

Lee Hip (- 11 Aug 1911)

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Chinese Kills Self

Lee Hip's Countrymen Say He Was "Funny" in the Head

Sold Laundry; Quit Work

But Chinatown Rejects Theory That He Was "Broke"

Disturbs Celestial Peace

Tragedy at Two O'Clock in the Morning Sets Colony Chattering.

Funeral Plans Secret

Pennsylvania avenue between John Marshall place and 3d street is a quite thoroughfare ordinarily at 2 o'clock in the morning, and that is why so many people were awakened by the crack of a long blue revolver at that hour today, when Lee Hip ended his troubles with a bullet in his breast. Lee was lying in his matting-covered bunk in a top floor room at 346 Pennsylvania avenue when he shot himself, but when the scores of Chinamen who ran upstairs to see what was the matter arrived there, he was on the floor.

Two policemen from the sixth precinct station, Lieut. Harrison and Price Conrad, happened to be passing the house just as Lee fired. They, too, ran upstairs. They did all they could for Lee, whom all Chinatown called "crazy" but even at Casualty Hospital they could do nothing, and Lee died at 4 o'clock this morning. The bullet which he used to send his soul into the dark land where the ancestors of all good Chinamen are staying passed entirely through his body.

Say He Was "Funny"

"Lee was funny," said a merchant on the lower floor of 346. "He used to hold his head up in the air, walk straight and not notice anybody. His head was not right."

Lee Chung, Lee Gong, Lee Foy and Lee Wing, cousins of the dead man, were asleep in the room on the top floor of 346 this morning when the shot was fired. On the floors below other Chinamen were sleeping and all were awakened, some by the report following the pulling of the trigger, and others by the tramping up the steps of curious persons who were anxious to learn what was going on.

Some of the Chinamen on the lower floors were startled by the tragedy and were afraid to venture up the steps. Some thought there was a fire on the top floor, while others knew there had been a shooting.

"I was afraid I would get shot," said one of those who slept on the lower floor, "and I didn't go up."

Amused by Tragedy

This Chinaman appeared greatly amused over what had happened, laughing heartily as he told of what he knew and had heard. Lee he explained, was tossing on the stretcher as he was carried from the house to the ambulance, moving his head to illustrate just how the dying man appeared.

"But," said the Chinaman, "he didn't have to do it, and it's all his own fault. He was tired of living."

A few minutes after the shot was fired the police found it difficult to keep back the curious and excited throng. The shooting took place shortly before the Chinese restaurants were to close for the night, and many of their patrons hurried to the room in which the wounded Chinaman lay.

The Chinamen who gathered about the top floor were excitedly talking. They discussed the shooting, of course, but the police in the room knew nothing of what they were saying. The two policemen recalled the recent shooting of a Chinaman in the southeast section and thought this

morning's shooting may have had some connection with that tragedy. Perhaps friends of the Chinaman who had been shot in the 11th street laundry had shot a cousin or brother of the one who had done that shooting, the police thought, and they proceeded to make a careful investigation.

It was soon apparent that Lee Hip had shot himself. It was explained that Lee had done no work for some time; that he positively refused to work after he had sold his laundry in the northwest section of the city. Some said he was lazy, but others thought his peculiar conduct indicated a disordered brain. It was suggested by some of his friends that he was without funds, but those who were closer to him said he was fairly well supplied with cash.

Could Have Gotten Money

"If Lee was broke," said a member of one of the Chinese merchandise companies, "he could have borrowed money."

All day yesterday Lee walked the sidewalk or sat in the stores in Chinatown. He had very little to say to any of his friends, the other Chinamen said this morning, and he never volunteered a remark. If addressed, they said, he merely grunted a response. Lee was in one of the Chinese restaurants shortly before midnight, where he got something to eat.

Shortly after leaving the restaurant the supposed insane laundryman went to his room. There was not much time wasted in making a change of wearing apparel for the night, as Chinamen seem to think particularly in that regard is merely a waste of time. Crawling into his matting-covered bunk. Lee was soon dreaming of the act which was to send him to appear before one of the gods he had worshiped.

None of his four cousins had given any thought to the question of Lee's putting himself in position to be taken to a temporary grave in Congressional cemetery, and not one of them heard him make a move until he fired the shot. Even then, it is said, one of them was so sound asleep that the noise did not disturb him.

Every Chinese resident of the section in which Lee Hip killed himself knew of the affair fifteen minutes after he shot himself, but very few of those who were seen by a Star reporter this morning were willing to admit knowledge of it. They asked who Lee Hip was and where he lived, and wanted to know what would be printed about him. Some of them suggested that Lee would not like to have his name in the paper, speaking in a tone to indicate the belief that, although dead, he would know about it.

Excitement Soon Subsides

A score or more of the Chinese residents of Pennsylvania avenue stood on the sidewalk and watched the policemen and hospital attendants carefully move the wounded man. They wanted to know where he was being taken saying they would see him in the morning. Chinatown recovered from the excitement in a short while and the celestials retired to their bunks.

Coroner Nevitt learned of the affair as soon as he reached his office this morning. It is rather unusual for the coroner to have to act upon a case involving the death of a Chinaman; especially a case of self-destruction. He was able to recall one or two other cases in which natives of the Flowery kingdom had committed suicide, however, and he was able to pass upon the suicide of Lee Hip without much trouble.

A certificate of death having been given, the body was turned over to Undertaker J. William Lee and removed to the latter's establishment on Pennsylvania avenue. Tomorrow or Sunday, Lee's four cousins will appear at the undertaking establishment and want the funeral held at short notice, hoping to lessen the number of curious spectators who usually are attracted by the appearance on the hearse of a Chinaman distributing "fake" money to tempt the evil spirits and to draw attention from the spirit of the departed.