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The Story of AMALGAMATED

By THOMAS W. LAWSON, of Boston



HERE will be set down, in the series of articles of which this is the foreword, in as simple and direct a fashion as I can write it, The Story of Amalgamated Copper and of the "system" of which it is the most flagrant example. This "system" is a process or a device for the incubation of wealth from the people's savings in the banks, trust, and insurance companies, and the public funds. Through its workings during the last twenty years there has grown up in this country a set of colossal corporations in which unmeasured success and continued immunity from punishment have bred an insolent disregard of law, of common morality, and of public and private right, together with a grim determination to hold on to, at all hazards, the great possessions they have gulped or captured. It is the same "system" which has taken from the millions of our people billions of dollars, and given them over to a score or two of men with power to use and enjoy them as absolutely as though these billions had been earned dollar by dollar by the labor of their bodies and minds. Yet in telling The Story of Amalgamated, the most brazen and voracious maw of this "system," I desire it understood that I take no issue with men; it is with a principle I am concerned. With the men I have had close and intimate intercourse, and from my knowledge of the means they have used, and the manner in which they have used them, and the causes and effects of their performances, I have no hesitation in stating that the good they have done, the evils they have created, and the indelible imprints they have made on mankind are the products of a condition and not of their individuality, and that if not one of them had ever been born the same good and evil would to-day exist. Others would have done what they did, and would have to answer for what has been done, as they must. So I say the men are merely individuals; the "system" is the thing at fault,

Donaldine Cameron and the Chinese Slave-Trade in America

By WILL IRWIN

THE Presbyterian Chinese Mission of San Francisco occupies a hillside street-corner just where dirty, picturesque, iniquitous Chinatown abuts on the American quarter of the city. It is a strange house, suggesting even in its externals its strange mission. In architecture, it is square, solid, respectable. Flowers blossom along the window-ledges; there are glimpses of chintz curtains and of feminine home-touches. Yet these windows are barred like those of a jail. The one entrance is a heavy oak door, double-locked and bolted. Before you enter, the guardian of this door scrutinizes you through a lifted curtain and then opens a tiny crack to ask what you want. It suggests some of the mysterious, terrible convents of Eugene Sue and the anti-Jesuit novelists.

These bolts and bars and precautions are not to keep the occupants of the house within, but to keep its enemies without. This Chinese Mission is a castle besieged in the time of peace. For twenty years it has been fighting the unwritten law of the Chinese and the written law of the land, in obedience to the higher law. For thirty years it has waged a war relentless and vigorous against an institution which the people of the United States believe in their blindness to have been wiped out by the Fourteenth Amendment—human slavery.

Stranger still, it has been a woman's war, and most strange of all, its Napoleon, its victorious general, is a young, gentle, and attractive woman—Donaldine Cameron, not yet in her thirties, and head of the mission. She has taken more than a man's chances against Chinese vengeance. Weekly, sometimes daily, she has gone into places where only she and the police have dared to go, and taken slaves from their masters by force—the only law that is final with the Chinese. And in the end, she has broken the back of the vilest evil in evil Chinatown.

Others have helped in the work, but it has centred about this gentle-mannered, well-

bred slip of a Scotch girl. Among all the people of the Far West, cast as they are into individual moulds, there is no more curious figure than she. Among all the strenuous, adventurous Western lives, there is none more deeply imbued with the True Romance. The East does not know her at all. The Far West has forgotten her—partly, perhaps, because all prophets are without honor west of the Rockies, and partly because the conditions under which she works are a part of Californian life. To understand what she has done, it is necessary to understand these conditions.

In the first place—and this is a thing that few Americans understand—slavery is not prohibited in the United States. It is merely not sanctioned. A slave may be bought, sold, and held, subject to his own consent. Refusal of consent is the only legal bar to negro slavery in the South.

In China, on the other hand, bond-slavery of women is a deep-rooted institution. It was transplanted to America early in the Chinese occupation. It has always been; that, to the Chinese mind, means that it will always be. Our objection to slavery is one of the most bewildering among the incomprehensible ideas which the Chinese find prevalent in America.

Usually, the Chinese slave-woman in America enters bondage in China, being sold by her parents, seized as an orphan, or stolen. To-day most of the slaves held in San Francisco are domestic servants; but at the time when Donaldine Cameron began her work, two out of three were held for immoral purposes. The free Chinese woman who chose such a life was the exception; the slave was the rule.

In the complex, mysterious, underground life of Chinatown, these slaves kept the place they had always held in China, with the exception that they were infinitely more valuable, especially after the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. In early



Photograph by Arnold Genthe.

MISS DONALDINE CAMERON.

days, a slave was worth less than \$1,000. After 1882, the price was doubled. Now, with their entrance still further restricted, the market price for a girl of fourteen is about \$3,000, for a baby, \$2,000. The last transaction of which the Mission people have any certain knowledge is the sale of a four-year-old girl for \$2,050.

When, twenty years ago, the Home Missions began their work in Chinatown, it seemed easy to break up this traffic. It was supposed that slavery in the United States had been killed by the Emancipation Proclamation. The missionaries rescued a few girls from brothels by force and the "king's keys," and then ran against the problem of consent. Though a woman were in the life against her will, though her body, when they found her, was bruised and broken from the violence of her masters, she would struggle against her rescuers and go back to slavery at the slightest threat from the Chinese.

The Mission people learned, in time, a bit of the curious Chinese psychology which ever opens, like one of the Chinese puzzle-boxes, on something new and unexpected. The cement of Chinese society is fear. Afraid of their masters, the slaves were still more afraid to leave them. The familiar stock lie of the Boxers—that missionaries are people who boil babies' eyes for their incantations—these and other stories of the same nature were told daily in the brothels. Also the slaves were made to believe in the absolute power of their masters. Years later, Miss Cameron heard one of the proverbs from this lore of fear: "If you escape to heaven, we will drag you down by the feet. If you escape to hell, we will drag you up by the hair."

The early missionaries had first to seize the girls—reach them by sudden raids on their quarters. In the beginning, this was not so hard as it became later, for the Chinese had

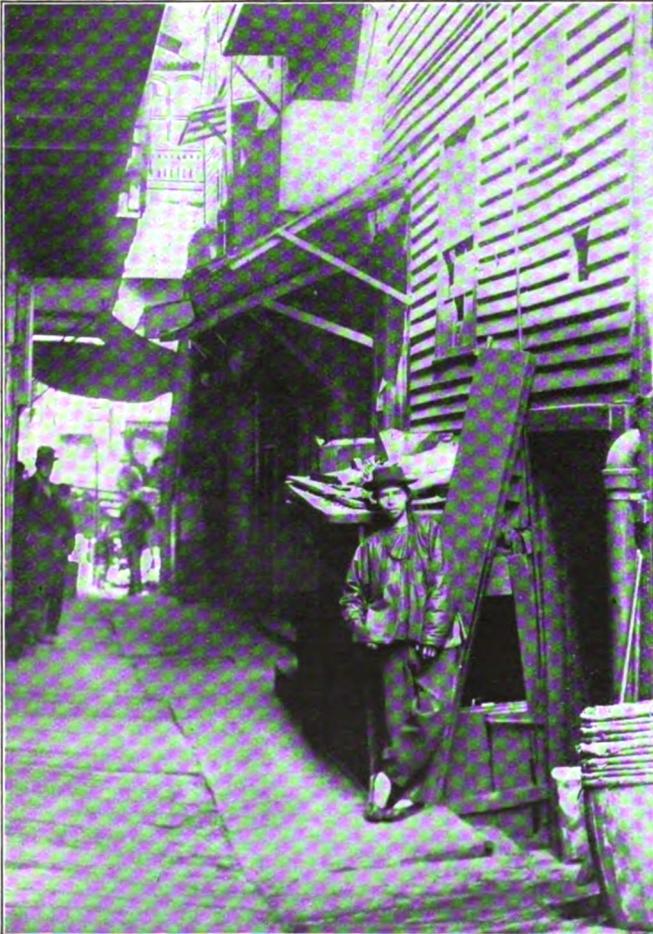
not yet learned that they had anything to fear from the white women. The real trouble came when the missionaries and their charges were summoned into court by the Chinese masters and their smooth, unscrupulous white attorneys. There, the slaves were confronted by their masters. Again and again, after declaring privately that they wished to leave the brothels and stay at the Mission, the girls would begin to tremble when their owners faced them, would break down on the stand and swear that they wanted to go back; would go back, indeed, to a slavery hopeless from that time forth, since such girls were given no second chance of escape.

This for the grown girls. Soon the missionaries found that they could not count on keeping even the babies. An owner would

swear that the child was his daughter or his niece and ward; and to support this he would present a swarm of perjured witnesses, bought at the union rate for Chinese testimony—\$5 for a safe job, a little more for a dangerous one. Ruling in accordance with the law, an honest judge had only one thing to do—give the baby back. Now and then, when it was shown that the child had been abused, and when she had the childish nerve to go on the stand and say that her “relatives” lied, the judge would rule out the Chinese testimony on the ground of unreliability and hand the child over to the Mission. In the nature of things, such cases were rare.

The work was begun by several women, notably a Miss Culberson, remembered in San Francisco as an unbeatified saint; and ten years ago it passed on to a young girl of twenty, just off a Southern California farm—this same Donaldine Cameron.

When the sudden death of Miss Culberson put the work in her hands, Miss Cameron had been involved in only one or two Chinese cases. The managers of the Mission were doubtful about her capacity; the white watchmen of the Chinese, who were becoming a little anxious over the frequency of the rescues, laughed in their sleeves. Within the year, these watchmen were being discharged because of the great number of girls lost to their employers. Miss Cameron's campaign was aggressive from the first. Where the other workers had depended upon a police force not above suspicion of graft, and always half-hearted, she depended upon herself. Knowing that the legal problem could be solved in time and that the slave business, being strictly a business, could not stand uncertainty, she made rescue work her first concern. She became lawyer, detective, and above all, raider.



Photograph by Chas. Weidner.

A Highbinder in San Luis Alley.



Photograph by Arnold Genthe.

CHINESE MISSION GIRLS RESCUED FROM SLAVERY.

When, out of the secrecy of Chinatown, came news of a slave who wanted to be free, Miss Cameron would work in the dark until the girl was located, and then strike suddenly. Sometimes she went all alone on these raids; more often she depended for help upon woman associates, or, if the Chief happened to be friendly, upon trusted policemen. She was always there in person, and always in the lead.

Not one attempt in four was a success. Chinatown of that time was built three stories above the ground and from two to four stories beneath it. Even now, when the Board of Health has cleaned out the cellars in great measure, one who knows his way can go through subterranean passages from one end of the Chinese quarter to the other. Every house has its sliding door, its false passage, leading into this maze.

In this stage-setting, Miss Cameron had a hundred adventures, most of them melodramatic. One of these has been told as a short story, with a few high lights added to give it artistic value. The samples given here are the sober truth.

Two years ago, Miss Cameron, with Sergeant Christensen, of the Chinatown Squad, raided a den in St. Louis Alley, a narrow

thoroughfare in the worst depths of Chinatown. They eluded the white watchman and made for the door of the marked house. Christensen, putting his shoulder against it, gave a heave; the hinges broke. The screaming and chattering of Chinese women, which had begun with the attack, sounded farther and farther away. The raiders found the lights burning, a tea-urn singing in the corner, a guitar with its strings still quivering, but there was no one in sight and neither was there any visible exit to the room. Experienced in these things, they knew there was a secret passage somewhere, and they went over the wall foot by foot, pressing and tapping. They were about to give it up and the sergeant had stepped outside, when Miss Cameron, rummaging under a couch, found a place that sounded hollow. She pressed with all her might and a rough panel fell away. Beyond it was darkness.

Too excited to think of consequences, Miss Cameron rolled bodily through and fell six feet. Christensen heard her call from the bowels of the earth, and ran to the hole. He handed down a lighted candle. There was a passage, stretching farther away than they could see, and so narrow that to thread it one must stoop and present his shoulder side-



HERE THE MISSION GIRLS ARE TAUGHT BOTH CHINESE AND ENGLISH.

wise. Where it widened, they found a Chinese hag, lying face downward. Without



Photograph by Arnold Genthe.

AH CHING, AN ORPHAN, WHO WAS SEIZED BY A SLAVE-TRADER AND RESCUED BY THE MISSION.

ceremony, Christensen rolled her over. She was the mistress of the house. Under her was a trap-door, padlocked.

Snatching the keys from this woman's belt, Miss Cameron opened the trap and she and Christensen dropped into the foul-smelling blackness. They found another passage, more scanty than the first. It sloped downward for a story, turned two or three times, ascended by two flights of stairs as steep as ladders and ended in a deserted room with a door in the farther wall. Against this the sergeant threw his shoulder. It gave way, and the fresh air poured in on their faces. They were on the street, only six feet from the door by which they had entered in the first place. A casual watcher told them afterward that two minutes after they broke into the house six Chinese women and two men had come through this last door, run across the street, and disappeared. The girl they were seeking is still in the hands of her Chinese masters.

Once Miss Cameron followed a five-year-old slave to a Chinese camp in the foot-hills of the Sierras. She drove ten miles by night with one Healey, a country constable. They hitched their horse outside the gambling-house where the girl was known to be, and peeped through a hole in the screen which shielded the door. The child was



THE PRESBYTERIAN CHINESE MISSION BUILDING IN SAN FRANCISCO.

sitting on a table, rolling cigarettes for six gamblers, who were playing fan-tan. Overthrowing the screen and rushing on the little girl, Miss Cameron snatched her up, and Healey held back the gamblers at the point of his revolver. As they backed through the door, a Chinese seemed to rise out of the ground. He drew a revolver and fired point-blank at Miss Cameron. The Chinese slowness with a gun, traditional in the West, saved her, for Healey had time to strike it up so that the bullet splintered the ceiling. They drove ten miles to civilization, and all the way Healey kept his revolver in hand against pursuit and attack. That was probably Miss Cameron's closest call.

On another raid Miss Cameron looked through a grating into a house whose door her police assistants were breaking down. She saw a girl rush out of the screaming, chattering crowd of Chinese women and run toward the rescuers with her arms outstretched. It was a fatal blunder. The mistress of the house saw that this was the girl who wanted to be rescued, knocked her down before Miss Cameron's eyes, dragged her away by the hair. When the rescuers broke in, the house was deserted—that secret panel again. They saw the girl no more, but a month later a rescued slave brought

news from the under-world that the slave-master had beaten her to death that night ;



Photograph by Arnold Genthe.

SUEY LEEN, WHO WAS SOLD BY HER MOTHER TO PAY A GAMBLING DEBT; ESCAPED ALONE TO THE MISSION.

had, in his anger, destroyed that valuable piece of property as one in a fit of passion might smash a costly vase. This murder went un-avenged. The police could do nothing. They cannot convict a highbinder who does open murder in broad daylight, such are the dark and devious ways of Chinatown. How then could they reach a crime like this?

After that, whenever a Chinese messenger, at peril of his life, brought news of a girl who desired to be rescued, the Mission people always sent back warning that she must make no sign, that she must cry and seem to struggle when they took her away. As a further precaution, they adopted the system of sending back with the informer some token for identification, such as a handkerchief of peculiar pattern or a flower to be worn in the hair.

In time, the Chinese began to spirit away marked girls, taking them to the country or to other Pacific Coast cities. Then the work

broadened and became dangerous. Making rescues in Chinatown called for nerve and quick, decisive action, but it was not, after all, especially dangerous. The twenty thousand Chinese in San Francisco, surrounded as they are by nearly four hundred thousand whites, half of them Chinese haters, know that the quarter would be torn down were they to offer violence to a white woman. In the rural settlements, this fear is slighter. The incident of the foot-hill camp is an example of something that did happen more than once and might have happened every time Miss Cameron went out on a country rescue.

On one occasion Miss Cameron fell afoul of the highbinders—the blackmailers and paid murderers—of Chinese society. She rescued a girl belonging to one of their companies or “tongs.” It was, perhaps, the most troublesome case she ever handled. One morning, in the progress of the legal fight over this girl, she found on her window-ledge a dynamite bomb whose fuse had gone out.

This case, by the way, involved a romance and a tragedy. Generally, information of a girl who wants to escape is brought by some Chinese man who has fallen in love with her. The man in this case was Jim Len, a cook in a family hotel, a respectable Chinese and a heathen. The girl was located, identified by means of a marked handkerchief passed to her by Jim Len, and rescued. The owners were rich, and they made a stubborn fight in the courts. This slave turned out to be a woman of character. Her masters could not terrify her. She swore that she wanted to leave the brothel, and the Mission won. A year later, Jim married her. By this sign, the Tong knew who had carried the information that robbed them of a \$3,000 piece of property.

They caught him one night a few doors away from the Mission and shot him twice in the back. He



Photograph by Chas. Weidner.

WHERE SLAVE-GIRLS ARE KEPT IN BONDAGE THIS PRECAUTION IS TAKEN.

crawled to the door of his friends, rang the bell, and lay down to die.

"Don't let them spoil my wife," he said to Miss Cameron before he lost consciousness.

He recovered, however, although the wound will kill him in the end, for it brought on consumption. When he could be moved, his wife took him home and sewed to support him until he got to work again. He is cooking once more and awaiting calmly the end of his disease.

Now these are strenuous doings for any woman in this latter age of peace; and one might suppose that they had made of Donaldine Cameron a strenuous woman, probably a fanatic of the Carrie Nation type, undoubtedly masculine. Imagine instead a slim, dainty gentlewoman, of quiet and simple ways, a touch of old-fashioned quaintness in her manners and a bit of a Scotch lilt in her voice. There you have her externals. Of all the strange things about this unusual woman, none is stranger

than her resistance of masculinity and fanaticism. Through it all, she has kept herself for herself. She had been making her daring rescues for seven years before she ever let a newspaper have her photograph for publication; even then she did it under pressure that amounted to compulsion, and she speaks of it yet with horror. She, who has faced down the highbinders—she tells as her most harrowing experience the time that she appeared before the Police Commissioners on a busy Saturday night to ask that Jim Len might have permission to carry a revolver.

And some day, after you have seen her in the Home, surrounded by the love of the Chinese girls who call her Mother, seen her in court fighting for their freedom and their virtue, seen her on her rescues, doing brave things with the quick decision of a soldier,



Photograph by Arnold Genthe.

FONG SEEM, NICKNAMED "TEA ROSE," THE BEAUTY OF THE MISSION.

her type dawns upon you. She once explained herself in a rare moment of confidence.

A friend said to her:

"I believe that you enjoy the rescue part of your work."

"My dear," said Miss Cameron, "my ancestors were Highland cattle-thieves. It's the spirit of them in me. It's the real, true, love of adventure. I've tried to make myself believe that I love it because I'm doing the Lord's work, and I suppose that I have a good deal of the missionary spirit or I couldn't bear the burdens of this place; but really, it's the cattle-raiding Cameron does it!"

That is the type; the adventurer, lover of brave deeds for their own sake, of danger for the song it starts in the blood. Love of

adventure is common among moral heroes; there is a bit of it in every noble character. Livingstone did not let the light into Africa for pure love of Missions, nor was it sheer devotion to Calvinism that made Cavalier and his Huguenot hill-men defy all France. The faith of such people may be as fierce as that of a devotee, but where another prays, they act—and for the love of action.

This leaven in her character, with the nobility that it implies, has done a great deal for Donaldine Cameron. Nowhere is mission work more sane than in her Mission. In keeping it sane, she has experienced at times trouble, only second to her trouble with the Tongs. From twenty to fifty girls are housed in the institution. To educate them, to guide their queer, Chinese impulses, to bring them, in the end, and if they wish, to Christianity—these make up the daily grind of her life. The occasional raid has been for her only an exciting diversion.

In the very beginning, she laid down this rule, expressed in her own way:

"I will never make Christianity go with shirt-waists."

This rule she has never broken. The girls are dressed and fed and housed in their own fashion, with only those modifications that make for health.

Says Miss Cameron again:

"I am not sure that our ways are at bottom any better than theirs. Christianity is different, but I have sentiment enough in me to see that this world will be pretty dull when we're all alike. The Chinese have a sense of beauty in common things which most of white people lack. Besides, I'm caring for their bodies as well as for their souls. They are never well when they wear our clothing and eat our food."

Once more she says, concerning the aim of her work:

"If it should ever be that one of the girls wanted to become a missionary, either here or in China, I would do all I could to help her. For the rest, my object is to see them married to good, self-respecting Chinese men, either Christian or heathen. Their religion doesn't make much difference, if they are good to their wives.

"When a man wants to marry one of the girls, I am careful, just as a mother would be; if he is a good man, I am glad to let her go. Twenty of the girls have been married from our Mission. We have never had a mixed marriage. I do not believe in them.

"I never try to rescue a grown slave-girl, who is living the life willingly. Why should I? There are good women and bad among the Chinese as well as among the whites; some like the life because of the pretty clothes and the sweetmeats and the leisure and the excitement of it. I *do* try to rescue every girl who wants to leave, and every baby held for slavery. I never touch a domestic slave who is well treated. They are well housed and fed, and worked no harder than an American servant. They will be allowed to marry and go free when they grow up. With these, slavery is only a name and is none of our business. It is different with domestic slaves when they are abused."

I have said that the slender hands of Donaldine Cameron have throttled the slave-trade in San Francisco. Her raids and her continual battles have made it unprofitable as a business. A slave-master is chary of taking the risks that she has created with a \$3,000 piece of property. Moreover, there is a clause in the new Exclusion Act providing that no woman leading an immoral life shall be admitted into the country under any pretext. This does not cover the whole case, but it helps. Interested as the people of California were in the anti-Chinese legislation, few knew that Miss Cameron and her sister missionaries were behind that clause. They worked for it for two years, carrying the case even to the White House.

There are still slaves held in the brothels of Chinatown, but the number is small and will decrease constantly. The shame of Chinatown is past.

That shame of Chinatown stood for half a century. Tourists, going through the quarter to admire its picturesque beauty, heard of the traffic from the guides and held up Pharisee hands; but they passed it by on the other side. The police knew of it, lived near it day after day, but they, too, passed it by. The rulers of California and of San Francisco knew it, but slave-women and rescue-workers have no votes, so they debated on railroad oppression and passed it by. The Federal Government heard of it, but Washington is a long way from San Francisco, and Washington passed it by. Only a few women, chief among them a young Scotch-American gentlewoman, paused on the Jericho road and faced down the thieves and gathered in the unfortunates of Chinatown—and behold! the slave-trade in America is no more.