

STOPPED FOR BREATH.

The Band Gave Out at a Critical Point in a Chinese Funeral.

A Chinese funeral as a public drawing card is almost equal to a circus. Hum Hok, a Chinese laundryman, was buried yesterday, and an hour before the funeral cortege moved from Carl's undertaking rooms the curious crowd of spectators began to gather in front. By 3:30 o'clock, when the coffin was carried out and put in the hearse, the street was blocked with people. The crowd was made up of all sorts and conditions of men, women and children. A business man would be hurrying up or down the street. Seeing the crowd he would halt, and ask:

"What's the matter here? Anyone killed?"

"No, a Chinese funeral."

"Gosh! 'S that so? Guess I'll have to see it!" And one more would be added to the throng.

There were seven hacks in the cortege, and each one of them held four almond-eyed mourners. Next to the hearse was the hack which bore the Chinese band. A rural charivari is not in it with a Chinese band when it comes to noise. The members of a Chinese band have a deep-rooted hatred for music. The band yesterday was the very worst of its class. It began to play as soon as the funeral started, and kept it up without intermission until the grave in Union cemetery was reached. There the coffin was taken from the hearse and placed on the ground about six feet from the foot of the grave. A half dozen boxes and baskets were brought from a hack and placed by the grave. First a pile of paper, cut round, with gilt letters in the center was produced, and a fire was kindled between the coffin and the grave. As it began to blaze more paper was added, and several bushels in all were burned. There were tissue paper emblems of all shapes, and nearly all had Chinese letters painted on them. Several hundred joss sticks in bundles were thrown in the blaze. A bundle of red wax candles was then brought out and stuck in the ground in a circle about the fire. They were lighted, but the heat melted the wax before they could burn.

Every mourner present threw some article into the blaze as offerings to the spirit of their dead countryman. Cigars, cigarettes, bits of cloth and pounds of sweet-meats were contributed and burned. Then a dozen Chinese tea-cups, holding about a thimbleful each, were set in a row on the ground. A bottle of wine was opened and each cup filled. A Chinaman would step up, facing the wine cups and the coffin, fold his hands and bow to the corpse, pick up a cup and scatter the wine upon the ground, bow again and retire. This was kept up until every Chinaman had gone through the ceremony. Meantime the band had stopped for breath and Gam Lee yelled at them to begin again.

When the grave had been filled a brother of Hum Hok's from St. Louis placed a bowl of rice at the head of the mound of earth. A roast chicken, a big chunk of roast pig and a basketful of fruit were placed at the foot. A marble headstone was planted at the head and the Chinese flag on a staff at the foot, and then the Chinamen climbed into their hacks and drove away.

As the pigtail of the last Celestial mourner disappeared through a hack door the crowd closed in on the grave and the fruit and other offerings were gobbled up. A policeman interfered, but not before nearly half of the articles had been stolen. One young woman was thrown to the ground in her anxiety to secure one of the little Chinese tea-cups. Her clothes were trampled into the mud, and the better element of the crowd was glad to see it.

Four young women who teach a class of Chinamen in a Sunday school in this city attended the funeral, but took no part in the ceremonies at the grave.

Gam Lee said to a TIMES reporter that Hum Hok was 43 years old. He belonged to a good family in China and has three married children there.