one of the men who answered the call to arms, who was eager to overturn the Union he hated. "Hell yes, I hate 'em. They sit in their big buildings in their dirty Yankee cities and think they can tell us to give up our slaves, our way of life. I love the South an' I won't be told what I got to do!" Joseph owned no slaves and he owned very little land. The way of life he loved served the plantation owners well, him and his family not so well. Joseph and his brothers worked their farm. growing what they ate and a little more to trade for what they couldn't grow and "We make out all right. We ain't beholden to nobody and and I'll be damned if a passel of Yankees come down here and tell us what to do. I fought 'em an' I'll keep fightin' 'em 'til they give hit up!"



"I was at the Citadel when Colonel Chesnut called for volunteers" Joseph went on, "and I volunteered. It was easy! The Yankees never put up much of a fight. We won an' then I went home."

Lincoln dreaded telling even his wife. He also dreaded telling his cabinet secretaries, in particular Seward. Of course there were many Americans who would cheer his decision, the many who were shallow pacifists, the men who were slaveholders and their sympathizers. White supremacy was the norm in Lincoln's America, a thing few thought shameful, but Lincoln was one of the few. He took the words of the Declaration at face value, delighting in the clarity of Jefferson's prose. Lincoln knew that his nation had never believed that "all men" meant exactly that. Americans thought that all men meant only white men and men of property but for Lincoln this was not enough, not good enough for the conscience that burned painfully in his breast like a bed of coals but also lit up his eyes.

Given all that, and for many it was not a given, why then no war? It did not simply follow. But it was so that just as white men should not force blacks to their will, neither should Union men force Secessionists to their will. And more, Lincoln knew the outcome of a war to compel a continued Union would have a worse outcome than permanent secession. Allowing his beloved unified nation to split into two would be painful but in the long run better. In this he was truly farseeing but that did not give him peace, not yet.

Four months had passed between Lincoln's election and inauguration and they had been turbulent. Eight states had proclaimed they would secede and six had one so, forming a new nation, the Confederacy. Jefferson Davis, a US senator, had been selected to be its president and left the Union senate. The final step toward civil war had been the attack on Fort Sumter at Charleston, South Carolina. This attack was made only thirty nine days after Lincoln's inauguration.

This act of war on the United States could have only two outcomes. The North, the residual United States, the Union, would make war on the South, the Confederacy, or agree that the Confederacy would stand. Would there be a civil war? It seemed unthinkable that the Union would acquiesce. It was up to Lincoln to either lead the nation to war and attempt to preserve the Union or surrender to its division.

Whatever his choice, Lincoln was stepping out over a void. He first admitted his choice to his wife. "Mary, I'm not going to lead the country into a war with the South. I will be hated and mocked for this and Congress may prevent me but the people have no idea how bloody the war will be and how dubious the outcome."

"Abraham, I am shocked at you!"

"It's not the war's immediate outcome, Mary. We have the men and the factories and the raw materials. We have everything to prevail in a war but what a killing it will be! Many, many will be killed and after we have won we will still have so many enemies who will hate us with a passion, hate us for killing their brothers and hate us for taking their way of life from them."

To his Secretary of State William Seward he said "I'm not going to do it, William. I won't ask the Congress to make war on the Confederacy." This new name for what had been members of the Union, even members of Congress, was bitter in his mouth. "It's a war that can't be won. Oh, I know well we have the wherewithal to defeat them on the field of battle but what then? Better to let them go their own way and make our separate way in the world. We will be better off without them. They are based on agriculture, the production of raw material, and that based on slavery! It breaks my heart to see the Union sundered but better that than what will follow such a war."

“You have persuaded me, Mr. President. I doubted you at first hearing and my heart breaks also but I think your refusal to make a war the wiser choice. But how will we persuade the Congress? And the people as a whole?"

Response to Lincoln's decision, to decline war and accept secession as a fait accompli, had been mixed. It had not been calm. There were many who were pleased and some who were angry. The northerners who would have been called or drafted to fight the war, the poor who would have died on the battlefields, were mostly relieved at Lincoln's decision. The upper class who ruled the poor were divided. Some of them were pleased with Lincoln's decision, thinking it wise, some were aghast at the rupture of the United States, and some thought of the lost opportunities to profit from a war.

New Yorkers were split. The working class was pleased and relieved. They would have to do the fighting and were worried that they would be drafted. The traders of Wall Street were drawn by the boom that a war would bring. Overall the nation's tenor supported Lincoln.

His thoughts had been persuasive since before his election, his speech at Cooper Union as an example. He then supported the abolition of slavery and he supported abolition now. He wanted the Union to be a nation of freedom. He however thought now that compelling the new Confederacy to accept abolition was a way sure to fail. He was persuasive again, addressing what remained of Congress, asking that they to accept the Confederacy, to accept secession. "No war, I entreat you! We will go our own way, the way of freedom, and in the end and in our own way we will prevail."

Britain's Benjamin Disraeli was delighted. He had a vision of the Confederacy as a new empire for England. "Once again they will be our colonies! They will supply the mills of Manchester with cotton! Closer than India by thousands of miles and the cotton will be cheaper too! Colonies yes, but we will not rule them, and we will not have to use arms. They will be our economic colonies and we will be spared the difficulties of conquest and rule. The East India Company used to rule our American colonies and now they will again. The American Colonies will be ours again, only some of them, yes, but ours again with the hard work already done!"



Manchester, already using cotton from India, grew to twice its capacity with cotton from the Confederacy. Already using the labor of the English underclass and the raw materials produced by Indian coolies, it was only natural to now profit from the enslavement of blacks. After all, it had been English ships, the slavers, that had delivered the Africans to the Americas! Cotton from the South enriched the plantation owners but to a greater measure enriched the mill owners of England. And the cheap supply of raw material from India was ensured by competition from the American plantations.

The slaves, the coolies and the mill workers suffered. The planters knew they too were being exploited but accepted this. They were the rulers of the Confederacy and exulted in that. They had their mansions, their mint juleps and their magnolias! But the English industrialists ruled over all of them and quietly smiled.

The Union didn't have to fight a war, institute a draft, to send thousands to their deaths, and to blockade the South. They didn't try to compete with the English fabric mills. The North did compete with Manchester but more focused its efforts on developing the iron ore of Lake Superior, making it into steel in Illinois and Pennsylvania, using the steel for the rails of the transcontinental railroad that was being built, from both ends at once! And used the steel for the mass manufacture of much more. Notably, it went into millions of the new design rifles from the Springfield Armory in Massachusetts. The Union was becoming an industrial giant big enough to challenge England. The Union boomed. The Confederacy plodded. England hovered above both, her ruling class prospering.

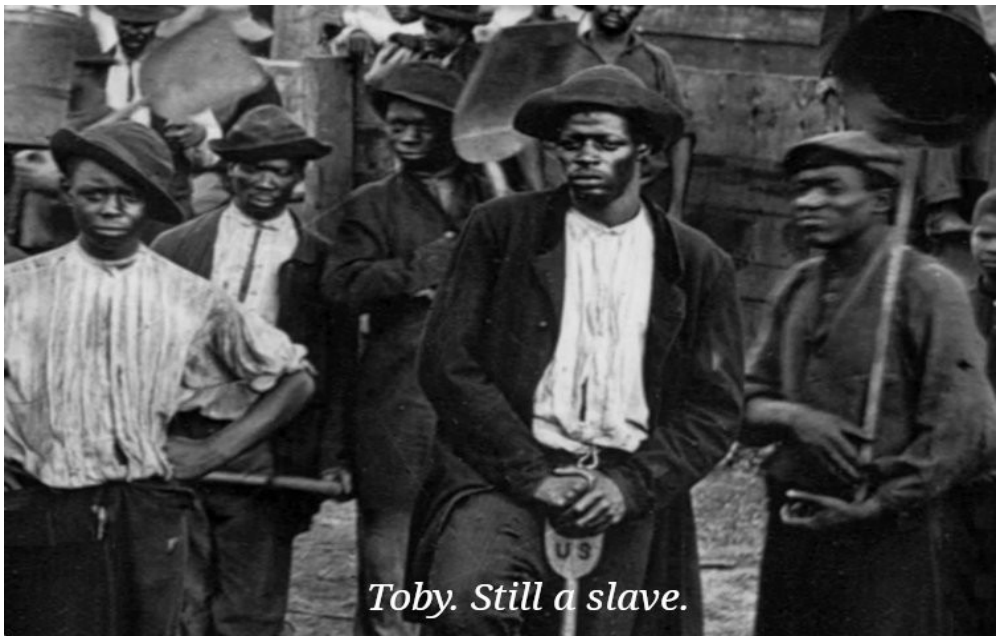
The import of slaves from Africa to America had ended decades earlier but slavery in the South didn't diminish, it grew. Slaves were bred like oxen and their population grew greatly. The planters grew richer, the slaves suffered, and many of the unneeded poor whites of the South moved west searching for better opportunities. Some of course stayed and struggled as they always had in the agriculture-based economy that was the South.

Joseph Henderson went along with other White Trash, as they had been called by the ruling class of Britain since the days of indentures. This time they formed a sort of army, an almost unarmed ragtag militia carrying the hunting rifles of the South, and poorly officered - what band of rebel illiterates could institute a proper officer's corps? And so they walked west. They bravely called their band The Indentures. Uneducated, they had no idea what an indenture actually was.



Things went as expected until they came to central Texas. Texas was a slave state and had joined the Confederacy but Texas was different. There was cotton and the slavery that went with it in east Texas only. In central and west Texas beef took its place. Slavery didn't mix well with beef.

Texas had seceded with the rest of the South and became a member of the Confederacy. It had been part of Mexico but had had its own revolution, then joined the Union, then seceded to join the Confederacy. It was still a slave state. There was no farming to speak of in its arid western half. What there was was beef and cowboys.



Toby. Still a slave.

Beef was the economic basis of west Texas but had to be driven to shipping points in the North, to the Yankees! The Yankees again! They were inescapable. Texas was a poor state, huge in size but small in opportunities, with a small owning class ruling over cotton in the east, beef in the west, which was almost a wilderness, isolated from the rest of the continent, still populated by hostile Comanches. It had no place for the poor whites that migrated westward looking for opportunities, for a new home. It did have a place for black slaves. Surprisingly, some of them were treated well. These lucky ones had to be. A field hand picking cotton or tobacco was one kind of slave but a black cowboy was different. He had to be an excellent horseman and had to be trusted in stampedes and dust storms. He was more of an equal to the white cowboys and they treated him almost as one. The poor southerners marching west saw this and were not pleased. They were angry that Texas had a place for black slaves, treated some of them well, and had no place for unskilled poor white dirt farmers. The Indentures moved on. They were angry but they kept walking.

Toby had been sold in a batch of other field hands from a cotton plantation in Georgia. Toby was his field hand name, given to him by his owner, and he hated it. The owner admitted that the main business of the plantation was the breeding of more slaves. Cotton was just a sideline and "Too much work, too little profit" said the owner. This batch of slaves was unusual. It wasn't bound for Mississippi but for Texas. The planter had never sold slaves to Texas before but money was money and niggers were niggers so he didn't mind. The slaves didn't know their destination either. All they knew was what they could see and

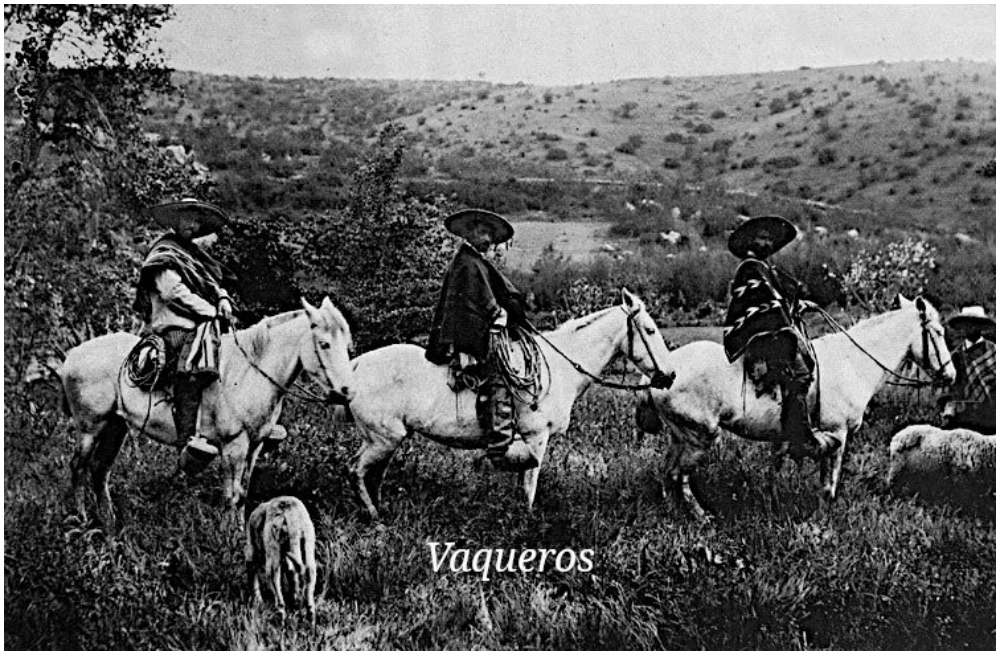
that was a march in chains from Georgia to the docks of New Orleans, then boarding an old sailing ship. The voyage took a week, they were still chained on deck and below. They counted the days and some of them, not too many like on the transatlantic slavers but some, died and the bodies were thrown overboard. The owner and the ship's captain didn't care. The loss of life was just part of the business of slavery and was figured in. Slaves to work cotton in east Texas and to drive cattle from west Texas to Kansas City were needed, that was all.



What none of the slaves knew was some of the field hands that survived the voyage frm New Orleans to Galveston would have a much better life. The cotton fields that stretched from Arkansas to San Antonio were much like the cotton fields of Georgia and Mississippi but the climate was different in west Texas. It was much drier so the land changed and the work to be done changed too: punching cattle instead of chopping cotton. The control the owners had over slaves changed too. They were never chained, they walked free, and Mexico where there was no slavery was nearby. Escape to Mexico was a real possibility, escape without capture.

Toby was lucky: he was sent west to San Antonio to see if he could be used to work cattle. He was ordered to learn to ride a horse, was thrown several times, made it out for a bad job and ran. He went south, hiding among the people who had been Mexican, then Texan, then Americans, and now were told they were Confederates but they had never been anything but Mexican and never owned slaves and didn't liked the slave owners. They taught Toby the simplest Spanish and gave him a new name and took him to the border with Mexico,

near Laredo. He was now Antonio, no longer Toby, named by his new friends for the city from which he ran. He now saw himself as a free man and crossed the Rio Grande to Mexico where he was free. No slavery! He tried riding again, trying harder. It went better this time and Antonio became a vaquero.



Eventually Antonio was told he would be part of a cattle drive from Mexico to San Antonio. He was afraid to go back into a slave state but his new friends told him "No hay problema, ¡eres un hombre libre!" and so he overcame his fears and went. This is how he crossed paths with Joseph Henderson. They didn't talk, at first they didn't interact at all, but for Henderson it was enough to see a black man riding proudly on a good horse talking as an equal to light-skinned Mexicans and free as a bird. It set Joseph off.

"Lookit ‘at! Damn! That nigger is all high and mighty, ridin' that horse an' talkin' that jabber they talk 'round here and actin' like he's white man! But he's jus' a nigger!"

Joseph Henderson was angry and aggrieved. There was no good place for him in the Confederacy. He had walked a thousand miles bringing with him only what he could carry, all hot and sweaty, burdened down, walking for weeks, and here was this black man ridin' a horse and lookin' down on him! What kind of place was this? "Sho 'nuff not God's country! Sho 'nuff not!"

Antonio was looking down at Joseph and saw what kind of man he was looking at: he saw white trash. Antonio could not help himself. He grinned down at Joseph, his teeth flashing bright in his dark face. This set Joseph to cursing loudly and Antonio rode off, still grinning.

Texas was enormous and seemed spacious enough to absorb all the Southerners but the opportunities for them were severely limited. They longed for the golden lands of California and Oregon but they too would be closed to them. They had heard men talk of El Dorado, the land of gold. They had heard about the gold rush of 1849. But the Gold Rush was history and California and Oregon had joined the Union as free states. The Union was building the Transcontinental Railroad and had the manufacturing and the population to build

two thousand miles of track and the railroad naturally ran to California. What might have been a military confrontation between the Union and the Confederacy turned out to be an economic one. How a civil war would likely end was never proved but the outcome of the economic struggle was that the Union would prevail, and without bloodshed. The British did well too. The Confederacy would exist as a country, yes, but a poor one. The Indentures blindly pressed on.

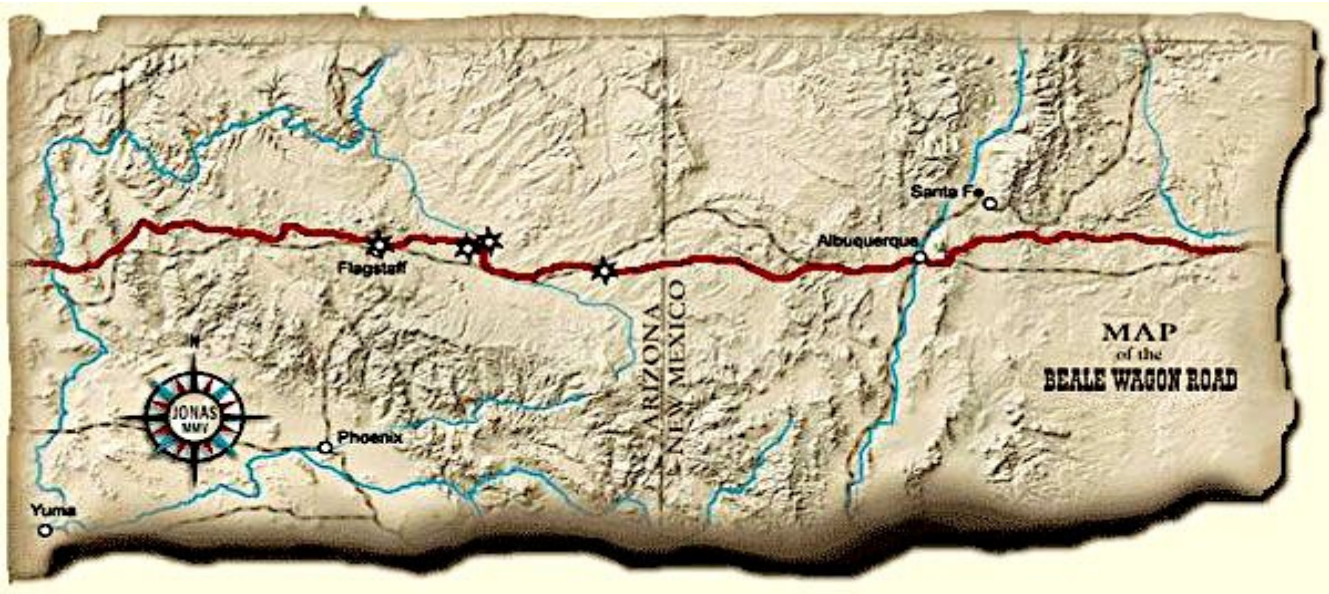
They left Texas finding no home there and passed into the New Mexico Territory. It was dryer and harsher and many of the people didn't even speak English, they spoke Spanish. It was nothing like the Confederacy. And like Texas, it was unwelcoming. It was not a new home for the migrants. The Indentures had now found a true desert. West Texas had been a comparative oasis. They didn't know the trail's name, they didn't even know the language, but it was called Jornada del Muerto, the Journey of the Dead Man.



They left the Rio Grande and followed the trail north. It was completely unlike Georgia, or the Carolinas, or Arkansas, or even Texas. It only took eight days but there was no water and half of them died of thirst. They found no water at all. There was a spring six miles off the trail but they missed it.

When they staggered into Santa Fe they found they were not welcome there either. Who would want them? Hundreds of poor emigrants from the Confederacy and poorly led too. They asked for a map. "¿Qué? ¿No tienes mapas? What? You have no maps?" and then they learned there were hundreds of miles more to cover, south and then west. They were told they should have taken the Beale Wagon Road as it was many miles shorter and had reliable water and The Indentures began to realize how badly they had chosen their way, how badly they had been led. "Wagon Road? We should have wagons! Why don't we have wagons?" and they were angry and fearful and doubted if they would ever find their El Dorado. "Where's this land of gold? We're jus' dying off! N' when we get to California we

won't be 'nuff usn's to make 'em take us!" But they had no alternative so they pressed on again. When they reached the Beale Road they pooled what money they had, Union money, Confederate money was no good there, and bought wagons. Now at least they were a wagon train.



The people of California wouldn't want the migrants that called themselves The Indentures either. Californians called them Southern White Trash and were determined to stop them. The older migrants had been all in favor of secession and then found there was no place for them in the South. There seemed to be no place for them anywhere. Young and old they all felt betrayed. They were angry, they were violent, they were illiterate, and they were welcome nowhere, They had nowhere else to go so they kept going, always further west. Many had heard of the golden land called California, they told others about the land where gold could be found everywhere, and they became a small second gold rush headed for the golden land. The outcome of the confrontation was predictable: they would lose miserably. Casualties would be few because fighters were few on the migrant side and the Californians, more numerous and better equipped, would be merciful to the losers when the outcome became obvious.

There would eventually be an armed clash between the migrants from the Confederacy and the Californians At a place on the Colorado River called Beale's Crossing but it would be much too small to be called a war. This series of skirmishes fought one after another on the same hot and dry slope on the west side of the river was a struggle between the well-situated wealthy and their laborers on the high ground against the badly led uneducated poor. In this case the wealthy and powerful had sided against slavery, which was unusual, but so they had done.

Before the fights the leaders of the migrants could see what was going to happen. They waited on the east side of the Colorado and sent a rider to appeal to their old homeland for a military intervention. They asked President Davis and General Lee to march the Army of Northern Virginia through Texas and New Mexico to threaten California and compel California to accept the migrants. This was seen by Davis and Lee as a fool's errand and they refused.

The Californians barred the way to the state and they finally fought. There were small

battles between the Californians, wealthy and well armed, and the poorly armed poorly led migrants. The Indentures lost miserably. It was as if foreordained.

There was no place for them in California, just like Texas and New Mexico, but there were the apparently empty lands of Arizona. They had lost heart, saw no way forward, so collected themselves and turned back. True to its name Arizona was arid. They straggled east, seeking water, suffering from thirst again, seeking a place where they might live, where they might at last make a home.

The migrants were beyond embittered as they drove their wagons to southern Arizona. It was hot and dry, a poor prospect for settlement, far south of the well traveled Beale Trail they had taken to California. But southern Arizona appeared empty. There were native peoples, Papago and Apache, Pima and Maricopa, but the natives avoided the white people completely. These natives had heard about what had happened to the Navajo and the Apache and wanted none of that. This time the migrants from the Confederacy would not have to fight for land.

They were parched dry and exhausted from their long journey when they finally found water. There was a confluence of two streams, streams too puny to call rivers in the green moist East but they called them rivers anyway, naming them the Salt and the Gila. They ended their migration, making a permanent camp, eventually giving it a defiant, rebellious name. They named it The Phoenix.

Lincoln was reelected by a wide margin. far greater than his first presidential electoral victory in 1860. The voters were thanking him for avoiding a war. Four years earlier they had been divided by the fear he would plunge them into one. Now they praised him for avoiding one.

On the evening of April 14, early in his second term, President Lincoln went with his wife to see a play. It was unusual for Lincoln to go out in the evening as he usually worked late into the night. It also was an unusual play for an American president to attend. It was named Our American Cousin, about an uncouth Yankee that inherited an English estate and traveled to England to claim it. His English relatives, very proper indeed, found him to have poor manners and to dress "like a bumpkin". Asked by William Seward later if he had enjoyed it, Abe said "Didn't much like it. Condescending. But what can one expect? After all it's an English play!"

It hadn't taken Lei Yi long to decide to board the ship to Old Gold Hill. He had already fled famine in the countryside near Nanking, walking the many days travel to Shanghai, not because he expected a better life there, not even because he thought he would have a full belly there. He walked to Shanghai because as he ate the last of his rice he could find no reason not to and because walking was easier than doing nothing. Lei Yi ate the last of his rice on the fifth day of his journey. He had nothing to eat for the last four days.

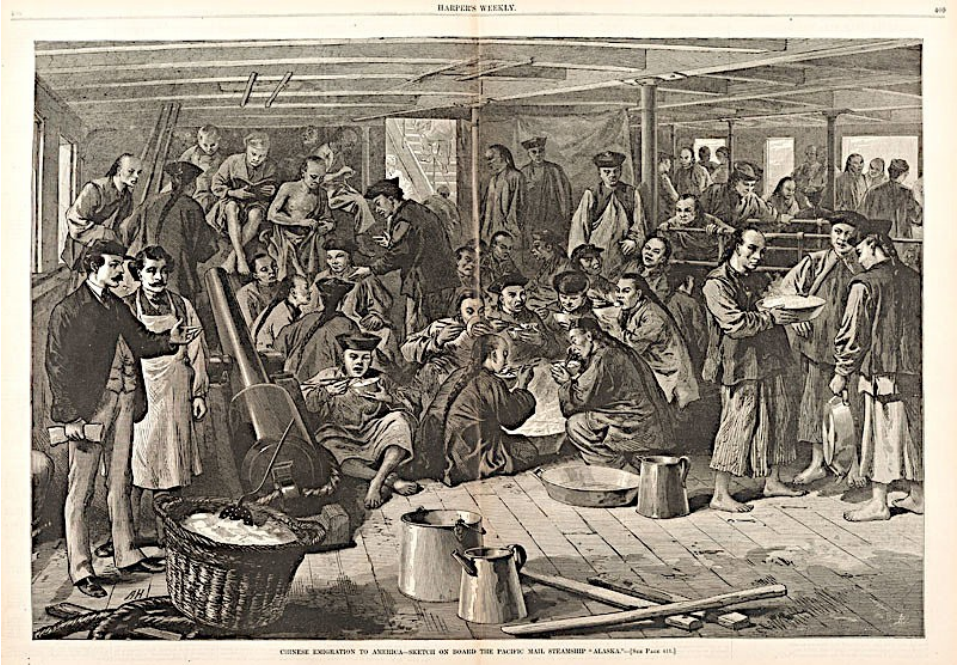
In Shanghai Lei Yi didn't find rice to fill his belly, not right away. There was rice to be had but he had no money. There also was a man walking the street, calling out that he had free rice for anyone that would board a ship, a ship from America, and make the voyage to Old Gold Hill. Lei Yi was afraid of Americans, frightened by the thought of travel on the ocean, and distrusting of anyone who would give rice for no money, but he was hungry. He walked up the strange walkway made of boards that swayed from side to side and seemed flimsy and unsafe and at the top of the walkway was shouted at by an American in words he did not understand and he stood there, confused and submissive. A Chinese man came up and told him to walk to a hole in the floor and go down the ladder to a place where he would be given rice. Lei Yi did as he was told and found more men in this strange room who spoke

a kind of Chinese and he was given rice. He ate hungrily and listened to these men.

"No, we don't go Old Gold Hill right first. We go Hong Kong, move to new ship, big fast ship with fire in belly. That ship goes Old Gold Hill. Ship name Alaska."

Lei Yi wasn't the only newcomer. There were others who knew nothing just as Lei Yi knew nothing. They were all eager to learn about the voyage they were setting out on. They were fearful too and Lei Yi found this reassuring. He listened and learned about the voyage as he finished his rice.

He and all the other men would sail to Hong Kong, change to a steamship and then cross the Pacific to San Francisco. The trip across the ocean would take a week and then he would be in a new land. That was intimidating but what did he have to lose? And the men he was traveling with had interesting stories. Some had been to this new land! So began his trip to America. He would not return to China for twenty years.



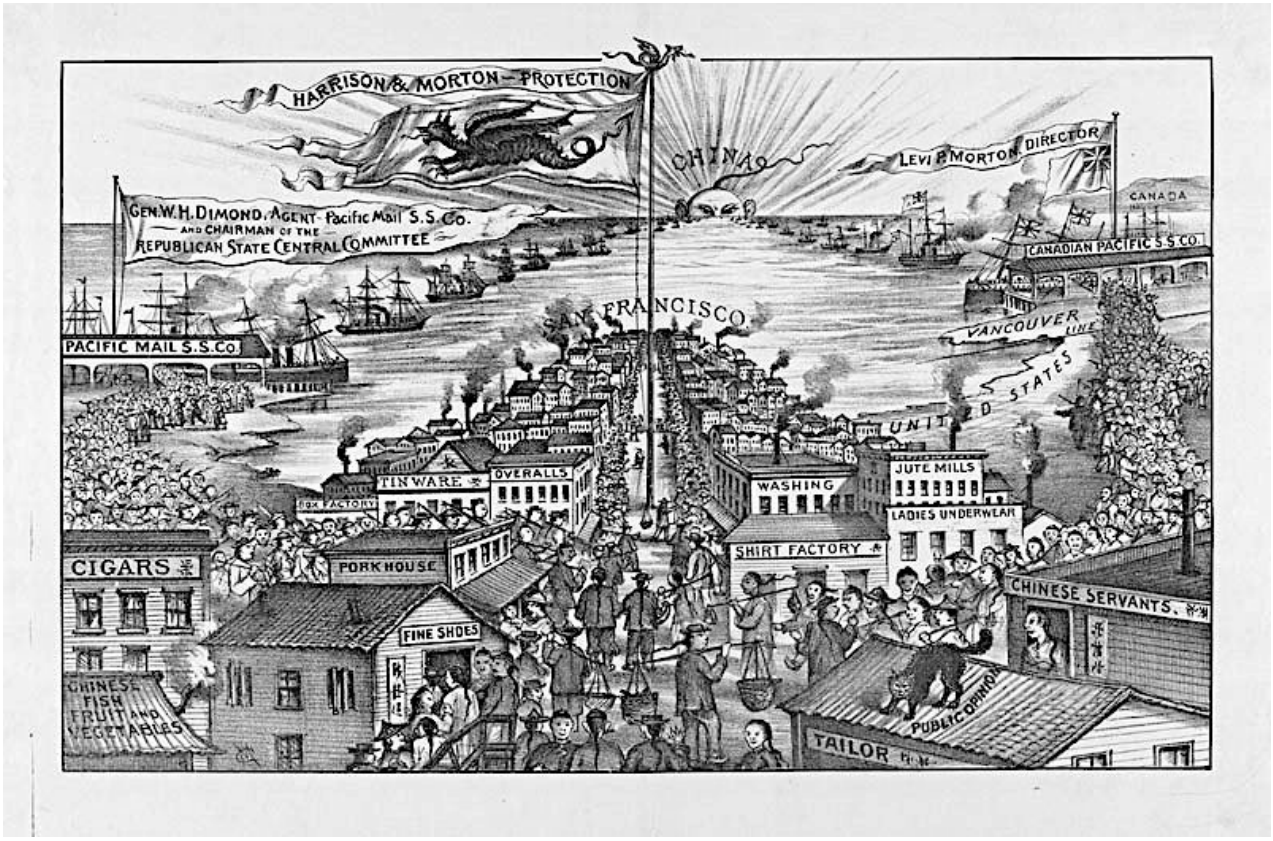
CHINESE EMIGRATION TO AMERICA—SKETCH ON BOARD THE PACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP "ALASKA."—[See Page 413.]

The crossing took two weeks, not one. There was a tai-fun and the Alaska was blown north, then south by the great winds but they stayed afloat, a miracle thought Lei Yi. Conditions in steerage were rough but there was always rice for those that could keep it down and so much time to tell their stories. Almost all the men were from Sze Yup and spoke a Chinese dialect Lei Yi could make out well enough to follow. Some of these men had worked on the railroad and gone back to tell their family and friends about the many railroad jobs that paid well and came with abundant food. They had recruited Lei Yi's fellow travelers and they all expected to work on the railroad. Lei Yi had never seen a road made of rails and had only the vaguest idea of what it was and what it was for but none of that mattered. There would be rice and work that paid money and no wars like in China. Lei Yi thought fortune had smiled on him when he boarded the ship in Shanghai. Even in the room overfilled with unwashed men, even seasick, Lei Yi felt peace in his heart. It had been a long time since he had felt peaceful.

After the long voyage the ship came to its landfall. They ran up onto the deck as land became clear on the horizon. It grew higher and Lei Yi could see a gap in the land and the

man next to him said "the bay of Old Gold Hill" in Chinese and another said "Golden Gate" in English. Lei Yi told himself "This will be my new home"

He walked down the gangway he had walked up two weeks before, onto the streets of San Francisco, trying to keep up with the men he knew, men who could take him to his new job helping make the road of rails. He was almost swept away in the crush of men on the street, many Chinese but many others: black men, brown men, even some white men, and he was carried along with his friends to a building with open doors. There was a sign with big letters he couldn't read but it said "Hiring Hall Central Pacific Railroad Co."

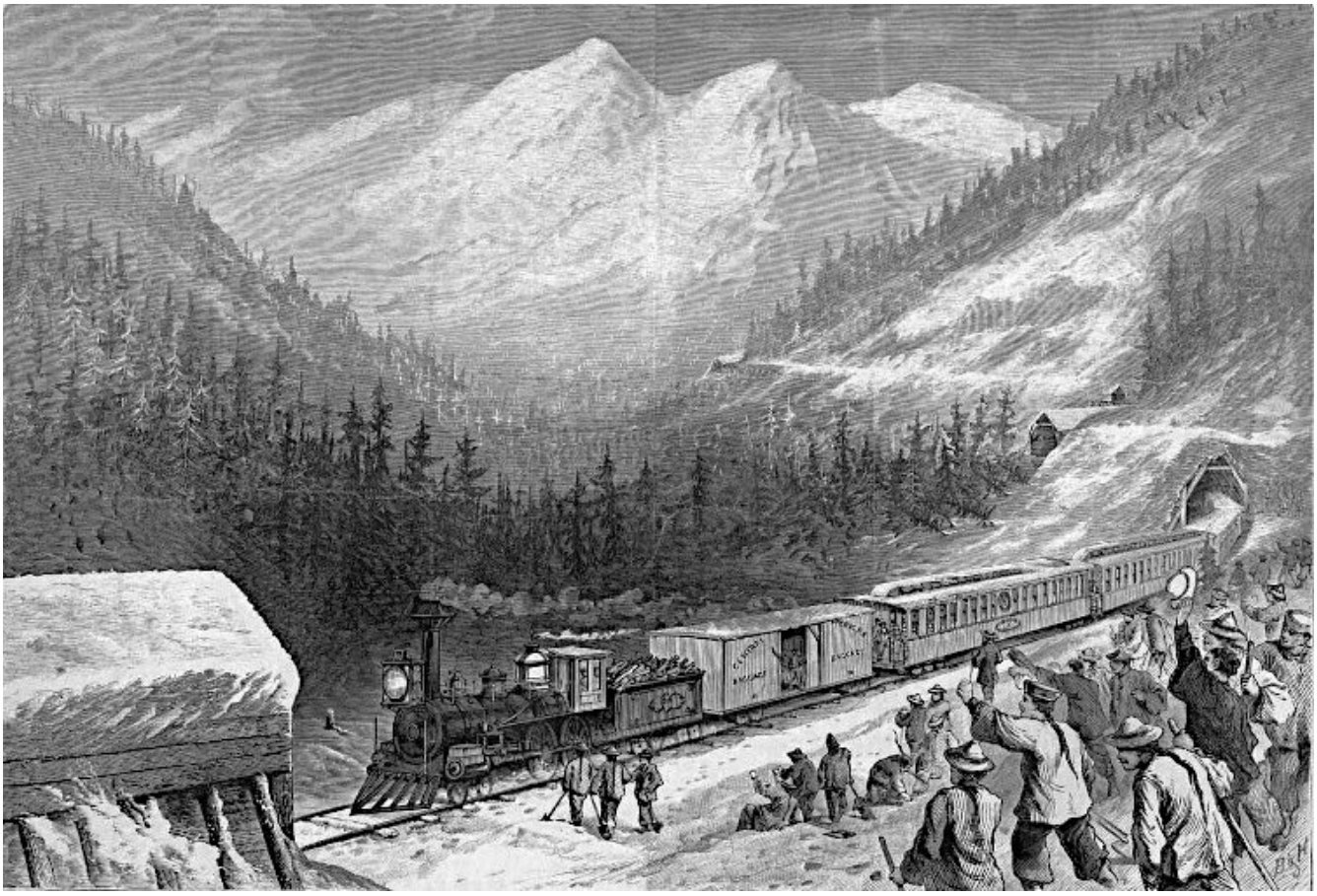


Lei Yi was hired. Of course he was. He was hired because he was Chinese and would work for one dollar a day and meals. The Chinese were good workers. The railroad men knew how good they were and so hired them preferentially. They worked hard for their dollar a day and were glad they weren't in China. No warlords and no wars. Plenty to eat. There was no language barrier because the men that told them how to build the railroad were Chinese too.

Of course the owners weren't Chinese. They were Americans, mostly from Eastern states, Union states, and had lots of money. They were very pleased to hire Chinamen for a dollar a day, as pleased as the Chinamen were to get that dollar. Lei Yi knew nothing of this. He did know that America was better than China, even for Chinamen.

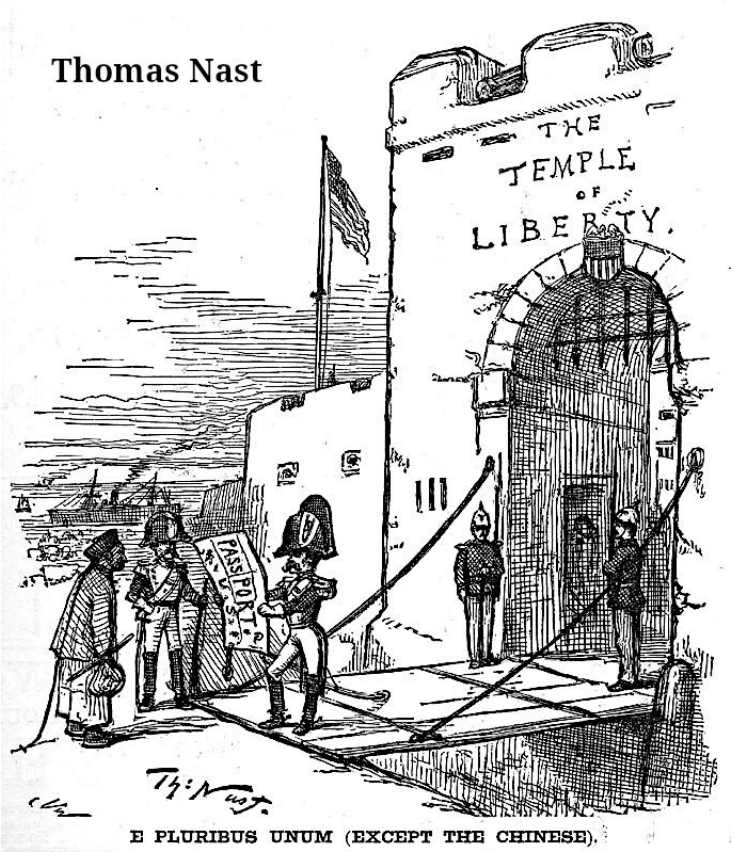
So Lei Yi became a railroad worker, helping build the next section of the railroad that when finished would run from the wharves of San Francisco to Promontory, Utah. He never learned English. He had no need to. He was always in the company of other Chinese, never associating with other men, white men, American men. He earned his dollar a day.

It was arduous and dangerous. The railroad was built over Donner Pass in the Sierras. There was cold and snow much of the year and the work was inherently dangerous. There was much blasting and it was done with liquid nitroglycerin. Dynamite was not yet available in America so nitroglycerin was used despite its dangers. Working with heavy iron rails and heavy timbers and building high trestles are always dangerous as well. Many workers, Chinese and others, were injured or killed as the railroad was built. But it was the best work available for even the white men, and the colored men and especially the Chinese.



Despite the dangers and the difficulties Lei Yi worked for the Central Pacific until their section of the Transcontinental was finished, then for the next company, and the next. He became a foreman of Chinese, now earning two dollars a day! He became a respected leader among them, always careful, never injured. He worked for the railroad companies for twenty years. Then he heard about a new law.

There was talk among the workers, the Chinese and the coloreds and even the whites, that the Chinese would have to leave, to go back to China. Surely this couldn't be! Lei Yi had been a good worker. He had broken no laws. He had been a quiet man. But it was true. He was Chinese and the Chinese were hated for their quiet law-abiding hardworking, even submissive nature, so they were now to be excluded.



Lei Yi had no living family in China. He had very little money saved. He had worked for his dollar a day, then two, for twenty years and had only the muscle in his arms and back to show for it. And now he boarded a ship in Old Gold Hill and went back to China. It was a great loss for him and all the other Chinese laborers. It was a loss for the Union too.

So Lei Yi went back to China. The Transcontinental Railroad transformed the Union, connecting the vast distances and making manifest destiny a reality. The Union became a great and powerful nation, eventually becoming the United Kingdom's rival. The Confederacy remained an agricultural nation, a producer of cotton and tobacco, an economic colony of Britain. Abraham Lincoln served out his second term as president of the Union and became thought of as one of the greatest of Union Presidents. Jefferson Davis served out his term as president of the Confederacy but was not reelected. Antonio lived free and happy as a vaquero in Mexico, marrying a fine brown senorita and raising a family. Joseph Henderson lived out his years in Phoenix, planting one of its first orange orchards, which thrived in the heat of what became know as the Valley of the Sun.

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