

# DAILY PEOPLE

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EDITORIAL

## NOW, FOR A BRET HARTE!

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE vast Russian Armada is now, partly floating in Japanese harbors as prizes of war, partly lying deep buried at the bottom of the Corean Strait, with about 9,000 of the marines that manned it, together with three admirals, strewing, like “leaves on the strand,” the strands of Japan in the Euchre game that “superior” races have delighted in, and that, with “cards that were stacked” and sleeves, which were “stuffed full of aces and bowers,” they delighted in inflicting upon “backward” races as an evidence of their “superiority.” The Jap variety of “Ah Sin” in Bret Harte’s great poem has turned up, with results that materially amend the issue of the encounter narrated by the poet.

“Superior” civilization has long played the Euchre game of raising mechanical expertness to the standard by which morality was to be gauged, and turned the false standard into a cloak under which to practice and conceal immorality: the Jap “Ah Sin” has gone them “several better” on mechanical expertness.

“Superior” civilization has long played the Euchre game of duplicity as the evidence of Christianity: the Jap “Ah Sin” gave them points on that score in the encounter in the Corean Strait, where placid-looking waters concealed mines and submarines, that sent ships and men to kingdom come.

“Superior” civilization has long played the Euchre game of brutality as the arbiter of nations: lo, the Jap “Ah Sin” thought to himself, Is that the game? and he won hands down and to spare.

All along the line the Jap “Ah Sin” outwitted the frauds and bullies at their own game, with a success that leaves the Russian “Bill Nye” breathless and speechless, too speechless and breathless to do aught but sputter “Perfidy!”

Oh, for a Bret Harte to take the inspiration of the solemn drama, and withal the humor thereof, and furnish a companion piece to the “Plain Language from

Truthful James!” While awaiting the advent of that poem, we deem it eminently timely to reproduce the rhymes, which now acquire historic importance, as the foreshadowing, thirty-five years ago, of events that were to come to pass just as soon as the “backward” Asiatic would have added physical powers to his “backward” genius at the game of Euchre that “superior” races were forcing upon him—

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PLAIN LANGUAGE FROM TRUTHFUL JAMES.  
TABLE MOUNTAIN, 1870.

Which I wish to remark,—  
And my language is plain,—  
That for ways that are dark,  
And for tricks that are vain,  
The heathen Chinee is peculiar.  
Which the same I would rise to explain.

Ah Sin was his name;  
And I shall not deny  
In regard to the same  
What that name might imply,  
But his smile it was pensive and childlike,  
As I frequent remarked to Bill Nye.

It was August the third;  
And quite soft was the skies;  
Which it might be inferred  
That Ah Sin was likewise;  
Yet he played it that day upon William  
And me in a way I despise.

Which we had a small game,  
And Ah Sin took a hand:  
It was Euchre. The same  
He did not understand;  
But he smiled as he sat by the table,  
With a smile that was childlike and bland.

Yet the cards they were stocked {stacked?}  
In a way that I grieve,  
And my feelings were shocked  
At the state of Nye’s sleeve:  
Which was stuffed full of aces and bowers,

And the same with intent to deceive.

But the hands that were played  
By that heathen Chinee,  
And the points that he made,  
Were quite frightful to see,—  
Till at last he put down a right bower,  
Which the same Nye had dealt unto me.

Then I looked up at Nye,  
And he gazed upon me;  
And he rose with a sigh,  
And said, “Can this be?  
We are ruined by Chinese cheap labor”—  
And he went for that heathen Chinee.

In the scene that ensued  
I did not take a hand,  
But the floor it was strewed  
Like the leaves on the strand  
With the cards that Ah Sin had been hiding,  
In the game “he did not understand.”

In his sleeves, which were long,  
He had twenty-four packs,—  
Which was coming it strong,  
Yet I state but the facts;  
And we found on his nails, which were taper,  
What is frequent in tapers,—that’s wax.

Which is why I remark,  
And my language is plain,  
That for ways that are dark,  
And for tricks that are vain,  
The heathen Chinee is peculiar,—  
Which the same I am free to maintain.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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