



The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Tales

Bret Harte

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A wonderful collection of tales by Bret Harte, including *The Luck of the Roaring Camp*, first published in the August 1868 issue of the *Overland Monthly* and which helped push Harte to international prominence. The story is about the birth of a baby boy in a 19th century gold prospecting camp. The boy's mother, Cherokee Sal, dies in childbirth, so the men of Roaring Camp must raise it themselves. Believing the child to be a good luck charm, the miners christen the boy Thomas Luck. Afterwards, they decide to refine their behavior and refrain from gambling and fighting. At the end of the story, however, Luck and a villager, Kentuck, perish in a flash flood that strikes the camp. The flood theme may have come from the Great Flood of California, witnessed by Harte in 1862, which resulted from weeks of torrential rains throughout the entire state, combined with warming temperatures in mid January that melted the snowpack. In addition to the melt-waters, according to the *Sacramento Union* newspapers of the day, six to ten feet of rain fell in some mining areas near Grass Valley.

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