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## The Heathen Chinees (A series of 9 lithographs illustrating a Poem by Bret Harte)

**Stock#:** 53578  
**Map Maker:** Harte  
**Date:** 1870  
**Place:** Boston  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 7 x 5.5 inches (each)  
**Price:** \$ 375.00



### Description:

Set of 9 lithographs drawn by John Hull and printed in Boston, setting Bret Harte's poem *The Heathen Chinees*, published in Boston in 1870.

Originally published as *Plain Language from Truthful James*, the work is a narrative poem by American writer Bret Harte. It was published for the first time in September 1870 in the *Overland Monthly*. It was written as a parody of Algernon Charles Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865), and satirized anti-Chinese sentiment in northern California.

The poem became popular and was frequently republished. To Harte's dismay, however, the poem reinforced racism among his readers instead of challenging it as he intended. Nevertheless, he returned to the character years later. The poem also inspired or influenced several adaptations.

Its sensational popularity made Bret Harte the most celebrated literary man in America in 1870.

The present set is from an "edition" of the poem that consisted of 9 loose pages, printed on stiffened paper, sold in an engraved envelope and perhaps suitable for framing. Tellingly, Hull's penultimate drawing elaborates what the poem refers to as "the scene that ensued" into something like a race riot. Mob violence against the Chinese was a recurring event in western cities like San Francisco and Denver. Harte wrote sentimentally about the victim of a white mob in "Wan Lee." These illustrations are by Joseph Hull. Chicago: Western News Company, 1870.

### Detailed Condition:

Archivally mounted for presentation.