

too far to use a torpedo—our fishing gear was crippled, half of our crew were killed and escaping steam below showed that our engines were mortally hurt. The biggest shells were fired so as to ricochet along the water. We could see them coming at us by the enormous splashes they made, and they came straight. Finally a shell from the Brooklyn, I think, tore the insides out of our ship. We were utterly helpless in that storm of death.”—Dispatch to Chicago Tribune from Portsmouth, N. H., under date of July 17.

REPORTS OF FAMINE IN RUSSIA.

The news of the widespread famine in Russia is getting worse, and the picture of the suffering of millions of disinherited peasants is distressing and heartrending in the extreme. The Russian government has at last been compelled to break its silence, and has issued an official proclamation endeavoring to quiet the general alarm raised in Russian society and in the press. The government asserts that the private accounts of general starvation, “hunger-typhus,” and other effects of lack of nourishment, are all exaggerated, and that the facts published in many papers are only “the ordinary appearances of poverty and want to be met with in the existing conditions of life among the agricultural as well as other classes of the population.” This apology and admission are characteristic in themselves. What are the facts?

This official account admits that 19 provinces, with a population of 40,000,000, are affected by the bad crops of last year. Numerous private, but more authoritative than official, reports from various localities, state that a large number of peasants have been compelled to sell their horses and cows at an average price of four rubles (about eight shillings) per head; that in numerous cottages the hedges and the barns have been burnt through the winter as fuel; and the very thatch from the roofs has been consumed in food for the cattle; that “meals” are taken once a day, the bread consisting more of the bark of trees, leaves, and chaff, than of flour; that diseases have broken out everywhere, as the result of cold and hunger. In many provinces the peasants, to save themselves from utter starvation, offer their day’s labor with that of their horse for the sum of 20 kopecks—about four pence, English. The appalling facts the government calls “ordinary appearances of poverty and want,” and attributes them “to existing conditions of life,” for which the govern-

ment apparently considers itself not in the least responsible.

We quite agree that the abject poverty and want of the millions of the Russian people, amounting practically to incessant semi-starvation, are “ordinary appearances” in Russia, but the misery is not the outcome of natural conditions beyond human control. The soil of the provinces now affected by the famine is incomparably richer and more productive than that of Finland and the Baltic region, but the population, thoroughly Russian, is more ignorant, entirely under the control of the state church, bearing on its weary shoulders all the terrible weight of a double system which may be truly designated as that of czarism and papacy combined, affiliated, or rather assimilated and absorbed into one another. We say, therefore, without hesitation, that the Russian government is responsible, and to be blamed for all calamities which befall Russia, be it famine, epidemic, self-demolishing fanaticism, or what not. For it keeps systematically and intentionally the whole nation in a state of childish ignorance.—Extract from *The Anglo-Russian*, of London, as published in *Public Opinion*.

A MOUNTAIN INN IN SPAIN.

An extract from one of Poultney Bigelow’s articles entitled “A Yankee in Spain,” now running in *Harper’s Weekly*.

At length the narrow streets of San Juan took us into their wallowy embrace. The little donkeys that passed us sank up to their knees, while we had ceased to care how far we went, so long as each step brought us nearer to *Senor Matias*.

What a blessed moment that was when we finally dropped down on a bench in his inn yard and commenced to remove our boots! I say inn yard for want of a word in our language that fits. The house, from our point of view, did not commence until the upper story. That is to say, we came in upon a broad space partly occupied by a mule cart and partly by kitchen utensils. From this apartment radiated doors communicating partly into a stable for donkeys, partly into a storage-room for forage, partly into sleeping quarters for the servants and the poorer guests, and partly into a yard devoted to manure and chickens. There appeared to be no door to this house—at least not on the ground floor. The population of the village drifted in and out without restraint, and I must again note the excellent manners they exhibited towards strangers like ourselves, who at such a time must have been well worth star-

ing at. There is no sign to mark this house as an inn, nor is there anything to indicate that the establishment supplies likewise a large variety of general articles in the way of wine, groceries, bread and the things usually kept at small country stores. Five drovers were having their supper at a table near the mule cart as we came in, and a kindly old lady was cooking savory things for them at the big gypsy fire in the corner. She had no light to see by save an iron bowl filled with lard, from the corner of which emerged a slender thread which served as a wick. It was the light that shone in the tent of Hannibal two centuries before Christ was born, and it is the light which will shine for centuries to come in this part of the world unless from without comes a heavy jog to this backward people, a reminder that they must use improved tools or else become unfit to compete with their fellow-men in other parts of the world.

As I sat with the five muleteers, watching the kindly old lady cooking for a large household by the light of a lamp so feeble that it could hardly have sufficed to show the way in a mine shaft, I could not help wondering how long this state of things could last in a land that was a geographic portion of Europe, whose king claimed the title of “Most Catholic.” I seemed to be an anachronism with my kodak, my bike, my stylographic pen, my portable typewriter—all recent triumphs of Yankee invention. I felt that I was in a way like Mark Twain’s Yankee at the court of King Arthur, and that the people about might readily regard as witchcraft the mechanical devices so far beyond their power to appreciate or even to understand.

Now and then purchasers came in, who waited patiently until *Matias* turned up from the stable, or his wife from where she was preparing our beds, or the kindly old lady from the fireplace, or some other member of the large household. No one was in a hurry, or, if he were, he did not show it.

When we had unstrapped the luggage from our bikes and put on bedroom slippers (a great luxury at such a time) we went upstairs, the part of the house evidently reserved for distinguished strangers. Here was a broad hall opening out at the front into a dining-room which faced the village street. At the back the hall opened upon a garden full of palms and southern trees. The bedrooms were merely alcoves opening upon this hall, black spaces large enough to hold a bed and a chair. We were so glad to

get this much that we questioned nothing, but made ready for dinner.

We little thought that a prehistoric lamp and a gypsy fire could have made such a dinner as the one we enjoyed that night in this far-away little Spanish village. The event made such an impression on us that the two songsters of the party treated the community to one of their choicest selections from "Carmen," which, by the way, sounds to a Spaniard about as much like his music as cockney does like plantation talk to a darky. However, the people showed no resentment, and the host even paid us some hollow compliments on the sweetness of our English song. George tried to explain to him that it was not English, but Spanish, which only confirmed Matias in his original view. He paid us a high compliment that night, no less than waiting on us himself, with a vast sombrero on his head, a cigarette between his teeth, and a species of smock which he wore when dressed for parade. George thinks we earned this by reason of having sung "Carmen." That may be. I am inclined to think that we won his heart by taking an interest in his wine cellar, by sampling some specimens of his Alicante vintage, both red and white, and finally by selecting with knowledge the wine which he too regarded as best.

By the way, let me remark that throughout Spain I cannot remember seeing a single drunken man, not even among the soldiers. And Spain is the country where wine is cheaper than milk—at times not dearer than pure water. Here is stuff for the teetotaler. Perhaps if America were to remove the tax on wine, we might assist the cause of temperance. Whisky might at the same time be rated as a poison, and prohibited altogether, save upon medical advice. For myself, I believe in total abstinence from alcoholic drink. And the best way to fight alcohol is to make light wine abundant and cheap. The world over we find that the cheaper the wine the more temperate the people; for drunkards, commend me to England and the United States, where wine is heavily taxed.

Do you want to know what sort of dinner we got in this savage section of mountainous Spain? Go there and sing to Matias, and he will provide the same for you.

First course: cheese, salt fish, cold ham. These by way of a cocktail.

Second course: Matias brought up from the gypsy fire a casserole, hot from the ashes, filled with a delicious medley, which I recall having enjoyed at Senor Castelar's eventful dinner. I

cannot remember the native name, but there was much onion or garlic, potato, and pieces of meat, and many odds and ends not readily analyzed. Matias told me all about the make of this dish; and Ned vowed that he would give a grand dinner when he got home, just like this one. We had some inkling of what was to be the extent of our meal, for before each of us was a stack of plates, each plate portending a separate course. Thus, after the table was once laid Matias had only to take away, never to bring on plates. Of course we kept the same knife and fork throughout.

The third course was a tortilla, or Spanish omelet, through which were scattered raw beans, which looked rather pretty, but which we judiciously dropped into our pockets when Matias was not looking.

As fourth course came an excellently dressed lettuce salad, which confirmed me in my respect for Matias. Then came a variety of fruit—nuts, raisins, oranges—all grown in the neighborhood; and finally a little cup of black coffee that could not have been produced better at that famous little French place in New Orleans. We had drunk with this Lucullian banquet a wine of Alicante that would have been rated at three dollars a bottle, yet our bill for this luxury came in at the rate of one dollar a day for everything. At night we slept soundly on soft mattresses with clean sheets, and in the morning washed in tin bowls at the chairs out in the general hall. Do you wonder that we love Spain?

A SOUTH AFRICAN SNAP-SHOT AT KIPLING.

A small man, dressed to match his old pipe—and rather fond of cutting jokes at his own expense on both scores—with prominent spectacles and prominent chin, dark mustache, keen dark eyes, keen expression, quick movements, and astonishingly quick rejoinders in talking; the distinctive note of him was keenness altogether, but sympathetic keenness. Somehow one began with an idea that he would be a rather cocksure and self-confident person. He is, of course, quite young; far younger than he looks—it was those long early years of hard unrecognized newspaper work in India that "knocked the youth out of him;" he is ridiculously young to be so famous and to have earned his fame by so much entirely solid work, political, or rather national, as well as literary. Nevertheless, as one enthusiast expressed it, "he puts the least side on of any celebrity I ever met."

He takes his work hard. He is tremendously in earnest about it; anxious to give of his best; often dissatisfied with his best. He is quite comically dissatisfied with success; quite tragically haunted by the fear that this or that piece of work, felt intensely by himself in writing, and applauded even by high and mighty critics, is in reality cheap and shoddy in execution, and it will be cast in damages before the higher court of posterity. When Rudyard Kipling had written the "Recessional," which two hemispheres felt to be one of the very truest and soundest pieces of work done by any writing man in our day and generation, he was so depressed by its shortcomings of his private conception that he threw the rough copy in the waste-paper basket. Thence Mrs. Kipling rescued it. But for Mrs. Kipling we should have had no "Recessional." For his best patriotic poems he has declined to accept any pay.—Cape Times, as quoted in Public Opinion.

THE SEAFARING INSTINCT OF RESCUE.

Even the babies in Gloucester are not without this instinct, although they do not count among their playthings medals from the Humane society. It happened, this last summer, that a couple of children were playing in a spar yard. They had ventured out upon the rolling logs floating on the tide. The older boy slipped. He was six. Down he went, head first, of course. The other one, a child of three, ran over to where he saw his playmate disappear between the logs, lay down at full length, and grabbed him by the hair when he came up. But the logs were coming together, so the baby put one of his chubby legs between the closing of the crush, and began to shriek. Without that spontaneous coolness and ability to rescue, which he probably inherited from generations of seamen, there would have been another procession of mourning hacks in the old town.—Herbert D. Ward, in The Century.

THE DIFFICULTY OF TAXING PERSONAL PROPERTY.

For very many years an opinion has been prevalent that the great bulk of the personal property of the States, especially of the class denominated "securities," including stocks, bonds, notes, mortgages and such like, has escaped taxation. With a very few exceptions the great fortunes in this country are invested in such securities. There is, of course, in the aggregate a somewhat wide distribution of the stocks and bonds of some of our