CHINESE MASSACRE AT BUCKLAND.

When the poll tax was imposed in Victoria the diggers seemed to think that the evils of which they complained would soon be disposed of. Instead of that they discovered that they were increasing, and that the poll-tax was not paid. Hundreds of Chinese who were able to pay the tax withdrew from the main camps, where they were apt to be pounced upon by either their protector or the police, and scattered themselves about newly opened gullies and freshly discovered diggings. They thus came into competition with diggers in outlying flats and gullies and mountain gorges where police protection was of the slenderest sort, and where each party of diggers was accustomed to rely solely on its firearms for the protection of life and property. There were always certain restraints on Chinese crime in the great authorised camps, because they had laws of their own under which they tried, convicted, and punished offenders. Frequently they handed over a criminal fellow-countryman to the police to be dealt with under English law, after having well punished him under their own tribunals. But all these restraints to which I refer were removed when a party of eight or 10 Chinamen built a rude bark hut in a back gully and commenced either surfacing or sluicing the creek banks. If their neighbour had pork or poultry John always smelt it out, and ended by handling it. Occasionally at night he would steal down to your sluice-box and lift up the bottom to assure himself as to your prospects. If occasionally he got peppered with small shot or salt, he could put up with the misfortune without complaint, but it did not deter him from other little depredations to provide the luxuries which his own labor could not acquire. So strong was the feeling amongst the diggers against Chinamen that, no matter what the goldfield laws were, no Chinaman was allowed to have a claim in new ground unless it was of his own discovery, and was too poor to work by European labor. Hence Chinamen were almost exclusively confined to re-washing abandoned ground or sluicing large tracts of country which Englishmen did not regard as payable. In the case of the Buckland River goldfields the Chinamen of the Ovens broke through the unwritten laws of the diggers, and actually took up new ground to work on their own account alongside Europeans. This raised a howl of indignation, and all sorts of charges were levelled against the dwellers in the Buckland Chinese Camp. They were alleged to be thieves and lepers, and to be steeped in the grossest immorality. They were accused of spreading new diseases unknown to white men before their arrival. A little of this kind of talk among ignorant men desirous of getting up reasons for destroying an enemy goes a long way. An anti-Chinese meeting was held. Then a "vigilance committee" was appointed to watch the Celestial camp of alleged midnight marauders. Things were coming to a head.

The Buckland goldfield was discovered in 1855. The diggers radiated from Spring Creek at Beechworth as their centre to all the adjacent ranges and rivers to a distance of 70 or 80 miles. The Woolshed Creek was the richest diggings ever known in the world. Buckets of washdirt were brought up from the shallow holes, the weight of gold in many of them being over 50lb. So rich were the diggers that that when in 1855, they had to elect a member for the Ovens to serve in the first Parliament of the colony they sent in Mr. Cameron, a popular Woolshed man, worth thousands of pounds, and as an exhibition of their combined respect and folly they shod his horse with heavy solid gold shoes, and accompanied the successful candidate on horseback three miles into Beechworth to return thanks to the electors. What became of the shoes I cannot say, but as fickle fortune deserted Cameron and brought him down from a speculative millionaire to a humble billet, I conclude they found their way to the melt pot of a bank or the Mint. Buckland wasquite different to the Woolshed, and indeed to any other gold producing area in the colony. The metal was sometimes almost black, whilst when smelted it looked more like copper than gold. Its value varied from £3 15s. to £3 10s. per oz., hence the diggers who were accustomed to get £4 4s. per oz. for their Spring Creek and Woolshed gold, felt a little shy of the Buckland stuff. There was never a large rush there, although the gold was got, not in grains and the form of dust, but in lumps varying in size from a pea to a walnut. Another objection the diggers had to Buckland was that it was very difficult of access, and was extremely unhealthy. The locality itself was remarkable in so far that the narrow valley through which the rivers flows was hemmed in on both sides by snow-capped mountains, whose sides were clothed with thick timber and undergrowth. The diggers only saw the sun for about four hours a day, and if you climbed the mountain on one side of the valley you fancied you could throw a stone on to the opposite side without running the risk of dropping it into the village about 2000ft., almost perpendicularly, below you. The distances at each elevations are extremely deceptive, especially when covered with snow. The valley of the Buckland was originally choked with a profusion of ferns and rich undergrowth to the very water's edge, through which the adventurous prospector had to cut almost every yard of his way, and the valley itself was more than 20 miles long, like the great American

than 20 miles long, like the great American canyons we read of.

The first news of the discovery of Buckland goldfields caused considerable stir all over the colony, but the excitement cooled down when the intelligence followed that no white man could live in the valley. A fatal disease broke out amongst the diggers, which was called the "Buckland fever." Strong men could not resist it, and hundreds died in a very short time. Nearly all who could do so fled from the plague spot, and it was only after a lapse of a year or more that the diggers summoned up courage to tackle the valley again. I am satisfied *now* that the "Buckland fever," as it was termed, was nothing else than a very virulent form of typhoid, which ran its fatal course in a very few days. When the white men abandoned the Buckland the Chinese thought it was just the kind of country to suit their constitutions, and so it proved; and they were getting along pretty well, and quite satisfactorily to themselves, when the "vigilance committee" abovementioned was formed. Mr. Dowling was at this time warden of the Buckland goldfield, but as he lived at Beechworth, and the distance between the two places was 60 miles, he did not make the journey more often than a feeble goldfields administration at headquarters required. Hence neither the police nor any of the goldfields officials knew of the threatening danger that now impended over the miserable Mongolian camp.

The vigilance committee were men of the early Californian stamp, who thought Lynch law was just as good as any other sort, besides being divested of religious ceremonies. They were men who acted secretly, but with unflinching determination. They went up to the Chinese camp one fine night in 1857, and told the residents that they would have to clear out of the valley in 24 hours, removing with them all their belongings. The Chinese were naturally surprised at the sudden and unexpected notice. Some treated it as a joke. Others preferred to act on the order and commenced packing up. When the alloted time had expired, the viligance committee, with a small contingent of diggers, went to see how things were progressing. They hurried the Chinese off, but did not touch their good or chattels. Some of the Chinese, especially a storekeeper, represented that he could not get all his stock away or realise upon it in the time prescribed. The committee thought the complaint reasonable, and agreed to allow extra time in some instances, and also assured the Chinese that if they went peaceably their properties would be respected and preserved for them. I mention this to show that the diggers were acting on principle, and not merely seeking to loot the treasures of the yellow foreigners. The Chinese went to the number of about 200. They walked down the valley and camped on the banks of the Ovens River, nearly opposite to the Porepunkah crossing. A stray trooper passed that way and heard their story. He advised them to go back to their tents and huts and resume work, and the exodus retraced its steps. The indignation of the vigilance committee knew no bounds. There was a defiant air about the almond eyes, and no doubt the returned Chinamen relied for assistance, should they require it, on the trooper. During the day of their return the Chinese were not molested; they seemed to be making merry after a victory. They screamed and laughed and let off crackers, and burnt incense in the Joss house, and invoked the aid of the God of good luck. The night passed away quietly, and day dawned to a cold foggy drizzle. The members of the vigilance committee, accompanied by a strong party of resolute diggers approached the camp in open daylight, just after breakfast. There could be no mistake about their intention. Their clenched lips bespoke their purpose. The chairman of the vigilance committee ordered the leading Chinese to leave the valley at once, taking all their comrades with them. A parley commenced, and the chairman gave a signal. In a few minutes the Chinese tents, huts, and stores were in flames, and their scared owners flying helpless before a ruthless mob of pursuers. During their flight over the holes and clay mounds, Chinamen slipped and fell. They were beaten to make them rise and continue the flight. If they would not, or could not get up, they were cast into old shafts and tumbled into the river. Some were poleaxed, or rather pickaxed, during the panic and their bodies thrown down abandoned holes. This massacre was not confined to the members of the Vigilance Committee, nor perhaps was it contemplated in the first place to commit murder. The committee during the rout and pursuit of the Chinese were joined by every digger who witnessed the fleeing crowd of alleged culprits. Thus were the Chinese expelled from Buckland. As far as could be ascertained about 30 Chinese perished in the affair; many were maimed; some were probably drowned in trying to swim the river, but for years afterwards it was not an uncommon thing to come across Chinese skeletons when working old ground.

I always felt at the time that the Government officials at Beechworth, for some reason or other, resolutely set their faces against finding out anything about the outrage. I know that O'Hara Burke (my own intimate friend) was extremely reticent on the subject, and no one was arrested for the rioting or murder until months after the event, and then only in deference to some outside pressure, when the police picked up two diggers on a charge of rioting, but the case against them broke

of rioting, but the case against them broke down, I believe designedly. The only man who could have given the real truth of the whole affair was the late Rev. J. Kennedy, the Roman Catholic clergyman at Beechworth. I accompanied him in 1858 over the whole scene of the massacre, but even he seemed inclined to hush up everything connected with the affair. Possibly some of his own flock were most deeply implicated in the tragedy. Even the residents of the Buckland Valley with whom I was on good speaking terms, and who must have seen the massacre, if they did not take a hand in it, always evaded answering definitely any questions on the subject of the crime. A few whispered the real truth, and the police inquiries substantiated the extent. The surviving expelled Chinese made their way to Beechworth to interview the Chinese Protector, but they never got any satisfaction, or any compensation for the loss of their property.-

A discovery was made at the Garfield mine, Creswton, Victoria, on Monday, which has caused some little excitement. In driving at the 175ft. level a reef 8ft. thick was cut, and some specimens were shown which were freely impregnated with gold. The full value of the discovery will not be known for a few days.