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A Silent War

By

WALTER KIRTON
A SILENT WAR
A TYPICAL VICTIM OF THE SILENT WAR
A SILENT WAR
or
The Great Famine in Kiangpeh
by
WALTER KIRTON.

Being, to some extent, a reproduction of certain articles appearing in "The North-China Daily News" and the "North-China Herald," while the author was acting as a special correspondent for those organs in the Famine Area of Central China.

Copiously illustrated by photographs taken by the author and reproduced in certain supplements to the "North-China Herald."

Shanghai:
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1907.
My Campaigning Crumm
A Silent War means literally a state of contest free from noise. Such a contest is at present being waged in China in general, and in the district known as Kiangpeh in particular. While a food Famine rages throughout an area of some 40,000 square miles and affects some 10,000,000 people, there is a famine of a different kind affecting the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Empire of China—a dearth of everything that makes life bearable, decent, clean, and happy.

One of the most famous pronouncements made in the history of the world lays it down as an axiom that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, amongst which are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. It is the primary duty, if not the sole object, of a good Government to secure these rights to its people. I publish this little work with a view to supporting and assisting such a policy, however slight that support and feeble that assistance may be.

WALTER KIRTON,
Shanghai, China.

Savage Club, London,
March, 1907.
PREFACE

A Study of the economic history of Japan in modern times.

Chapter I: The Beginning of the Meiji Period

Chapter II: The Inception of the Industrial Revolution

Chapter III: The Sino-Japanese War

Chapter IV: The Russo-Japanese War

Chapter V: The World War

Chapter VI: The Post-War Period

Chapter VII: The Economic Development of Post-War Japan

Chapter VIII: The Economic Future of Japan

Chapter IX: The Role of Japan in the World Economy

Chapter X: The Lessons of Japanese Economic History

MATTEI KIRIYAMA

Preface: January 1950
Impressions

In the first place I must disown any idea or suggestion of being prejudiced or influenced by the opinions of any persons, whether of Chinese or foreign nationality, with whom I have come in contact during the course of my investigations. I have relied on my own eyesight and on that faculty for getting unaided at the bottom of things which is born of many opportunities and nurtured by much cultivation and exercise. From this standpoint I am able to say definitely that neither the general state of affairs nor the condition of the people in those parts of the province of Kiangsu that I have traversed have in any way been exaggerated by responsible persons.

As I have attempted to indicate in my communications the state of famine prevailing and the condition of several millions of people is almost indescribable both in its present gravity and in its potential abomination. And here it may to some extent be necessary for me to say that I am treating of this matter and regarding these people amongst whom I have been wandering, from the same standpoint and with the same sentiments as I have done, or would do, any other race of human beings with whom I have ever come in contact or with whom I expect ever to be associated. I am well aware that I lay myself open to the carping criticism if not the active sneers of certain prejudiced persons who would, if possible, deny to the bulk of the Chinese people that human equality which is the basis of all elementary existence not only on the earth as we know it, but—as it may be—throughout the Universe.
The peasant of China is not a subject for meretricious admiration, love, or undue consideration. His mentality is conspicuous by its absence; he is the victim of the most profound and damnable superstition; his instincts are but slightly, if at all, above those of the lowest beasts of the field. But—he is a human being, procreated and dying after the fashion of us all. If we consider the many curses, infusions, and disadvantages under which he and his have laboured from time immemorial and throw these into the balance when weighing up his position in the scheme of creation we cannot honestly do otherwise than recognize that while he is no subject for undue consideration he deserves and is entitled to our all-embracing charity and our profoundest commiseration. Under such conditions I treat of him and his affairs in as practical a manner as possible, and while making every allowance for his failings, both negative and positive, do not abdicate my status as his critic, although I am his well-wisher.

How many of these people are affected by this dearth of everything necessary to sustain life it is impossible for me to say with any approach to the most primal degree of accuracy. I have no reliable data to work upon. No census has ever been taken of the population of China. Also I have been handicapped by the impossibility of obtaining even the most restricted view of the terrain covered by the operations of the forces of famine, because there is no hill or eminence throughout the whole of those thousands of square miles from which the area immediately under survey might be gauged, the huts and other habitations enumerated and an estimate made of the number of inhabitants in that area from a count of their denizens. The country is flat level right away to the back of beyond. The horizon of sparse timber and eternal China mud-coloured soil interspersed with mud-built huts and mud-heaped dykes, is only a mile and a half away at the best
"EMACIATED BEINGS OF HUMAN BREED"
of times. The flats stretch out in their dreary infinitude, monotonous, bare of any green thing, blank and empty under the leaden winter sky. Occasionally a chattering magpie perches in the gaunt leafless boughs of the stunted trees through which I ride and eyes me questioningly; he oftentimes is the only bird or other living creature in the partly snow-covered landscape, save the lank, emaciated beings of human breed clothed in their lousy wadded rolls of dirty blue who throng the path and gaze, sometimes stolidly, at other times pleadingly and with many thumps of head on ground, at the strange vision of a European clothed in the weird garments of his civilization. Thus my own observations are of little worth as regards the numbers affected, and I have perforce to rely, to some extent, on the figures given me by others. Of these, of course, the most important are the Mandarin and the Missionary. Making allowance for the idiosyncracies of each, the sense of importance conveyed by the alleged control of more people than he actually has, of the former; the benevolent sentiment—combined in some measure with the same policy—which may lead to undue augmentation on the part of certain of the latter, I have arrived at a method whereby I discount the numbers served up for my consumption in proportion varying according to circumstances, but having a general, and sometimes very considerable, reductionary tendency. Sometimes it may be a ten per cent decrease, it is generally in the vicinity of thirty-three and one-third per cent; it all depends on the credence I attach to my informant which is usually gauged by his verbosity or otherwise, his tendency towards undue enthusiasm and the obvious head-lamps of his intelligence, environment and other pointers with which mankind out of its first youth may be to some extent familiar.

For instance, in this manner, I estimated the number of people who inhabit the district of which Tsingkiangpu may be considered the centre, who are affected by the
famine at 1,500,000, and of these the hsien of Antung contains from 750,000 to 800,000. This district was reported to be the poorest in the whole famine area, so I made an extended journey as possible through it. I obtained the only horse the city of Antung possesses and with an escort of two soldiers—originally furnished me by the Taotai of Tsingkiangpu—a couple of runners or guides from the local yamen and my own man, I traversed an area of some 350 square miles. And here I may say that travelling in those parts and at this season of the year (winter) is one of the toughest bits of work of its kind that I have ever undertaken. Everything moved at a snail's pace; it was impossible to get more than a back-breaking sort of walk out of the rough-coated uncouth Antung nag and I worked my passage every foot of the way. Similarly, in our boat on the Grand Canal, we travelled some twenty-five li during twenty-four hours, wind, rain, current, and the equivalent for "Maskee! To-morrow can do" being all against us.

Now, the hsien of Antung may be the poorest part of the province of Kiangsu or of the whole of China for all I know, but this much I do know that it has no right to be poor. Its soil is the same as that of all the rest of the Yangtze delta; there is very little difference between its climate and that of the great grain-growing areas of North America and France. In some parts carbonates and nitrates of soda and saltpetre whiten the surface of the country, and these are generally avoided by the inhabitants. While making no pretence to an expert knowledge of agriculture I have not lived off and on in many countries without learning something about the crops off which I have sometimes been compelled to live, their growth and cultivation, and I know that nitrates, etc., are valuable fertilizers and that saltpetre is essential to the growth of the tobacco plant. It was altogether in the negative sense that the value of the
THE FLOODED COUNTRY  

DYKE  

OLD BED OF YELLOW RIVER

VIEW TAKEN FROM SUMMIT OF DYKE SHOWING THE DIFFERENCE IN LEVEL (ABOUT 25 FEET) 

OF THE OLD YELLOW RIVER BED AND THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY
country, from an agricultural point of view, was at that time apparent. There was not a green blade of any plant or herb to be seen throughout the whole country, with the exception of a few sprigs of onions that I saw striving to grow in one holding and which would of course be growing in some other places as well. But, generally speaking, there was not enough green stuff throughout the whole countryside to graze the proverbial goose, and I must here point out that to see one square mile of the famine country is, virtually speaking, to see the whole. And yet a wheat-growing land, such as it is primarily, is also capable of raising such crops as turnips, mangold wurzels, and other roots, beside sweet-potatoes and pea-nuts during the winter months. Again, the whole area, though bare, was completely tilled—superficially, and ready for sowing. From information which I sifted in the usual manner I estimated that about a third of the tracts were sown with seed, the balance being absolutely empty and non-productive.

Disregarding, for a moment, the question of the floods which were the immediate cause of this distress, I will proceed with an analysis of the technical cause of the poverty of the country which is to a great extent responsible for the present state of its inhabitants. The people evidently almost completed their tillage work prior to sitting down and awaiting their inevitable destiny. I saw a few isolated cases of this elementary tillage proceeding, men with an archaic plough drawn by a steer or heifer the size of a short-horn calf, sometimes with a donkey running alongside, cutting a shallow furrow of from six to eight inches deep. One of the greatest factors in the poverty is, obviously, this shallow tillage which scratches, and has scratched for generations, the surface only of a depth of soil such as few other parts of the world possess, while no fertilizer worth talking about has been put into it.
Another factor is that although the country is subject to floodings during exceptionally heavy rainy seasons no conservation of water is attempted on individual farms or holdings and thus, in periods of drought, no irrigation is possible. These appear to me to be two material causes of the initial poverty of this country; the more personal or ethical causes will be dealt with hereafter.
PORTION OF THE REFUGEE CAMP AT CHINKIANG
Facts

A GLANCE at the map shows that the famine area is traversed by the Grand Canal. In conjunction with this great feat of engineering certain other channels and waterways have been from time to time constructed. Some of these are in use, one to wit the Yen Ho, or Salt Canal, on which I journeyed to and from Antung, and which runs eastward and northward into the Yellow Sea. Others have been constructed—and forgotten.

The same glance will show the old course of the Yellow River and leads to the presumption, even if it is not marked “Found Dry in 18—,” that this is a dried-up river bed. This course is defined by huge dykes, built of the soil of the country, which also form lateral highways along which the people travel with their primitive wheelbarrows. At this season the centre of the channel so defined is occupied, in places, by a stagnant stream or series of disconnected reaches averaging some thirty yards in width and of unknown depth, but presumably shallow. In the summer months it is a wide river lapping the dykes. I travelled along one of these banks for some distance, crossing six wash-outs in fifteen miles. There were many more incipient wash-outs that I did not count; they only need a slight rise in the summer river to make them complete. No sign of any attempt at their repair was evident.

To illustrate further the argument to which these remarks lead up, attention must be called to the fact that the Grand Canal crosses this old bed of the Yellow River in the vicinity of Tsingkiangpu—a few miles to the westward thereof—and below the system of “locks” or “Tszar”
which soon afterwards—when travelling North—raises the boat of the traveller some ten to twelve feet above the winter level of the Canal at that place. Thus those parts of the country with which I am at present dealing are completely at the mercy not only of the natural accumulation of rain water due to their low-lying position, but of the overflow from the higher levels of the Grand Canal plus the overflow from the rotten banks of the old Yellow River bed.

Not only are the dykes before mentioned in a bad condition, but the banks of the Grand Canal for the major portion of the distance between Yangchou and Chingho, i.e., its lower reaches, are in a state of disrepair impossible of exaggeration and disgraceful to all and any of those authorities under whose control they may happen to be. The great banks which originally were of such dimensions as to render them fit for the laying of a railroad on the top are now broken down in some places and others show signs of total neglect which would be obvious to the merest tyro. The bed of the canal is silted up to such an extent that a steam-launch, drawing six feet of water as a maximum, with which I was travelling, ran aground in midstream and remained there for six hours. This state of affairs is not confined to the lower reaches. Ten miles below Suchien there is another "lock." The canal at this place is about 100 yards wide and three to four feet deep, with the exception of a narrow channel only navigable by one boat at a time. The earthworks abutting on the masonwork of the lock have been washed away, the water of the canal has been allowed to meander all over the place; nothing has been done to repair the damage, although it is evident it has been in this state for many years and the lock stands—a monument of incompetent neglect and vicious dereliction of duty. And yet it is credibly reported that at Huaian there is a likin station, established for the purpose of obtaining funds for the
upkeep of the canal, which yields the holder of the supreme billet an income sufficient to enable him to retire upon after he has held the post for a year.

Among the photographs I have taken is one of an antique dredger lying moored at Tsinkiangpu. This vessel, to the certain knowledge of several gentlemen in the vicinity, has been lying where she is at present for the last ten years, and her appearance confirms this assertion, yet her complement have drawn, and are still drawing, pay for "dredging the canal." At intervals along the great water highway certain guard-boats are to be seen, they are generally bunched together at spots convenient to some city and are of the junk pattern, built of wood, varnished, and—mirabile dictu—spotlessly clean. Their crews seem to have little else to do but keep them scoured. But that applies solely to the vessel, its personal accommodation and running gear. Its armament is invariably an iron gun of ancient pattern, either a small carronade or three-pounder, mounted on a timber carriage; in fact the ship's gun of bygone centuries. On my passage up the canal I spotted one of these "war-junks" anchored off the city of Yangchow; in the muzzle of its barker—in place of a tompion—was a fish. A month afterwards I repassed the same vessel in the same place and the remains of the same fish—presumably—were still there. It may have been placed there for "luck," and I am inclined to think that this is so from the fact that the boat we were travelling on was doctored prior to our embarking by the blood of a pig that had been killed on board and its vital fluid smeared all round the bluff bows, presumably for the purpose of securing that desirable and mystic influence. One never knows how far the extraordinary superstition which apparently governs every action of this most extraordinary people will go.

But—the gun of the guard-boat is not for use. It is only there for purposes of "Makee look-see." By implica-
tion it stands as a notice "This is a gun—take care how you behave," and suffices for preserving a little order along the canal. The absurdity of all was demonstrated to me time and again while on my voyage. The laodah of my boat would never travel after dark because he was afraid that he might not reach some safe place where he might tie-up for the night, and he always stopped with other boats even if it was long before sundown. I saw at least a hundred of these guard-boats but only one was under way. They remained together—I presume for mutual protection.

Similarly, when travelling through the country I was always accompanied by soldiers as an escort. These were provided by the local officials and without them it was, to some extent, dangerous to move. In some places the danger might accrue from the curiosity of the crowds at the sight of a foreigner, in others from the bands of robbers who sometimes roam over the country. Now I am informed that the "soldiers" were not sent with me to protect me by force of arms, their antiquated and rusty weapons—when they carried such—would have done more harm to themselves than to their opponent in the event of their using them in the accepted manner. They protected me by force of "face" a characteristic of many peoples, but pre-eminently of the Chinese. In effect their protection was afforded in this manner. Supposing my party to be "Held-up"; the soldier would not attempt to fire his carbine but would argue with the robbers after this fashion "What do you mean by causing me dishonour in stopping the distinguished, etc., etc., personage under my care?" and he would give a sign. This being the signal of fellowship in the "secret society" to which—I am informed—most of the "soldiers" and robbers belong, we should have been permitted to go on our way scatheless. No robber would dare, under such circumstances, rob the person so protected as not only would he
THE FIRST FRUIT OF FAMINE
be causing his comrade to "lose face" by so doing but he would have the hottest of hot times when he was either caught or attended the next conclave of his society; or in fact, whenever or wherever he was found. But, Heaven help the next poor benighted traveller coming his way without a "guard."

These illustrations are typical of that essence of negation which apparently plays such a paramount part in Chinese policy, politics and administration from the highest to the lowest and most insignificant detail. "Squeeze" and "Face" apparently still control this part of the great Chinese Empire despite "Edicts" and "Reforms." This may all be stale to some of my readers and I may not yet have absorbed a complete appreciation of the niceties or nastinesses of Chinese Administration, and although I may appear quixotic and more sanguine than circumstances warrant I still find difficulty in believing that even the most puerile government would willingly and knowingly permit of a continuance of such a state of affairs, if their existence was authoritatively and independently brought to its notice. At any rate I can do no harm by thus drawing attention to these things in the hope that those enlightened gentlemen, who must inevitably control the destinies of their country at no distant date, will note them and use their influence to secure the amelioration in the position of many millions of their less fortunate compatriots which such a reformation would bring in its train.
Horrors

About two miles outside the city of Chinkiang at the base of steep tree-crowned heights and adjacent to the cuttings and embankments of yellow earthworks which form the road-bed of the Shanghai-Nanking Railway lay the camps where some 17,000 of the refugees from the famine area were congregated. They were called camps—I suppose for lack of any more suitable term—but they were in reality a collection of huts built of the ever present reed mat, scattered over the face of the country without any semblance of order or design. They ran up the little valleys amid the spurs of the hills and stretched along the courses of the putrid streams like the tentacles of an octopus, scattered pell-mell and end-ways. In shape the huts resembled the tilt of a travelling waggon and covered a piece of ground some eight feet long by five feet wide, very similar to the tents of the nomad Romanies of the Balkan Peninsula.

These domiciles were inhabited by people whose appearance transcends that of any other of the numerous races of human beings that I have seen. If it were possible to make rags to order no effort of maker or machinery could approach, in result, that of the *deus* or *diabolus ex machina* which has fabricated the wherewithal in which these people are clothed and move and have their being at all times and seasons, both night and day. Their garments appear to be as ancient as the multitudinous graves that dot the landscape and amongst which the mat-huts of the living are indiscriminately built. These clothes cover beings whose facial appearance
beggars description save by comparison to that mythical individual whose portrait adorns certain advertisements of a famous soap and whose habitat is likewise and similarly comparisonable. Their habits and customs are on a par with that appearance; they exercise the animal functions of humanity within a pace's distance of their place of lying down and of eating; they sit in the welcome sunshine and search and scratch; they wander here and there with eyes bent on the ground looking for something edible or burnable; they expectorate impartially and profusely; they are the apotheosis of filth—and yet they are human beings.

They are Chinese, they live after the manner of their kind and as circumstances have forced them to live and they, themselves, are not to be blamed for the manner of their living. These were in distress, that was evident to the meanest intelligence. Doubtless all were not in that acute distress which has hitherto been associated with the word famine, for the simple reason that these were able to leave the famine area at an early period and got farther south than the majority of their fellows. The vast majority of them might be the inhabitants of any village in the vicinity of Shanghai, were it not for the fact that they were living on ground and sheltered by structures which proclaimed that they were only migratory.

But it was amongst the children and the women that the signs of suffering were most pronounced, and although some five per cent only of the whole mass disclosed sufficing evidence of distress, it must be remembered that with these people the pinch was only then beginning to be felt. Their own stock of supplies was exhausted and they were dependent on the dole of the local officials who daily cooked some two and a half tons of rice—making, say, six tons of food—which was served out by ticket at the cook-houses set apart or erected for the purpose. Certain astute individuals amongst the resident population of Chinkiang seized the opportunities for obtaining a free feed. Many
wheelbarrow coolies employed on the railway construction faked themselves up *à la refugee* and obtained a good sized bowl—full of rice prior to starting their day's work, turning up half-an-hour late—which led to this being found out.

Throughout the camps I saw the men, and women too, standing around—after they had consumed their food—and loaing the hours away. The men were able-bodied and in good condition, the majority of the women—and they are of a class accustomed to daily manual toil—were similarly capable of performing a day's labour, and yet nothing was being done. Not even a trench existed for sanitary purposes. The tracks over which the food and fuel for the camps had to be transported were roads only in name and the coolies with the wheelbarrows had to help each other in negotiating the almost impassable places. The men might have been set to work making proper roads. Stone for macadam abounds and the women—the young ones especially—might easily have been employed in breaking it. A few hours' work per day by those thousands would have put the roads in the vicinity in a fit state for years to come.

Again, on my way to call upon the Taotai I passed the entrance to the Grand Canal on the south bank of the river and traversed the bank of this famous "cut" for about a mile and a half. It may have been a canal once upon a time, now it is a series of putrid pools in which lie junks and boats which will not be moved until the summer floods enable them to pass over the silted-up reaches. I asked His Honour about these matters. He said that he had no money with which to initiate the work. I pointed out that he was spending a considerable amount on food for the refugees every day and that there was an abundance of tools of all the sorts needed for such a simple operation in the vicinity and at least ten thousand people who would be all the better for
"INTENSELY COLD." A STARVING VILLAGE HEADMAN
ABJECT AND TOTAL MISERY

"A RAGGED BUNLED-UP LITTLE PUPLUM"
being employed. I believe he said that he would think about it. And there the matter rests.

The need for this work was brought home to me in a very practical manner when on my way North from Chinkiang by the Grand Canal. The steam-launch towing the barge on which I was travelling ran aground in mid-canal. No effort of the entire crew of launch and barge could shift her and after they had all sat down suddenly, as the result of the rotten rope—with which they were attempting to pull her off—parting, they sat down quietly to await the arrival of another launch. In the meantime the stoker got rid of his ashes by simply throwing them overboard and thus doing his best to increase the original cause of the trouble. Six hours afterwards the steam-launch turned up and after the usual amount of furious shouting, accompanied by an infinitessimal amount of work, but withal an expenditure of a vast amount of misdirected energy we were towed off and ultimately arrived at Tsinkiangpu in the early morning of a cold but sunny day. No sign of the famine had been visible the whole way up from Chinkiang, with the exception of boatloads of people who might, or might not, be refugees, but the sights in this city made up for all such deficiencies. The narrow streets were thronged, and it was with the greatest difficulty that we made our way through the surging masses. A guard of soldiers with fixed bayonets was stationed at the bridge spanning the first "lock" on the canal, to keep unauthorized refugees from crossing, and thus making their way southwards. I soon found that the main aim of the officials was to induce the people—by hook or crook—to return to their homes and any attempt on the part of refugees to get farther afield was sternly discouraged. At the bridge-head we saw what was to us the first fruit of famine, a dead Chinese lying in the sun at the place where he had dropped, with his dog curled up at his feet. Pulling his jacket aside with my stick, I
saw that the ribs were literally through his skin, this being cracked and the body being absolutely fleshless. Apparently he was a man of about thirty, large framed. I suppose that the body—stripped—might weigh about eighty to ninety pounds.

I have seen Chinese villagers and coolies in various parts of the country, in Manchuria and Chihli, in Shantung and Anhui, as well as in Kiangsu and the vicinity of Shanghai; I have also seen the Korean in his native sewer-like habitat; the gentle Hindoo of those parts of the Central Provinces as yet undefiled by the touch of the white sanitary reformer; and various other breeds and races of elementary humans, black, brown, yellow, mud-coloured and alleged white, but never before have I seen or even imagined such beings as I saw here. Also I have seen life and death in their crudest forms and with the lid off; battle, murder, sudden death—and worse—but never before have I seen such concentrated misery, such indescribable horrors, as were to be witnessed in the streets and in the camps outside the city of Tsingkiangpu. I am informed that in normal times the city is fairly prosperous and not unduly crowded, but with the advent of some half-a-million refugees, ten per cent of whom were absolutely famished, thirty per cent in a state of starvation more or less acute, and the rest not having a tithe sufficient to eat, the sights encountered at every stride were such as to make the most hardened campaigner or even a callous Chinophobe experience a sensation of horror in which pity plays a predominant part. I have never seen famine before, but I have been on short rations, have felt my belt getting nearer and nearer my backbone from all sides, and I have a slight inkling of what real proper hunger means, but starvation is another thing, and there was not a scrap of animal or vegetable matter left in the dirt or dust or among the cobble stones in the pavement on the streets of the city.
MASKED
But if the sights in the city itself were bad, the scenes in the camps a mile or more outside the walls were worse. In saying this I must not fail to accord a great deal of praise to those officials who attended to the laying out of the camps, which were symmetrical and well designed for the purpose for which they were intended. They were situated on a flat plain of the same sort of soil as that common to the whole delta of the Yangtze. Some 125 of my paces square (about the same number of yards), a deep ditch surrounded them and the soil from this excavation was heaped up as a wall. Inside this the mat-huts were ranged close together in rows resembling streets, not indiscriminately as at Chinkiang, but in orderly sequence. Close packing was the rule and I counted several squares, finding that the huts numbered from 1,000 to 1,200 in each. In the centre of each square mud houses were built for the accommodation of the officials in charge, for use as offices, etc., and streets led at right angles from these to the gates with which each square was provided. At these gates a watchman was stationed and, on occasion, a patrol of soldiers was within call. A fort, of mud, on the walls of which sentries paced up and down, commanded the major portion of the great encampment. So much for the general arrangements.

Inside these walls and ditches was congregated a sum of human suffering which would require the pen of a Zola to adequately describe. Hunger and abomination, the abomination of desolation—and worse. They were eating leaves and grass and something that might be rice made into a gruel. They were—well, the truth is that I can't say anything more about them except that they were human beings in or approaching an extremity of the direst description.

The relief afforded by the officials and others took the form of coin only, and wheelbarrows of copper ten-cent pieces continually passed through the crowds. This had
caused the city inhabitants, as one man, to turn rice and grain merchant, and every alley was lined with their stalls and booths containing baskets of rice and corn of various qualities and prices.

Around these the refugees clustered haggling and bargaining for the worth of a few cash and watching every grain that might be spilled over the lip of the bamboo measure with a dull wolfish glare of the eye such as only starvation brings. What struck me very forcibly was the comparative quietude of the crowd; there was very little of that shouting and gesticulation with which the foreign resident in China is so familiar, and this together with the haste with which the purchaser hurried off after completing the deal carried a significance impossible of misconception.

Again, another remarkable thing—to the impartial critic—was the orderliness of these hungry thousands. It boots not to enquire, or state, whether their behaviour was influenced by fear or respect for the law or by any other sentiment or consideration. The fact is that I neither saw or heard of any cases of theft or looting. Whatever may be the limitations of the Chinese peasant or whatever place in the scale of civilization or humanity may be allotted him, it is nevertheless an incontrovertible fact that there are few—if any—other races or countries where, if half-a-million hungry people were gathered together in such circumstances, they would behave as these people do, leader or no leader, law or no law, fear or no fear.

But—how long will this respect for "law and order" continue.
DEAD
"EMACIATED TO THE LAST DEGREE"
We arrived at Tsingkiangpu just in time to see the vast accumulation of human misery in its concentration camps at its height as within twenty-four hours the great dispersal of the refugees commenced. I had numbered forty-eight camps, but after that I lost count, as darkness came on before my tally was completed, and coming back to my starting point via Shiba and Wanginza amidst the two streams of refugees—one inward and one outward bound—which crowded the embankment of the Yellow River, along which the road runs I became to a certain extent confused as to the camps I had already seen and also as regards the points of the compass. But I saw enough to convince me that my estimate of 450,000 people was well within the mark and that I had witnessed more human suffering concentrated in one spot than I ever have witnessed before and such as I hope I shall never see again.

The sun had shone brightly all the day and the night was clear and starlit. The murk and reek of countless smudges of burning vegetable matter, which took the place of fires in the camps, befouled the clear atmosphere and hid the huts and their inhabitants in a veritable inferno. It was intensely cold and it required no effort of imagination on my part to picture the state of the thousands who had experienced the short-lived beneficence of the sun's rays during the day, but who were now crouching in their flimsy shelters without extra clothing, fireless and famished. I had taken some snap-shots while the light was good and now—once again—I wished for
some portable instrument which, instead of taking pictures, would register or record sounds. I have often longed for a tool of this description for the purpose of illustrating or sound-picturing a modern battle, wherein little is seen compared with the noise that is heard, and now I wanted it to record the sounds emanating from a source which brings the utter and abject misery of such strife as I was then witnessing right home to the most indifferent or leathery intelligence—the ceaseless wailing of countless babies.

I had only been away from Shanghai for ten days and almost every moment had brought its experiences and sensations, but of all the things I saw and heard during those few short winter days the wails of these waifs of destitution were the most haunting and pitiful. They were everywhere and ever-present, the ragged, bundled-up little plumplings, helpless, and dependent as every one of us was at one time, no matter whether we are heirs of all the ages with a bloody flag to guard us and a purse at our command to procure us the frills and frills of a bone-dry civilization or the quotient of a spasm of animal passion, derelict by the wayside.

Shrapnel and common shell make some ghastly sights out of flesh and bones and blood, but ghastlier far than the sudden death is the slow sure starvation that is written on the faces of these myriad combatants in a silent, hopeless war. I am haunted by a sight that may be laid by my recounting it. I was returning from a long journey of inspection of the surrounding famine country. The "Ay-Ays" of one poor little waif had died away in the distance and another was approaching. A young and good looking woman was coming towards me with her baby slung in front and facing her. She gazed straight to her front with such a look of abject and total misery on her face as I shall never forget. The child wailed with that abandon that only hunger brings and the tears were
"ON THE ROAD"
HOPELESS AND HOMELESS—TREKKING SOUTH
running down the mother's face. She was helpless. As for myself—my vocabulary is limited—I could only ride onward, sick and sore in that indefinite organ of sentience ordinarily termed "heart" and—reverting to first principles—mutter to myself, "My God, My God."

Forty-eight hours after our arrival we left Tsingkiangpu bound East to the hsien of Antung, whose population numbers some 800,000 and whose area is so many hundred li—it boots not to enquire how many or to attempt to be definite. During the summer the major portion of this area was under water, and in fact the space between the walls of the "city" (?) is mostly covered with water at this moment. The embankment which is supposed to dam back the Yellow River in flood-time runs close to the walls and forms the great highway through the country. I marched along this for some fifteen miles on my way to Wuchiangkou and other villages and in that distance I crossed six large washouts, to say nothing of smaller ones. I was accompanied by certain servants of the Magistrate of Antung, a most courteous and energetic official, who genuinely feels the position of those under his control and is doing everything in his power to help them, and when I asked them why these places had not been repaired, they told me that their Mandarin had only taken up his appointment within the week and that the former occupier of the position had no money to spend on such works. This was the usual answer. I have heard it now more times than I can remember. It applied to the making of roads in Chinkiang, the dredging and embanking of the Grand Canal, the ditching and road-making in the vicinity of Tsingkiangpu et hoc genus omne, and will, I suppose, continue to the end of the chapter. In the meantime nothing was being done to remedy the original cause of all this trouble, primarily due to the disgraceful way in which the great engineering feats of a former generation have been allowed to go to rack and ruin by the authorities of the latter and present days.
On the road from the great camp we overtook and passed many thousands of the disbanded refugees, who were travelling home with all their belongings. I do not know, for certain, how these people were induced to return. I was told by one person, for whose veracity I can vouch, that promises of support had been made to all of them and that they were told that the Government would supply them with food, or money, till the harvest. There is no doubt that small-pox had broken out in the camps and it was likewise desirable that such a huge congregation of people should be broken up for sanitary reasons; but I very much doubt that food will be forthcoming for a tithe of them. The Magistrate made no concealment of his opinion that half of the people in his hsien will die, and nothing but a miracle can prevent it, as I can vouch for myself after my experiences. Such figures not only make the numbers of Tsingkiangpu comprehensible, but give reason for wonder as to why they were not larger. This will be explained in a subsequent chapter.

The dying part of the business had already begun. I visited hamlets innumerable in the course of my round-about journey through the district of Antung and in every collection of dwellings there was either a dead or a dying person, some contained several. There was not the least shadow of doubt about the cause; it was nothing else than starvation. The appearance of the people is masked by the great bundles of clothes or rags that they wear, but in some instances I got a few of them to disclose the upper parts of their anatomy for photographic purposes and for my own information. They were emaciated to the last degree, fearful and horrible—living skeletons. The wealthier amongst them were eating a sort of gruel made of leaves and peanuts and perhaps a little flour or rice, and their surroundings proclaimed that in normal times they lived a very decent and satisfactory existence—judged by Chinese standards.
THE DAILY MEAL
At Wuchiangkou the officials were distributing money. A crowd besieged the small *yamên* on all sides. Stalls and booths containing peanuts, rice, and a sort of biscuit baked from dark flour stood amid the crowds, and the row was deafening. Fortunately I had an escort of five men or I should have had a rough time, as I was the first foreigner ever seen in those parts, at least in foreign kit. Wheelbarrows loaded with boxes of copper cents were arriving as I got there and were being hiked through a hole in the wall of the compound. By this entrance I also made my way to the presence of the official in charge. Now, of course, he was courteous, but this is the way the "business" was being conducted. In a ramshackle room, crammed indiscriminately with boxes of coin, chairs of ancient fake, straw, fires, tea equipment officials and hangers-on, about fifty of them were all talking at once. Outside a squad of suppliants crouched on the ground, each holding up a flimsy paper in his left hand. Immediately one was attended to the whole lot rose and yelled *en masse* and were reduced to order by the sticks of the hangers-on. The ticket—a scrap of coarse-fibred tissue paper—stated the owner's property and number of his family. Against it another chit was issued entitling him to a certain amount; which he then obtained—in his turn—over the way at another "office" conducted in a similar manner. I suppose it was all right, but I have my doubts, with a very big D.

The far-reaching nature of this catastrophe may be gathered from the fact that although all the ground in the district I traversed is prepared for sowing, prepared that is in the trumpery way in which these people still do things—scratching the surface of as rich a country as there is anywhere with ploughs that till only to a depth of six inches or thereabouts—only a third of it is sown with seed. The rest is empty; the seed has gone to feed the people, people who will be dead long before what little seed there is in the ground sprouts.
Reflexions and Contentions

At the various halting places on my journey of investigation of the conditions obtaining in the famine area, especially in those places where refugee camps had been formed, I was constantly told that the refugees in camp numbered only a tithe of the population from the districts affected by the famine, and one of the reasons given for this was that the majority of the people had remained at home owing to the difficulty of travelling to the place of concentration. At first I was rather sceptical as to the bona fides of this explanation and found it difficult to believe that the villages from whence the people I saw in the camps had come had not been altogether and totally evacuated by their inhabitants. It was only when I got out to those villages and traversed the roads to them myself that I grasped the reasonableness and truth of the dictum. And yet there is nothing strange about it after all, nothing strange—that is—when the facilities for communication which are the outcome of progress and civilization are forgotten. If we eliminate all methods of locomotion save that provided every man by his own limbs and physical energy we lengthen not only the period occupied by his journey, but also the odds against his making any journey at all.

Especially is this the case in a part of the world where macadam is not and where in wet weather the micaceous mud of the Yangtze delta is unrelieved by any more ancient geological formation until the neighbourhood of the foot-hills just north of Suchien is reached, where the old red sandstone underlies and out-crops
BROTHER AND SISTER—STARVATION AND DISEASE
from the sempiternal Kiangsu muck. The primeval tracks, which, however ill the term fits them, have still to be termed roads for lack of some more definite and explicit cognomen, are roads in a sense of being a way or direction only. To describe their appearance would involve the use of more space than I have at my disposal; suffice it for me to say that they are generally formed of a single wheel-track—the main "road"—and certain footpaths adjoining it, and that no more work has been expended on their construction than that passively and unintentionally performed by wayfarers along their several routes.

The going is heavy at most times, but when rain falls the travail is indescribable and provocative of much profanity. The mud obtains the consistency and slipperiness of deep butter, upon which it is impossible to step without slipping, however one may be shod; moreover it clings to everything with which it comes in contact with a fervour and abandon passing the love of woman. At such times it is impossible to travel far on foot, and as there is hardly an animal of any sort fit for traction or carrying purposes left in the famine area, it is easily comprehensible that people in a weak state have been unable to travel to the cities where, it was rumoured, they would obtain relief. Therefore it was only a few of the most indigent, who were at the same time physically fit to make the journey, that concentrated at such spots as Tsingkiangpu.

I have received all-sufficing proof of the fact that it is impossible to travel in wet weather and also that the country is denuded of traction and riding animals. A few mules, donkeys, and horses are still to be seen throughout the famine area, though very rarely, but they are only a drop in the vast ocean of dearth which has overrun these tracts of as fertile a country as the world possesses. I told you that the Magistrate at Antung commandeered the only horse in his hsien for my use, and this was one out of about ten that I saw during the whole of my journey. For
two days in Suchien, I moved Heaven—as represented by my most kind and courteous hosts the Missionaries—earth, whose minister may be the Mandarin, and the other powers, with whom the Fourth Estate is commonly supposed to be familiar, to obtain a cart or some other means of conveyance to transport myself and my few effects to Hsüchoufu, without result.

The reason I did not start to cover the distance on foot was that the task was impossible for several reasons; the principal one being that it was raining and the whole country was covered with mud as before described. I made actual acquaintance with this factor in the situation when on a short expedition through the surrounding country. The weather was fair at starting, but towards afternoon it began to rain. I persevered until my progress equalled three steps forward to two and a half backward with goodness knows how much side-slip thrown in. After my companion had embraced the earth suddenly and spasmodically we returned, and I again had to console myself with the inevitable “Maskee! To-morrow can do” of China. A subsidiary reason was that it is necessary, when travelling in that part of the world, to carry one's bed and board with you. Not only has the famine denuded the outlying parts of food and animals, but even the highways have little native accommodation along them, as the owners of the inns have nothing to keep open with.

When this state of affairs is considered it affords further proof—if such were required—of the severity of this catastrophe. The dearth of animals is one of the most striking features of the famine. It is now March, April, May, June and a part of July at least must elapse before an ounce of food is obtained from the only source of permanent supply—the soil. I mean solid food—grain. The food that would in normal times go towards feeding the animals is now being eaten—if it
SORDID SQUALOUR
is not already consumed in many places—by the human beings themselves. I have seen them eating it, the grass and chopped chaff, the leaves and stalks, all boiled up into a sort of vegetable burgoo which blows them out, causes dropsy and other complaints and eventually will lead to famine-fever, typhus, and other horrors which sentiment prescribes should only be termed "unmentionable."

In its bearing on the practical combatting of this vast mass of distress the problem of transport is of the greatest importance. In November and December the famine region was blessed with a spell of mild dry weather such as is most unusual at that season—so I am told, and comparatively little difficulty, beyond those of a normal character, would have been experienced within those months and the first two weeks of the year in conveying any amount of foodstuffs to the places off the Grand Canal, where such is urgently required. But no relief supplies had arrival up to the time I left Suchien, and then the weather showed every sign of a long spell of wet. Another thing to be considered is that the flour forwarded by the Shanghai Relief Committee is packed in thin hags which not only tear at the slightest provocation, but which afford no protection to their contents from rain or moisture of any sort.*

This, in conjunction with other matters, brings me to the crux of this chapter and for the proper setting-forth of my ideas it is necessary for me to recapitulate to some slight extent what I have ascertained about the famine. Throughout an area which is at present indeterminable from lack of any authentic data, but which I know to be vast and to amount to many thousands of square miles, some millions of people are on the verge

* This has now been rectified, as the result of Capt. Kirton's suggestion and the flour is shipped in double bags.
of starvation; many dying and many hundreds of thousands must inevitably die of hunger. No food can be obtained from the great source—the soil—for at least four months more.

The Chinese Government is furnishing these people with a certain amount of money, for which it gets no return in the way of work done. What the total sum expended and to be expended will amount to nobody knows, but some idea may be obtained from the fact that in the hsien of Suchien alone the relieving officials have distributed the sum of $130,000 by the Chinese New Year. The population is some 500,000, and this was the first distribution, several others being contemplated—so it is stated—as the famine increases in virulence. But whatever is done, through any and every agency whatsoever, there is no disguising the fact that there will not be available a tithe of the money necessary to keep all of the millions involved alive.

I cannot too strenuously impress it upon my readers and the authorities in charge of the relief that some criterion will have to be decided upon as to whom shall be saved from starvation. You cannot save all. Whom are you going to save? What test, other than that of work, can you make and enforce? In this day of famine the ancient saw holds very good indeed, "If a man will not work neither shall he eat," and there are six months of hard work in view.
Comparisons and Realities

THREE days of strenuous negotiation and canvassing of the districts surrounding Suchien had obtained me no means of conveyance, but at last the Magistrate came to the rescue and impressed a cart which had been engaged in the transport of coin for the local banks and placed it at my disposal. Although I was loth to make use of such methods I subsequently salved my conscience by paying the owner much more than the official rates and practically demonstrated to him that although necessity knows no law, it sometimes pays to make a virtue of it.

I dwell upon this trifling incident merely to emphasize what I have said in former communications about the dearth of transport in the famine area. This applies not only to vehicles drawn by animals, but to the main means of conveyance—the wheelbarrow. Of course the barrows are still in being, but many of the owners are incapacitated from wheeling them owing to insufficiency of food. In normal times the coolies of Kiangsu can live well on about fifty cash a day and cover his sixty to ninety li with a heavy load without turning a hair, but in January it required at least 100 cash to provide him with anything like a square meal. When to this is added the state of the "roads" in winter time the problem of the transport of supplies in those parts of the country at any distance from the Grand Canal and other open waterways becomes almost impossible on business and commercial lines, unless the price of the commodity thus conveyed is greatly increased.
While travelling through this country of canals and dykes, of flat level land and monotonous scenery it is impossible for me to refrain from comparing it to another and a similar country—Holland. It is the Netherlands—on a large scale. Its formation is the same. Both countries have been formed by the alluvial deposits from rivers, the Scheldt and the Yangtze. The soil of both is deep and fertile; both are subject to the danger of periodical floods and each has been the field of great engineering enterprises and undertakings for the purpose of facilitating communication by water and preventing the ravages of the same element. Here the comparison ceases. In the Netherlands public effort has been maintained and seconded by private enterprise, with the result that although that country is in a far more dangerous natural position than Kiangsu she is prosperous and wealthy. The peasant of Holland has his windmill, which grinds his corn and pumps the superfluous water off his land, and on occasion—if such were required—could irrigate the same. These engines are not marvels of elaborate mechanism but simple, crude, though effective appliances such as any man with an inkling of mechanics and a few tools could construct. The Chinese peasant is not a fool with his hands, as is evident in more ways than one, although he may not be an ultra-skilled workman. The windmill would be quite as effective on the endless plains of Kiangsu as it is on the mudflats of Holland.

The dykes of Holland are used, to some considerable extent, as the road beds of railways. The Dutchman of the last century found the major portion of the necessary construction work already done for him by his ancestors and seized the opportunity thereby afforded for facilitating his communications and enabling him to transport supplies to any part of his country.

The canals of Holland are thronged with power-driven craft which afford quick transport and add greatly to the
THE RELIEF COMMITTEE'S FLOUR BEING LANDED ON THE BANK OF THE GRAND CANAL.—NOTE HOUSES IN BACKGROUND
wealth of the whole people... it took me four days to travel, on the Grand Canal, from Tsingkiangpu to Suchien, a distance of some 130 miles.

It may be puerile to draw attention to these things and to compare a progressive European country with China, but—why should it be? Surely there are some among the many Chinese who have seen the benefits that progress brings who will be able to exert some influence in the direction of progress in these matters.

That this idea is feasible is strengthened by the report that certain gentry are organizing a scheme to reopen some of the old drainage ditches in the Tsingkiangpu districts which have been allowed to silt up and become useless. Should this news prove to be true in esse as well as in posse it will afford some slight evidence that the lessons of this famine will not be altogether disregarded. It is in these matters that those factors of a more ethical and personal nature, at which I before hinted, and which have a more practical effect on this situation than any question of deep tillage, fresh seed, drainage or water conservation, play a most prominent part. Until the peasant on his holding sees that his superiors perform their duty towards their common country by maintaining intact the great conveniences and facilities for communication handed down to them by past generations, it cannot be expected of him that he will make any attempt to raise himself out of the rut of sordid squalour and bestiality into which he has been forced and kept by the detestable system of squeeze and laissez faire with which this part of the province of Kiangsu—at least—is most abundantly cursed.

And, the pity of it all. In a land where everybody should be prosperous—floods or no floods—people are dying of starvation by the thousand. The wealth of the country, its manhood, womanhood, and childhood is being dissipated, and yet on every hand the cry is, "We have no money to do this, to do that, to do the obvious thing."
During one fortnight in Kiangpeh I saw more horrors than I witnessed during the campaign with Kuroki. At present they appear to be infinitely less useful than the casualties of conflict, but if they only arouse a sense of indignation at the criminal carelessness which initially caused these horrors and have the result of strengthening the hands of the true reformers of China these poverty-stricken myriads, whom only a miracle can save from destruction, will not have suffered and died—all unwittingly—in vain.

When the thermometer stands at some degrees below freezing point and the landscape is obscured by scurrying snow-flakes, traveling in a Peking cart through the bulk of China, over those huge "Back-Blocks" of country remote from the pseudo-civilization of the Treaty ports, is not only calculated to bring home to one the immensity of the country and the torpor and stagnation which has veiled it for untold centuries, leading to the neglect of most of those things pertaining to progress, but also to a sense of the most vivid commiseration for the millions of starving people who surround one on every hand. Hunger and cold, starvation and disease are now so familiar to me as to have lost their sting and seared my mind with the contempt bred of constant association.

But now these horrors are being augmented by another concomitant of famine—lawlessness. A few paces away from the track stand some new reed mats; they cover a man who had been attacked by robbers the night before while defending his scanty store of grain and had had his arm cut off by the sword of one of his assailants. He was lying where he had fallen and would do so till the official from the yamen came to make his inquest. The affair had happened on another man's land and I am informed that failing the capture of his actual assailants the owner of that land will have a very unpleasant time.

This is not an isolated instance of a lawlessness which, while more or less prevalent—so I am informed—
THE EFFECT OF STARVATION—BLOATED FACE
AND SWOLLEN BACK
IN HIS WINTER KIT—VILLAGER WITH BARK IN HIS HAND, SOME OF WHICH HE ATE
in these districts, in normal times, is now growing daily in extent and violence. Every man who is the fortunate possessor of a little grain or other foodstuff has now to guard it night and day. Every village has its watch-tower, every hamlet its concealed coign of vantage from whence the movements of strangers can be scanned and if necessary their approach prevented by the ancient blunderbusses and other weapons of mediæval make which are to be found in these villages. A favourite form of fort is provided by the small circular sacks of forage or straw which some of the more fortunate inhabitants still possess. This is hollowed out and the proprietor takes up his position in the snug cavity and projects his weapon through the easily-made loopholes.

All the way through the districts in the vicinity of Suchien I was struck with the general excellence of the houses and other surroundings of the vast majority of the inhabitants. This applies in a more or less equal degree to the rest of the country that I have traversed during the past month. Away from the cities the state of life of the peasant and the coolie compares most favourably with that of the peasantry and labourers of any other country that I have seen. Their adobe houses are—generally speaking—quite as good buildings as those of the majority of Scotch Crofters or of the Irish cabins of Galway, to say nothing about other races farther afield. Their land is diligently cultivated and none of it wasted, save where the ancestral graves cumber the means of life for the living, and there is an evidence of general prosperity which carries its own significance. I do not mean to use the term entirely in its Western sense, as of course it is the hand-to-mouth prosperity of the agricultural labourer of all countries.

The mention of graves inevitably leads to the matter of the present method of sepulture amongst the Chinese. As I have said, time and again, the whole area devastated
by famine is flat country. Naturally there are a few places where the ground is higher than elsewhere and these spots are invariably devoted to the burial of the dead, presumably for purpose of keeping the corpses dry. Immediately about the city of Suchien such elevations exist and these are smothered with the tumult of dead, and for the most part forgotten, citizens. And yet, if the land had been put under wheat or any other crop, it would have yielded almost sufficient food to keep the whole of the city's inhabitants during the season of scarcity. I make these remarks in all proper reverence of the Chinese creed of ancestor-worship, and no reflexion is cast on any ethical or moral quality of a people whose practical application of their creed must in many ways command the admiration of every impartial man.

For five days I travelled through scenes and scenery that I have described before. There was no difference between the state of the people in the Northern part of the area and that of those South, East, and West. A few ate grain, many ate stuff which aforetime was fed to the cattle and the pigs; most made their meals of the leaves or vine of the sweet potato or a gruel of slusky green-tinted liquid which they boiled up from roots and bark and chaff and anything else edible. Ye Gods! This diet has not in every case produced that emaciation invariably associated with famine; this will come later. The face of the Chinese peasant and coolie, in its contours, is not to be associated with any idea of stall-feeding and luxury at the best of times, and it is by the face that the majority of men have perforce to judge of the physical condition of their fellows. Especially is this so when applied to the Chinese peasant in winter time, when he is clothed in his entire accumulation of kit, but even now it affords infallible proof of his state and condition because—although a photograph does not show it—he changes colour and his complexion becomes a dirty green-tint,
THE ARGOSY OF THE RELIEF COMMITTEE
in some cases verging on blackness. Certain parts of
his anatomy also swell up and from these well-known
signs it is possible to gauge the state of destitution in which
he may be. The majority of the people with whom I
have come in contact show these signs in varying degree,
and as the famine runs its inevitable course the change of
colour, the bloatings of dropsy and other disorders, and
the emaciation will all follow in their sequence.

Throughout the whole country the people were crying
for Grain, Grain, Grain. Time and again they asked me
"what is the use of the copper money, there is nothing
for us to buy, except leaves?" Grain—of any sort—is
what is wanted in the Famine Area, whether it be wheat
or flour, corn or oats, barley or buckwheat or kaffir-corn
or any other cereal. Some is getting there now, as
twenty-four hours from the time I left Suchien on my
way southward I met the argosy of the Famine Relief
Committee, eight boats laden with the flour that left
Shanghai a month before, sailing up the canal before a
fair wind. They had got through the "locks" at last
and by the time this appears their cargo will be doing
something at least to relieve the horrors of nightmare
from which I have now escaped as regards my body.
There is no mental escape from it. It is there—only a
few hours’ journey away from the Bund of Shanghai. The
scene is a great wide open plain of dun-coloured soil, mud
and water, many thousands of square miles in area. The
stage is occupied by at least ten million people of whom
a huge percentage will die. The audience is the peoples
of the world, who apparently require the sensational
attendant on bloodshed to afford the thrill necessary to
sufficiently awake their sentiments of humanity and not
the cold-drawn horror of this silent war.
Opinions and Assertions

Many people have expressed the opinion, and others appear to hold it, that the Chinese Government, as represented by some of its officials, are not adverse to seeing a considerable reduction in the population effected by this cataclysm. I would point out that eliminating any question of any ethical or moral consideration it would be a most impolitic move on the part of the Chinese authorities in any way to countenance such a propaganda, so impolitic as to be impossible. They have been making every possible effort towards demonstrating to the world that they are fit and proper persons to receive recognition of equality, and the mere fact that the existence of this famine has now obtained a world-wide publicity should altogether negative any possibility of their shirking their responsibilities in connexion with it. Should they do so, in spite of the knowledge of this publicity, the nations will definitely know what reliance can be placed on any of their protestations of good faith.

I am not going to attempt to criticize or discuss the methods of the Chinese authorities any further in this place. I have met many minor officials whose heart is in their work of relief and who are making every effort to cope with the situation to the best of their ability. I am told that certain of these have lost their buttons through showing too great, or too late, a zeal in this work, etc., etc., but of course the whole matter is outside of my province. But I say, without fear of contradiction, that this famine affords an opportunity for bringing home to many people of all classes and many millions of the toiling peasantry of
"NOT AN ARM-CHAIR CRITIC"
China the practical advantages to be derived from the employment of modern methods. It appeals through their stomachs to their intelligence or rather their instinct, and this is one of the best means of education for any human being.

Similarly, I am not going to criticise further the work of the Relief Committee, they have sufficient arm-chair critics already. The path of honest public effort is always the rocky road to detraction—for a period—and such is the inevitable destiny of gentlemen who attempt to do good to their fellows in any and every walk of life. The criticisms made in my communications to the Press were honest and impartial criticisms of facts—as I saw them on the spot—and I daresay I have trodden on the corns of Chinese and foreigner alike, but it has all been done in good faith. I intended to indicate that there was room for improvement, in more ways than one, and that certain operations were advisable. That some of my suggestions were useful has been proved by their acceptance. That others—more vital to the issue perhaps—will have the same fate is my fervent hope.

Imputations as to the *maia fides* of the Relief Committee have been made in certain quarters. Imputations of this sort are always made. They invariably emanate from the lewd minds of those who, if opportunity came their way, would act after the manner they impute to others. They are seconded and spread by those who thus salve their conscience for not subscribing to the fund, or who regard the existence of a few "Chinks" more or less as a matter of infinitely small moment to their vastly superior organization and not worth troubling their gilt-edged—to them, but tin-pot—to others, souls about. I apologize for thus noticing such a piffling matter, but—"Lies get a long start."

The criticisms I have levelled, impartially and independently, have been directed mainly upon matters of
administration and policy and questions of practice as against theory. To understand them intelligently it is necessary to be practical, in every sense of the word.

In the first place every one must definitely recognize that it is impossible to feed all the starving people. However awful and regrettable this may be we have to write off some unknown number, but in all probability at least a million human beings who will die within the next five or six months—unless a miracle happens.

At a most moderate estimate, considering the enormously enhanced prices of every edible commodity throughout the area, and the terrible lack of means of communication, it would require daily a sum of goodness only knows what, simply to keep some of them alive. Therefore the impossibility of attempting to do so should be recognized and every energy should be concentrated in an effort to as much good as possible for the relief of the people. Throughout the whole of my communications I have endeavoured to point out one of the obvious forms that this relief should take. The main cause of the disaster, apart from the heavy rains of the past season, has been the neglect of public works. Through neglect of dredging the bottom of the Grand Canal is, in many places, above the level of the surrounding country. The dikes confining the rivers are broken down. The subsidiary canals and drainage ditches are silted up. The roads are impassable, especially in wet weather. There is neither public nor private enterprise in the whole country in any of these and kindred necessities. If proper provision for drainage alone had been made during the years that elapsed since the previous famine this season would have been shorn of many of its terrors.

Therefore it is obvious that the relief of the famine sufferers, as a whole, can only be effected by operations and influences of a much wider nature and character than those involved in the mere attempt to feed so many thousands of them for a certain period. Perhaps it may be due to a
REPAIRING THE BANKS OF THE GRAND CANAL
recognition of this obvious fact that certain great firms who have made much money out of their dealings with the Chinese have subscribed such paltry sums to the Central China Famine Relief Fund.

In all countries, in all ages and amongst every race of mankind ignorance and incompetency have dreaded publicity. In all walks of life dishonesty and venality in one occupation are bars to trust in any and every other transaction or operation, whether such lapsi are characteristic of the code of a certain class, whether they are the outcome of tradition and precedent, or whether they exist by reason of forces or circumstances apparently uncontrollable. On the other hand sentiment, especially that sentiment termed humanity, is the greatest lever by which the mind of man can be moved and mankind induced to use its influence. Such influence is wanted here in China. Verbum sapientes.

These assertions require little—if any—proof of their truth. However, I received one while on my return journey down the Grand Canal. The banks of the ancient waterway in several places were being repaired by gangs of labourers; whether they were famine sufferers it was impossible for me to ascertain, but the mere fact of such work being done spoke volumes.

The banks may be repaired but banks wash down into the bed of the channel, and the Grand Canal, instead of being one of the main drains of the country, at least in Winter line, has assumed the functions of an aqueduct. But, half a loaf is better than no bread, and the mere fact that some remunerative labour is at last being performed gives rise to hope that such will be continued and elaborated on proper and systematic lines. The officials in charge gazed curiously at me as I stood astride of the houseboat roof and snap-shotted the scene. In some places they bowed and gave other signs of salutation.
That many of the officials and the gentry in the districts through which I have passed do feel their responsibilities and are actuated by the best of motives I am only too pleased to testify heartily. I have always met with the most courteous treatment, if I except the actions of an understrapper or two who acted after the fashion of most understrappers, and every possible help has been given me by most of the officials, both of high or lesser degree, in making my investigations and in facilitating my journeys. Many evidenced acute distress at the state of their compatriots and were greatly exercised as to the best means of allaying it. Without exception everyone of the men of position to whom I mentioned the subject agreed that the means of communication and the systems of drainage throughout the country were in a very bad state and that the repair of the already existing facilities, the construction of roads, and drainage of canals were imperative to the welfare of the province. I inferred from their conversation that, although they were reluctant to say so definitely, they were of the opinion that nothing could be done in this direction owing to the lack of funds and the want of experienced men amongst their own class.

In many instance the gentry and unofficial people were more outspoken in their opinions. I will not further enlarge on this matter save to say that throughout my travels I did not experience any manifestation of that anti-foreign feeling which is commonly supposed to exist amongst the mass of the inhabitants of the interior. Beyond a very natural curiosity—which would be evidenced in any country in the world in similar circumstances—the demeanour of the people of Kiangpeh would not discredit the highest forms of civilization.

I am persuaded that this is in a great measure due to the action of the few missionaries throughout the district, who are gentlemen of the most estimable character and worthy of the great calling to which they belong. The in-
fluence of these men, who sacrificed many—and in some cases all—of the amenities of civilized existence for the purpose of carrying on their work amongst a people who will inevitably benefit enormously thereby, is a credit not only to themselves and the organizations to which they belong but to that Western Ideal which China must ultimately absorb if she would make herself worthy and safe in the family of the nations.

It was after seeing certain of these Ax. good men at their work under all the circumstances of such work, after roughing it in the company of one of the best chums that I have ever "bandobusted" with and saying "Au Revoir" to a lot of good fellows every one, that I got aboard the crazy craft that was to take me away from the famine area.

The passage of the "locks" was a more expeditious affair than on the northern journey, when every boat has to be hoisted through the narrow mason-work aperture by means of bamboo ropes attached to antique timber capstans, worked by crowds of men and more women, the operation sometimes taking about half-an-hour per boat, beside the inevitable wait for one's turn. These "locks" are as old as the canal itself and are a great obstruction to the northward traffic, while the purpose for which—I presume—they were designed is now a very active though negative one, and that is all I can say about it. Shortly after this was accomplished we were speeding Shanghai-ward in a more expeditious manner than any available north of Tsingkiangpu where the remains of the deserted camps are the sole evidence of those ghastly sights witnessed only three weeks before.

In the long reach above Chingho we came across the belated flour fleet which was carrying the first consignment of the Relief Committee's supplies for the inhabitants of the Suchien districts. It had taken nearly a month for this urgently-needed food to cover less than five degrees of latitude. I repeat—*verbum sapientes*. 
After sighting the flour fleet we ran past an almost continuous line of boats and junk making the best of the fair South-west wind and slowly forging up the canal against the continuous downward current. I made a point of hailing as many as possible and inquiring as to the nature of their cargo. Many replied "Rice," some shouted "Kerosene." I was subsequently informed that the rice boats were mainly carrying cargoes for speculators who are presumably reaping their harvest at the expense of their less fortunate countrymen. The cargo of the oil boats is necessary to replenish the stock of lighting liquid exhausted by the consumption of the oil-beans from which the majority of the people procure their lighting medium—for food. Lucky are they who are able to buy or otherwise procure the beans; the refuse—as I may term the bean-cake—which in normal times is either fed to the pigs or used as a fertilizer, is now a high-priced luxury amongst the victims of this silent war on the plains of Kiangpeh.
"LIFE" IN CAMP
Conclusions

First paragraph of an Imperial Decree issued by H.I.M. The Emperor of China in obedience to the instructions of H.I.M. the Empress-Dowager, September 1st, 1906.

"Ever since our Imperial House began to rule this Empire we have ever had the best interests of the people in our hearts and have always taken up anything that at the same time seems advantageous to our subjects. At the present day we hold relations with the various nations of the earth and learn that there is amongst them a mutual interdependence and with each other and this leads us to consider our own position which seems pressing and fraught with danger, unless we seek for wise and experienced men to assist us in the Government of the Empire."

In giving the result of my month's experiences in the Kiangpeh famine districts and in bringing this item of work to some extent to a close, I must again emphasize the fact that I have trusted to my own eyesight and to that faculty for getting to the bottom of things which can only be obtained by experience. At times I have, of course, been compelled to rely on the information of others and not only have I carefully weighed its source, but I have endeavoured invariably to use the words—"So I am informed" in quoting therefrom.
In thus performing a vicarious duty to the best of my ability I have endeavoured to maintain those traditions with which it is the proud boast of the Anglo-saxon to be associated, despite occasional and inevitable lapses therefrom, and any criticisms I have made have been conscientiously made, nothing being wittingly exaggerated or extenuated and nought set down in malice. My work has been done for the information of thinking men of every nationality, and it would be absurd to suppose that I have pleased everyone of my readers, such is not my métier. In reply to those who may feel that I have—under their code—exceeded the bounds of propriety I can only make use of a true and time-honoured *tu quoque* "Charity covereth a multitude of sins;" my mission was undertaken in one of the most practical applications of that great term. But in thus voicing what may be construed into being an *apologia* I unhesitatingly declare that I have in no sense abrogated the right to ask "What now?"

This ghastly horror was—immediately—caused by floods. The floods were the result of an abnormally wet season, but the local rainfall was not responsible for the disaster in its entirety. There is—I believe—no country in the world where the rainfall is sufficient to drown out a whole countryside some 40,000 square miles in area within the space of a few days. The floods in Kiangpeh were caused—initially—by the neglect of the natural and artificial means of drainage and communication already in existence and constructed, and by the failure to maintain and augment these by modern methods and modern engineering. It booted not to state that the province and districts affected are low-lying, and subject to incursions of water from up-country; the mere fact that they have been found to be inhabitable for unknown years by millions of people proclaims that they are habitable. The mere fact that the soil has been deposited by the great
rivers of the country proclaims it to be an enormously rich country in an agricultural sense.

Similarly, no plea of want of funds or want of the experience necessary to maintain and construct these drainage channels and means of communication can now hold water. Both the funds and the experience are available at any moment if China will only—whole she still has the chance—be true to herself and, in that fiduciary capacity inseparable from national existence, to the other nations of the World's great family.

Just six months have elapsed since the Emperor of China, in obedience to the behest of his Imperial mother the Empress-Dowager, issued the Decree the opening paragraph of which appears at the head of this chapter. Such pronouncements, issued by the head of a State, are not matters to be conveniently forgotten and disregarded. They are of record; they are noted in the book of the nations. By it the Chinese Empire and the Chinese Government stand pledged to perform the part and the duty which "mutual interdependence" entails on every nation that would continue to be a nation.

The era of segregation; of contemptuous toleration mixed with kicking against the pricks resultant from past misdemeanours; of futile endeavour to obtain relief from penalties without expressing—in action—that contrition which must proceed such release; of a consistent attitude of superiority mixed with a most ludicrous self-conceit accentuated by a sublime ignorance; that era is dead, once and for all. I saw it killed and buried only three short years ago this First of May, when Kuroki's guns smashed the Russian redoubts to dust on the banks of Yalu and the book of China lay open to the world, never to be closed again. The same fate that is befalling the Muscovite bureaucracy awaits the Chinese oligarchy—unless they take heed. The torpor of the Russian peasant is a thing of the past. The torpor of the ground-grubbing millions
of China is a thing of the present—for the present. But John Chinaman is pricking his ears, his eyelids are quivering, and—there are four hundred millions of him.

The political world is getting weary of the way the lessons given in the past are being disregarded; lessons which, unfortunately, have borne most hard on the peasantry of China and not on those responsible for the misdeeds which necessitated them.

The practical and financial world, which controls the sinews of war and peace, of revolution as well as of development, is already tired of the obstructions continually placed in its way by folly, ignorance, incompetence and dishonesty.

The humanitarian world is watching the result of this cataclysm in Kiangpeh and will infallibly apply the criterion. "By their deeds ye shall known them."

The Press, one of the greatest forces for good or ill that the world has ever known, is throwing its searchlight on the Celestial Empire in a manner never hitherto known, and is established therein beyond all possibility of uprooting.

Whether it comes by a union of these great forces with those of Law and Order as at present constituted; or whether it comes through a combination of them with other, at present, unrecognized forces, true Reform will come to China as surely as the sun rises in the East.

I make no apology for thus flavouring this work with politics. Truly interpreted that term means The Art or Science of Government, and morality, progress, humanity, charity and a score of other quantities and qualities are salient factors in that art and are as mutually interdependent as are the nations of the world. Similarly such curses as "squeeze," superstition, ignorance and false pride are mutually dependent one upon the other and collectively, but—fortunately for mankind, their influence can never be permanent although it may have lasted for centuries.
I have had demonstrated to me practically during the last few weeks that there is nothing wasted in China—except time; the very nutriment derived from the earth is passed on in its sequence of man, dog, pig, fowl, worm and insect. But the day of "Maskee! To-morrow can do" is dead. China has killed it herself by proclaiming that it is her intention to do as others do, and the excuses which have heretofore been based on the idea implied by that vernacular quotation will—it persisted in—avail her not one jot in the eyes of her now intimate associates, the nations of the world.

Despite the pessimism which periodically surges over the mind when contemplating Celestial problems, I am still sufficiently an optimist to believe that there will yet be found enough men of weight and probity amongst the controllers of the destinies of the Chinese people to grapple with such problems as the proper development and reclamation of the vast tracts of enormously fertile country bisected by the Grand Canal, which are at present the scene of the horrors I have witnessed. To effect this it is necessary only to treat such propositions in a practical and business-like manner, putting such a venture on a combined public and commercial basis, obtaining the assistance of men who have been fortunate enough to obtain—in their turn—the practical knowledge and experience which few, if any Chinese at present possess, and thus securing that material success which is almost invariably the result of honest ethical effort as much as when the position of these two entities is reversed.

It is on such lines that some "reform" of China, or the Chinese people, will be effected, and no amount of tinkering with Constitutions and promulgation of Edicts will alter her destiny, or the destinies of those who rely on such methods. Following on what appears to be an immutable law in connexion with things Chinese economical development must precede national assertion and the acquisition of a purely "political" prestige.
The soil is the source of all wealth. The people are the primary accessories to the production of that wealth; at present both are being wasted. And China, in these assets, is among the richest of all countries. Through lack of opportunity; through the burden of an antiquated tradition; through lapses and torpor in the past, and folly—it may be unconscious—in the present, China is not yet possessed of the knowledge which is the driving force of progress and enterprise.

It has been impossible for her sons to acquire it, and it boots not herein to question—Why? But others possess it. Through every age of History the races of mankind have either learned from a predominant or more practical civilization and levelled themselves up to it, or have refused to learn—and have been absorbed or obliterated by it. We need not go back to the times of the ancients to prove this. The most positive proof is written on pages on which the ink is not yet dry. No loss of suzerainty or self-respect has been experienced by Japan in making use of the knowledge of others, employing their capital, accepting their advice and assistance and treating them honourably. Negative proof is contained in pages of history which the present generation saw turned over. Spain, once the proudest of nations, persisted in the course on which China is steering and was stranded on the same shoals that will wreck China if she still disregards the weather-warning of an inevitable typhoon.

There is nothing to be ashamed of in not knowing how to do a thing, when one has had no opportunity for learning, or if one has not deliberately neglected the opportunity. There is nothing to be ashamed of in asking the advice and making use of the experience of more fortunate persons to assist in transacting any business or executing any beneficial scheme with which one is not familiar. There is nothing to be proud of in erecting a barrier of racial pride and prejudice, unjustifiable in every
sense of the term, across the march along the paths of peace and progress that have been followed by every race of mankind in its turn. But there is everything to be ashamed of in posing as knowing, when one does not know; in saying one is capable, when one is not—and knows it; in perpetuating blindly a policy of callous *laissez faire*, which has led to disaster in the past and will inevitably lead to worse in the future, in a transparently futile attempt to preserve a totally false sense of self-esteem—when not only the lives of others are in the scale as they are at this moment, but also their well-being and happiness every day of their most miserable existence.

I again remark that I am treating this matter of the famine in Central China and regarding these people amongst whom I have been wandering from the same standpoint and with the same sentiments as I have done, or would do, any other practical proposition or any other race of human beings with whom I have ever come in contact or with whom I expect ever to be associated.

The Silent War now devastating the fair country known as Kiangpeh will leave an indelible mark and have an incalculable effect on the destinies of the Chinese people. In such and similar circumstances History has ever demonstrated that human beings do not die in vain. In the hope that the work now concluded may have done something towards bringing good out of evil I have written these pages in all honesty and sympathy. Especially have I been moved thereto by the experience of four weeks of heart-rending realities amongst a people for whom, despite the barrier of race, the confusion of tongue, variations of ethics and differences in temperament and surroundings—matters which play no permanent part in the scheme of the Universe—I have a great admiration mingled with the most profound commiseration.