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Requiem of Old San Francisco, by Will Irwin**

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FRANCISCO ***

The City That Was

A Requiem of Old San Francisco

By Will Irwin

This is a recast of a newspaper article of the same title published in The Sun April 21, 1906, three days after the Visitation came upon San Francisco. It is here published by special permission of The Sun. For the title, I am indebted to Franklin Matthews. W.I.

**"I'd rather be a busted lamp post on Battery Street, San Francisco,
than the Waldorf-Astoria."—Willie Britt.**

The old San Francisco is dead. The gayest, lightest hearted, most pleasure loving city of the western continent, and in many ways the most interesting and romantic, is a horde of refugees living among ruins. It may rebuild; it probably will; but those who have known that peculiar city by the Golden Gate, have caught its flavor of the Arabian Nights, feel that it can never be the same. It is as though a pretty, frivolous woman had passed through a great tragedy. She survives, but she is sobered and different. If it rises out of the ashes it must be a modern city, much like other cities and without its old atmosphere.

San Francisco lay on a series of hills and the lowlands between. These hills are really the end of the Coast Range of mountains, which stretch southward between the interior valleys and the Pacific Ocean. Behind it is the ocean; but the greater part of the town fronts on two sides on San Francisco Bay, a body of water always tinged with gold from the great washings of the mountain, usually overhung with a haze, and of magnificent color changes. Across the bay to the north lies Mount Tamalpais, about 3,000 feet high, and so close that ferries from the waterfront take one in less than half an hour to the little towns of Sausalito and Belvidere, at its foot.

Tamalpais is a wooded mountain, with ample slopes, and from it on the north stretch away ridges of forest

land, the outposts of the great Northern woods of *Sequoia sempervirens*. This mountain and the mountainous country to the south bring the real forest closer to San Francisco than to any other American city. Within the last few years men have killed deer on the slopes of Tamalpais and looked down to see the cable cars crawling up the hills of San Francisco to the south. In the suburbs coyotes still stole in and robbed hen roosts by night. The people lived much out of doors. There is no time of the year, except a short part of the rainy season, when the weather keeps one from the fields. The slopes of Tamalpais are crowded with little villas dotted through the woods, and these minor estates run far up into the redwood country. The deep coves of Belvidere, sheltered by the wind from Tamalpais, held a colony of "arks" or houseboats, where people lived in the rather disagreeable summer months, coming over to business every day by ferry. Everything there invites out of doors.

The climate of California is peculiar; it is hard to give an impression of it. In the region about San Francisco, all the forces of nature work on their own laws. There is no thunder and lightning; there is no snow, except a flurry once in five or six years; there are perhaps half a dozen nights in the winter when the thermometer drops low enough so that in the morning there is a little film of ice on exposed water. Neither is there any hot weather. Yet most Easterners remaining in San Francisco for a few days remember that they were always chilly.

For the Gate is a big funnel, drawing in the winds and the mists which cool off the great, hot interior valleys of the San Joaquin and Sacramento. So the west wind blows steadily ten months of the year; and almost all the mornings are foggy. This keeps the temperature steady at about 55 degrees—a little cool for the comfort of an unacclimated person, especially indoors. Californians, used to it, hardly ever think of making fires in their houses except in a few days of the winter season, and then they rely mainly upon fireplaces. This is like the custom of the Venetians and the Florentines.

Give an Easterner six months of it, however, and he, too, learns to exist without chill in a steady temperature a little lower than that to which he was accustomed at home. After that one goes about with perfect indifference to the temperature. Summer and winter, San Francisco women wear light tailor-made clothes, and men wear the same fall-weight suits all the year around. There is no such thing as a change of clothing for the seasons. And after becoming acclimated these people find it hard to bear the changes from hot to cold in the normal regions of the earth. Perhaps once in two or three years there comes a day when there is no fog, no wind, and a high temperature in the coast district. Then follows hot weather, perhaps up in the eighties, and Californians grumble, swelter and rustle for summer clothes. These rare hot days are the only times when one sees women in light dresses on the streets of San Francisco.

Along in early May the rains cease. At that time everything is green and bright, and the great golden poppies, as large as the saucer of an after-dinner coffee cup, are blossoming everywhere. Tamalpais is green to its top; everything is washed and bright. By late May a yellow tinge is creeping over the hills. This is followed by a golden June and a brown July and August. The hills are burned and dry. The fog comes in heavily, too; and normally this is the most disagreeable season of the year. September brings a day or two of gentle rain; and then a change, as sweet and mysterious as the breaking of spring in the East, passes over the hills. The green grows through the brown and the flowers begin to come out.

As a matter of fact, the unpleasantness of summer is modified by the certainty that one can go anywhere without fear of rain. And in all the coast mountains, especially the seaward slopes, the dews and the shelter of the giant underbrush hold the water, so that these areas are green and pleasant all summer.

In a normal year the rains begin to fall heavily in November; there will be three or four days of steady downpour and then a clear and green week. December is also likely to be rainy; and in this month people enjoy the sensation of gathering for Christmas the mistletoe which grows profusely on the live oaks, while the poppies are beginning to blossom at their feet. By the end of January the gentle rains come lighter. In the long spaces between these winter storms, there is a temperature and a feeling in the air much like that of Indian summer in the East. January is the month when the roses are at their brightest.

So much for the strange climate, which invites out of doors and which has played its part in making the character of the people. The externals of the city are—or were, for they are no more—just as curious. One usually entered San Francisco by way of the Bay. Across its yellow flood, covered with the fleets from the strange seas of the Pacific, San Francisco presented itself in a hill panorama. Probably no other city of the world, excepting perhaps Naples, could be so viewed at first sight. It rose above the passenger, as he reached dockage, in a succession of hill terraces. At one side was Telegraph Hill, the end of the peninsula, a height so abrupt that it had a one hundred and fifty foot sheer cliff on its seaward frontage. Further along lay Nob Hill, crowned with the Mark Hopkins mansion, which had the effect of a citadel, and in later years by the great, white Fairmount. Further along was Russian Hill, the highest point. Below was the business district, whose low site caused all the trouble.

Except for the modern buildings, the fruit of the last ten years, the town presented at first sight a disreputable appearance. Most of the buildings were low and of wood. In the middle period of the '70's, when, a great part of San Francisco was building, the newly-rich perpetrated some atrocious architecture. In that time, too every one put bow windows on his house to catch all of the morning sunlight that was coming through the fog; and those little houses, with bow windows and fancy work all down their fronts, were characteristic of the middle class residence districts.

Then the Italians, who tumbled over Telegraph Hill, had built as they listed and with little regard for streets, and their houses hung crazily on a side hill which was little less than a precipice. The Chinese, although they occupied an abandoned business district, had remade their dwellings Chinese fashion, and the Mexicans and Spaniards had added to their houses those little balconies without which life is not life to a Spaniard.

Yet the most characteristic thing after all was the coloring. The sea fog had a trick of painting every exposed object a sea gray which had a tinge of dull green in it. This, under the leaden sky of a San Francisco morning, had a depressing effect on first sight and afterward became a delight to the eye. For the color was soft, gentle and infinitely attractive in mass.

The hills are steep beyond conception. Where Vallejo street ran up Russian Hill it progressed for four blocks by regular steps like a flight of stairs. It is unnecessary to say that no teams ever came up this street or any other like it, and grass grew long among the paving stones until the Italians who live thereabouts took advantage of this herbage to pasture a cow or two. At the end of four blocks, the pavers had given it up and the last stage to the summit was a winding path. On the very top, a colony of artists lived in little villas of houses whose windows got the whole panorama of the bay. Luckily for these people, a cable car scaled the hill on the other side, so that it was not much of a climb to home.

With these hills, with the strangeness of the architecture and with the green-gray tinge over everything, the city fell always into vistas and pictures, a setting for the romance which hung over everything, which has always hung over life in San Francisco since the padres came and gathered the Indians about Mission Dolores.

And it was a city of romance and a gateway to adventure. It opened out on the mysterious Pacific, the untamed ocean; and through the Golden Gate entered China, Japan, the South Sea Islands, Lower California, the west coast of Central America, Australia. There was a sprinkling, too, of Alaska and Siberia. From his windows on Russian Hill one saw always something strange and suggestive creeping through the mists of the bay. It would be a South Sea Island brig, bringing in copra, to take out cottons and idols; a Chinese junk after sharks' livers; an old whaler, which seemed to drip oil, home from a year of cruising in the Arctic. Even the tramp windjammers were deep-chested craft, capable of rounding the Horn or of circumnavigating the globe; and they came in streaked and picturesque from their long voyaging.

In the orange colored dawn which always comes through the mists of that bay, the fishing fleet would crawl in under triangular lateen sails; for the fishermen of San Francisco Bay are all Neapolitans who have brought their customs and sail with lateen rigs stained an orange brown and shaped, when the wind fills them, like the ear of a horse.

Along the waterfront the people of these craft met. "The smelting pot of the races," Stevenson called it; and this was always the city of his soul. There were black Gilbert Islanders, almost indistinguishable from negroes; lighter Kanakas from Hawaii or Samoa; Lascars in turbans; thickset Russian sailors, wild Chinese with unbraided hair; Italian fishermen in tam o' shanters, loud shirts and blue sashes; Greeks, Alaska Indians, little bay Spanish-Americans, together with men of all the European races. These came in and out from among the queer craft, to lose themselves in the disreputable, tumble-down, but always mysterious shanties and small saloons. In the back rooms of these saloons South Sea Island traders and captains, fresh from the lands of romance, whaling masters, people who were trying to get up treasure expeditions, filibusters, Alaskan miners, used to meet and trade adventures.

There was another element, less picturesque and equally characteristic, along the waterfront. San Francisco was the back eddy of European civilization—one end of the world. The drifters came there and stopped, lingered a while to live by their wits in a country where living after a fashion has always been marvellously cheap. These people haunted the waterfront and the Barbary Coast by night, and lay by day on the grass in Portsmouth Square.

The square, the old plaza about which the city was built, Spanish fashion, had seen many things. There in the first burst of the early days the vigilance committee used to hold its hangings. There, in the time of the sand lot troubles, Dennis Kearney, who nearly pulled the town down about his ears, used to make his orations which set the unruly to rioting. In later years Chinatown lay on one side of it and the Latin quarter and the "Barbary Coast" on the other.

On this square the drifters lay all day long and told strange yams. Stevenson lounged there with them in his time and learned the things which he wove into "The Wrecker" and his South Sea stories; and now in the centre of the square there stands the beautiful Stevenson monument. In later years the authorities put up a municipal building on one side of this square and prevented the loungers, for decency's sake, from lying on the grass. Since then some of the peculiar character of the old plaza has gone.

The Barbary Coast was a loud bit of hell. No one knows who coined the name. The place was simply three blocks of solid dance halls, there for the delight of the sailors of the world. On a fine busy night every door blared loud dance music from orchestras, steam pianos and gramophones, and the cumulative effect of the sound which reached the street was chaos and pandemonium. Almost anything might be happening behind the swinging doors. For a fine and picturesque bundle of names characteristic of the place, a police story of three or four years ago is typical. Hell broke out in the Eye Wink Dance Hall. The trouble was started by a sailor known as Kanaka Pete, who lived in the What Cheer House, over a woman known as Iodoform Kate. Kanaka Pete chased the man he had marked to the Little Silver Dollar, where he halted and punctured him. The by-product of his gun made some holes in the front of the Eye Wink, which were proudly kept as souvenirs, and were probably there until it went out in the fire. This was low life, the lowest of the low.

Until the last decade almost anything except the commonplace and the expected might happen to a man on the waterfront. The cheerful industry of shanghaiing was reduced to a science. A citizen taking a drink in one of the saloons which hung out over the water might be dropped through the floor into a boat, or he might drink with a stranger and wake in the forecabin of a whaler bound for the Arctic. Such an incident is the basis of Frank Norris's novel, "Moran of the Lady Letty," and although the novel draws it pretty strong, it is not exaggerated. Ten years ago the police, the Sailors' Union, and the foreign consuls, working together, stopped all this.

Kearney street, a wilder and stranger Bowery, was the main thoroughfare of these people. An exiled Californian, mourning over the city of his heart, has said:

"In a half an hour of Kearney street I could raise a dozen men for any wild adventure, from pulling down a statue to searching for the Cocos Island treasure." This is hardly an exaggeration, it was the Rialto of the desperate, Street of the Adventurers.

These are a few of the elements which made the city strange and gave it the glamour of romance which has so strongly attracted such men as Stevenson, Frank Norris and Kipling. This life of the floating population lay apart from the regular life of the city, which was distinctive in itself.

The Californian is the second generation of a picked and mixed ancestry. The merry, the adventurous, often the desperate, always the brave, deserted the South and New England in 1849 to rush around the Horn or to try the perils of the plains. They found there a land already grown old in the hands of the Spaniards—younger sons of hidalgo and many of them of the best blood of Spain. To a great extent the pioneers intermarried with Spanish women; in fact, except for a proud little colony here and there, the old, aristocratic Spanish blood is sunk in that of the conquering race. Then there was an influx of intellectual French people, largely overlooked in the histories of the early days; and this Latin leaven has had its influence.

Brought up in a bountiful country, where no one really has to work very hard to live, nurtured on adventure, scion of a free and merry stock, the real, native Californian is a distinctive type; as far from the Easterner in psychology as the extreme Southerner is from the Yankee. He is easy going, witty, hospitable, lovable, inclined to be unmoral rather than immoral in his personal habits, and easy to meet and to know.

Above all there is an art sense all through the populace which sets it off from any other population of the country. This sense is almost Latin in its strength, and the Californian owes it to the leaven of Latin blood. The true Californian lingers in the north; for southern California has been built up by "lungers" from the East and middle West and is Eastern in character and feeling.

Almost has the Californian developed a racial physiology. He tends to size, to smooth symmetry of limb and trunk, to an erect, free carriage; and the beauty of his women is not a myth. The pioneers were all men of good body, they had to be to live and leave descendants. The bones of the weaklings who started for El Dorado in 1849 lie on the plains or in the hill-cemeteries of the mining camps. Heredity began it; climate has carried it on. All things that grow in California tend to become large, plump, luscious. Fruit trees, grown from cuttings of Eastern stock, produce fruit larger and finer, if coarser in flavor, than that of the parent tree. As the fruits grow, so the children grow. A normal, healthy, Californian woman plays out-of-doors from babyhood to old age. The mixed stock has given her that regularity of features which goes with a blend of bloods; the climate has perfected and rounded her figure; out-of-doors exercise from earliest youth has given her a deep bosom; the cosmetic mists have made her complexion soft and brilliant. At the University of California, where the student body is nearly all native, the gymnasium measurements show that the girls are a little more than two inches taller than their sisters of Vassar and Michigan.

The greatest beauty-show on the continent was the Saturday afternoon matinee parade in San Francisco. Women in so-called "society" took no part in this function. It belonged to the middle class, but the "upper classes" have no monopoly of beauty anywhere in the world. It had grown to be independent of the matinees. From two o'clock to half-past five, a solid procession of Dianas, Hebes and Junos passed and repassed along the five blocks between Market and Powell and Sutter and Kearney—the "line" of San Francisco slang. Along the open-front cigar stores, characteristic of the town, gilded youth of the cocktail route gathered in knots to watch them. There was something Latin in the spirit of this ceremony—it resembled church parade in Buenos Ayres. Latin, too, were the gay costumes of the women, who dressed brightly in accord with the city and the climate. This gaiety of costume was the first thing which the Eastern woman noticed—and disapproved. Give her a year, and she, too, would be caught by the infection of daring dress.

In this parade of tall, deep bosomed, gleaming women, one caught the type and longed, sometimes for the sight of a more ethereal beauty—for the suggestion of soul within which belongs to a New England woman on whom a hard soil has bestowed a grudging beauty—for the mobility, the fire, which belongs to the Frenchwoman. The second generation of France was in this crowd, it is true; but climate and exercise had grown above their spiritual charm a cover of brilliant flesh. It was the beauty of Greece.

With such a people, life was always gay. If the fairly Parisian gaiety did not display itself on the streets, except in the matinee parade, it was because the winds made open-air cafes disagreeable at all seasons of the year. The life careless went on indoors or in the hundreds of pretty estates—"ranches" the Californians called them—which fringe the city.

San Francisco was famous for its restaurants and cafes. Probably they were lacking at the top; probably the very best, for people who do not care how they spend their money, was not to be had. But they gave the best fare on earth, for the price, at a dollar, seventy-five cents, a half a dollar, or even fifteen cents.

If one should tell exactly what could be had at Coppa's for fifty cents or at the Fashion for, say thirty-five, no New Yorker who has not been there would believe it. The San Francisco French dinner and the San Francisco free lunch were as the Public Library to Boston or the stock yards to Chicago. A number of causes contributed to this. The country all about produced everything that a cook needs and that in abundance—the bay was an almost untapped fishing pound, the fruit farms came up to the very edge of the town, and the surrounding country produced in abundance fine meats, game, all cereals and all vegetables.

But the chefs who came from France in the early days and stayed because they liked this land of plenty were the head and front of it. They passed on their art to other Frenchmen or to the clever Chinese. Most of the French chefs at the biggest restaurants were born in Canton, China. Later the Italians, learning of this country where good food is appreciated, came and brought their own style. Householders always dined out one or two nights of the week, and boarding houses were scarce, for the unattached preferred the restaurants.

The eating was usually better than the surroundings. Meals that were marvels were served in tumbledown little hotels. Most famous of all the restaurants was the Poodle Dog. There have been no less than four establishments of this name, beginning with a frame shanty where, in the early days, a prince of French cooks used to exchange ragouts for gold dust. Each succeeding restaurant of the name has moved further downtown; and the recent Poodle Dog stands—stands or stood; one mixes his tenses queerly in writing of this city which is and yet is no more—on the edge of the Tenderloin in a modern five story building. And it typified a certain spirit that there was in San Francisco.

For on the ground floor was a public restaurant where there was served the best dollar dinner on earth. At least, if not the best it ranked with the best, and the others were in San, Francisco. There, especially on Sunday night, almost everyone went to vary the monotony of home cooking. Everyone who was anyone in the town could be seen there off and on. It was perfectly respectable. A man might take his wife and daughter to

the Poodle Dog.

On the second floor there were private dining rooms, and to dine there, with one or more of the opposite sex, was risqué but not especially terrible. But the third floor—and the fourth floor—and the fifth! The elevator man of the Poodle Dog, who had held the job for many years and who never spoke unless spoken to, wore diamonds and was a heavy investor in real estate. There were others as famous in their way—the Zinkand, where, at one time, every one went after the theatre, and Tate's, which has lately bitten into that trade; the Palace Grill, much like the grills of Eastern hotels, except for the price; Delmonico's, which ran the Poodle Dog neck and neck to its own line; and many others, humbler but great at the price.

Listen! O ye starved amidst plenty, to the tale of the Hotel de France. This restaurant stood on California street, just east of Old St. Mary's Church. One could throw a biscuit from its back windows into Chinatown. It occupied a big ramshackle house, which had been a mansion of the gold days. Louis, the proprietor, was a Frenchman of the Bas Pyrenees; and his accent was as thick as his peasant soups. The patrons were Frenchmen of the poorer class, or young and poor clerks and journalists who had discovered the delights of his hostelry. The place exuded a genial gaiety, of which Louis, throwing out familiar jokes to right and left as he mixed salads and carried dishes, was the head and front.

First on the bill of fare was the soup mentioned before—thick and clean and good. Next, one of Louis' three cherubic little sons brought on a course of fish—sole, rock cod, flounders or smelt—with a good French sauce. The third course was meat. This came on en bloc; the waiter dropped in the centre of each table a big roast or boiled joint together with a mustard pot and two big dishes of vegetables. Each guest manned the carving knife in turn and helped himself to his satisfaction. After that, Louis, with an air of ceremony, brought on a big bowl of excellent salad which he had mixed himself. For beverage, there stood by each plate a perfectly cylindrical pint glass filled with new, watered claret. The meal closed with "fruit in season"—all that the guest cared to eat. I have saved a startling fact to close the paragraph—the price was fifteen cents!

If one wanted black coffee he paid five cents extra, and Louis brought on a beer glass full of it. Why he threw in wine and charged extra for after-dinner coffee was one of Louis' professional secrets.

Adulterated food at that price? Not a bit of it! The olive oil in the salad was pure, California product—why adulterate when he could get it so cheaply? The wine, too, was above reproach, for Louis made it himself. Every autumn, he brought tons and tons of cheap Mission grapes, set up a wine press in his back yard, and had a little, festival vintage of his own. The fruit was small, and inferior, but fresh, and Louis himself, in speaking of his business, said that he wished his guests would eat nothing but fruit, it came so cheap.

The city never went to bed. There was no closing law, so that the saloons kept open nights and Sundays at their own sweet will. Most of the cafes elected to remain open until 2 o'clock in the morning at least.

This restaurant life, however does not express exactly the careless, pleasure-loving character of the people. In great part their pleasures were simple, inexpensive and out of doors. No people were fonder of expeditions into the country, of picnics—which might be brought off at almost any season of the year—and of long tours in the great mountains and forests.

Hospitality was nearly a vice. As in the early mining days, if they liked the stranger the people took him in. At the first meeting the San Francisco man had him put up at the club; at the second, he invited him home to dinner. As long as the stranger stayed he was being invited to week end parties at ranches, to little dinners in this or that restaurant and to the houses of his new acquaintances, until his engagements grew beyond hope of fulfilment. Perhaps there was rather too much of this kind of thing. At the end of a fortnight a visitor with a pleasant smile and a good story left the place a wreck. This tendency ran through all grades of society—except, perhaps, the sporting people who kept the tracks and the fighting game alive. These also met the stranger—and also took him in.

Centres of man hospitality were the clubs, especially the famous Bohemian and the Family. The latter was an offshot of the Bohemian; and it had been growing fast and vieing with the older organization for the honor of entertaining pleasing and distinguished visitors.

The Bohemian Club, whose real founder is said to have been the late Henry George, was formed in the '70s by newspaper writers and men working in the arts or interested in them. It had grown to a membership of 750. It still kept for its nucleus painters, writers, musicians and actors, amateur and professional. They were a gay group of men, and hospitality was their avocation. Yet the thing which set this club off from all others in the world was the midsummer High Jinks.

The club owns a fine tract of redwood forest fifty miles north of San Francisco on the Russian River. There are two varieties of big trees in California: the Sequoia gigantea and the Sequoia sempervirens. The great trees of the Mariposa grove belong to the gigantea species. The sempervirens, however, reaches the diameter of 16 feet, and some of the greatest trees of this species are in the Bohemian Club grove. It lies in a cleft of the mountains: and up one hillside there runs a natural out of doors stage of remarkable acoustic properties.

In August the whole Bohemian Club, or such as could get away from business, went up to this grove and camped out for two weeks. On the last night they put on the Jinks proper, a great spectacle in praise of the forest with poetic words, music and effects done by the club. In late years this has been practically a masque or an opera. It cost about \$10,000. It took the spare time of scores of men for weeks; yet these 750 business men, professional men, artists, newspaper workers, struggled for the honor of helping out on the Jinks; and the whole thing was done naturally and with reverence. It would not be possible anywhere else in this country; the thing which made it possible was the art spirit which is in the Californian. It runs in the blood.

"Who's Who in America" is long on the arts and on learning and comparatively weak in business and the professions. Now some one who has taken the trouble has found that more persons mentioned in "Who's Who" by the thousand of the population were born in Massachusetts, than in any other state; but that Massachusetts is crowded closely by California, with the rest nowhere. The institutions of learning in Massachusetts account for her pre-eminence; the art spirit does it for California. The really big men nurtured on California influence are few, perhaps; but she has sent out an amazing number of good workers in painting, in authorship, in music and especially in acting.

"High society" in San Francisco had settled down from the rather wild spirit of the middle period; it had

come to be there a good deal as it is elsewhere. There was much wealth; and the hills of the western addition were growing up with fine mansions. Outside of the city, at Burlingame, there was a fine country club centering a region of country estates which stretched out to Menlo Park. This club had a good polo team, which played every year with teams of Englishmen from southern California and even with teams from Honolulu.

The foreign quarters are worth an article in themselves. Chief of these was, of course, Chinatown, of which every one has heard who ever heard of San Francisco. A district six blocks long and two blocks wide, housed 30,000 Chinese when the quarter was full. The dwellings were old business blocks of the early days; but the Chinese had added to them, had rebuilt them, had run out their own balconies and entrances, and had given the quarter that feeling of huddled irregularity which makes all Chinese built dwellings fall naturally into pictures. Not only this; they had burrowed to a depth of a story or two under the ground, and through this ran passages in which the Chinese transacted their dark and devious affairs—as the smuggling of opium, the traffic in slave girls and the settlement of their difficulties.

In the last five years there was less of this underground life than formerly, for the Board of Health had a cleanup some time ago; but it was still possible to go from one end of Chinatown to the other through secret underground passages. The tourist, who always included Chinatown in his itinerary, saw little of the real quarter. The guides gave him a show by actors hired for his benefit. In reality the place amounted to a great deal in a financial way. There were clothing and cigar factories of importance, and much of the Pacific rice, tea and silk importing was in the hands of the merchants, who numbered several millionaires. Mainly, however, it was a Tenderloin for the house servants of the city—for the San Francisco Chinaman was seldom a laundryman; he was too much in demand at fancy prices as a servant.

The Chinese lived their own lives in their own way and settled their own quarrels with the revolvers of their highbinders. There were two theatres in the quarter, a number of rich joss houses, three newspapers and a Chinese telephone exchange. There is a race feeling against the Chinese among the working people of San Francisco, and no white man, except the very lowest outcasts, lived in the quarter.

On the slopes of Telegraph Hill dwelt the Mexicans and Spanish, in low houses, which they had transformed by balconies into a semblance of Spain. Above, and streaming over the hill, were the Italians. The tenement quarter of San Francisco shone by contrast with those of Chicago and New York, for while these people lived in old and humble houses they had room to breathe and an eminence for light and air. Their shanties clung to the side of the hill or hung on the very edge of the precipice overlooking the bay, on the verge of which a wall kept their babies from falling. The effect was picturesque, and this hill was the delight of painters. It was all more like Italy than anything in the Italian quarter of New York and Chicago—the very climate and surroundings, the wine country close at hand, the bay for their lateen boats, helped them.

Over by the ocean and surrounded by cemeteries in which there are no more burials, there is an eminence which is topped by two peaks and which the Spanish of the early days named after the breasts of a woman. The unpoetic Americans had renamed it Twin Peaks. At its foot was Mission Dolores, the last mission planted by the Spanish padres in their march up the coast, and from these hills the Spanish looked for the first time upon the golden bay.

Many years ago some one set up at the summit of this peak a sixty foot cross of timber. Once a high wind blew it down, and the women of the Fair family then had it restored so firmly that it would resist anything. It has risen for fifty years above the gay, careless, luxuriant and lovable city, in full view from every eminence and from every valley. It stands tonight, above the desolation of ruins.

The bonny, merry city—the good, gray city—O that one who has mingled the wine of her bounding life with the wine of his youth should live to write the obituary of Old San Francisco!

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CITY THAT WAS: A REQUIEM OF OLD SAN FRANCISCO ***

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