

JOKE - A JOKE

QUAINT PECULIARITIES OF THE HERMIT KINGDOM ACQUIRED BY JAPAN

By Stephen Bonsall.

TEN years ago the rare traveler from the Mountain West, who traversed the Sea of Japan and landed upon the shores of Corea, known and correctly known as the Hermit Kingdom, if he preferred not to be classed with Baron Munchausen and Lemuel Gulliver, Esq., had to be very careful about the letters he wrote home. For Corea was then and is really to-day a country which in this world age could not be taken on faith. You have to see the place and its extraordinary inhabitants for yourself, and even then for a reason at least you are inclined to distrust your eyes.

It was the Hermit Kingdom for the foreigners, and when you remember that ninety per cent of the population who came to Corea came with a desire to loot the royal tombs, which were supposed to be the storehouse of fabulous riches, you will understand in a measure at least why the foreigners preferred to feast by themselves. But the intimate and affectionate name for this strange and most improbable country was "Land of the Morning Calm, or Calm"—quite as much a misnomer by the way, as the name given by the foreign devils, for Corea within the measurable radius of history has never been really quiet, but only apparently so.

Work on Eff. etc.
In this farewell to Corea I shall only deal with certain phases of court life which came under my observation, and have nothing to say about the working classes, though I dare say they existed, but were guided entirely by the old ways and the ancient maxims of wise men who had been dead a thousand years or so. A striking illustration of this national trait was furnished in the matter of their wearing apparel, which was changed according to an ancient calendar and without any regard to the temperature of the day.

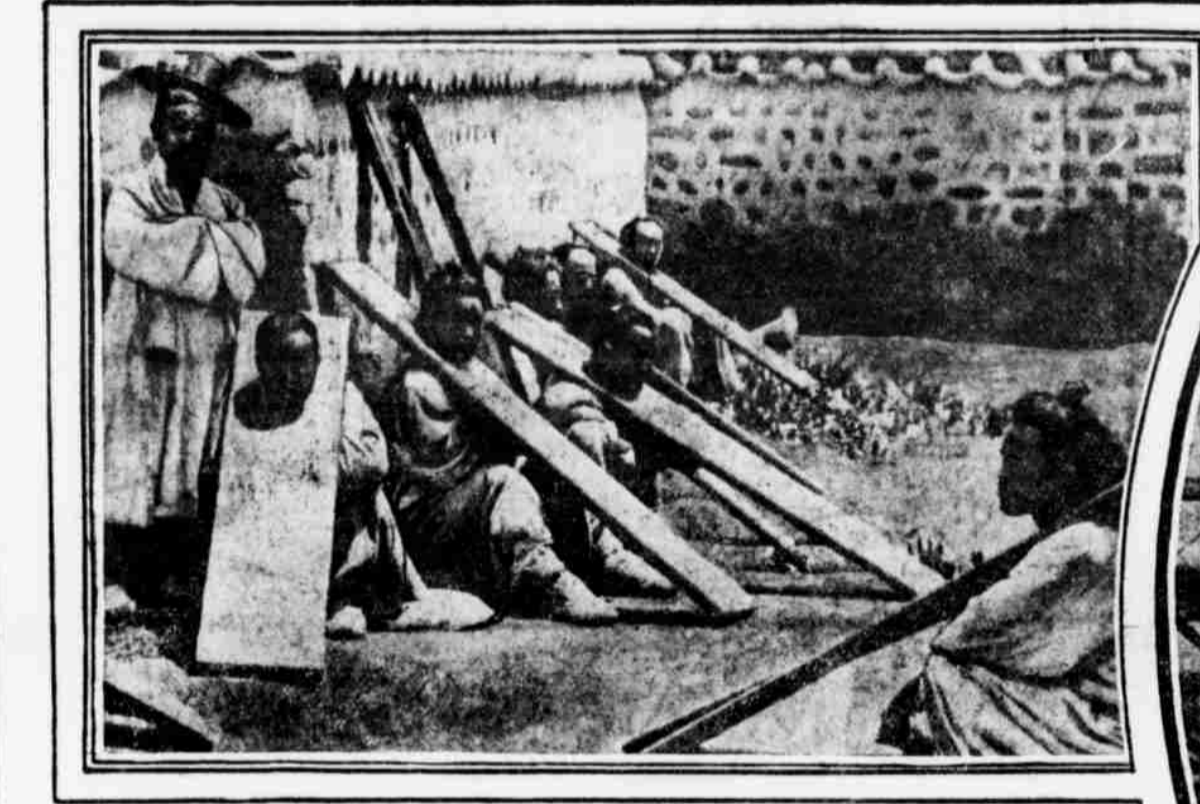
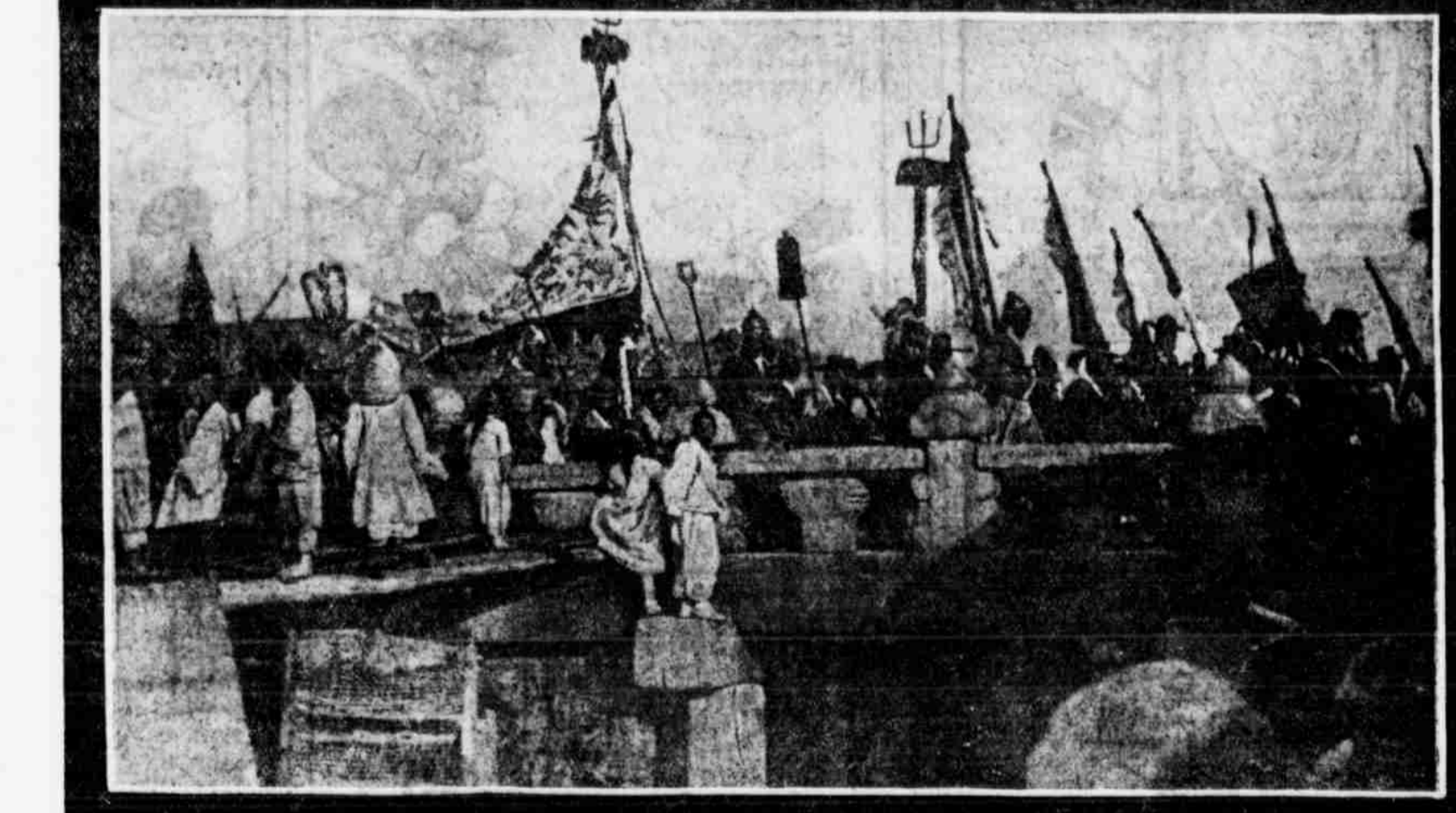
Land of Ex. etc.
Corea is a land of great extremes, of heat and cold, and the man who drafted the calendar by which all clothing is changed, though a Chinese sage, it is said, was no success as a weather prophet, unless, as some maintain, the climate, in the course of the hundreds of years which have elapsed, has changed. When the calendar announces now begins the period of great cold, the conservative Corean, although the air may be soft and balmy, pads out his white garments with six or seven thicknesses of cotton wadding, until the thin man becomes a fat man and the stout party swells up to such enormous size as to block up the streets when he walks or, rather, rolls abroad. Again, though spring and early summer may have come, the heat prevailing is almost tropical, the Corean sweaters about in his wadded clothing in perspiring veneration of his hereditary calendar.

Standards of Ex. etc.
The standards of high and low, of those eligible to high office, who also had their place at the exclusive court, were an extraordinary race of people, with ideals diametrically opposed to those of our intense and strenuous world. Feeble, enervated, and were, both mentally and physically, and were not quite the utter incompetents they strove to appear. A yangban only walked where he had to, and that was in certain precincts of the palace approaching the throne room.

Corean Sedan Chairs.
Here he maintained a staggering point which was contrived with the purpose of conveying to all beholders the impression that he had never walked before, in which he generally succeeded. At the mounting block, on the edge of the charmed court circle, where neither quadrupeds nor bearing coolies might enter, he would fall for a moment exhausted into the arms of his attendants, by whom he would be laid with care into a Corean version of a sedan chair, or placed upon the back of his pony, where he would assume the general seat and bearing of a bag of meat. The largest Corean pony is about three feet high, but the yangban once mounted, spared no effort to demonstrate his physical incompetence. One and sometimes two attendants led the pony by the noseband and the bridle, while on either side of the saddle the courtier was supported by another stalwart slave. Should the yangban stumble or fall, whether riding or walking, it was quite a job to get him upon his feet again. He might give directions to his servants and slaves as to the method they should pursue in propping him up, but help himself he would not, as that would have been bad form.

The day before I reached Seoul, the capital and chief city of this whimsical race, on my first visit there, now nearly ten years ago, the palace was in a turmoil because the Queen, Min, had been murdered the night before. The Japanese, as an official result of their successful war with China, had taken possession of Corea, and as the Queen opposed their high handed measures with considerable ability, the Japanese Minister at the court, in conjunction with her father-in-law, a grim figure, known and feared throughout Corea as the prince Parent, had hired a band of Japanese desperadoes and Japanese soldiers to kill her—a disastrous crime, in which they were only too successful.

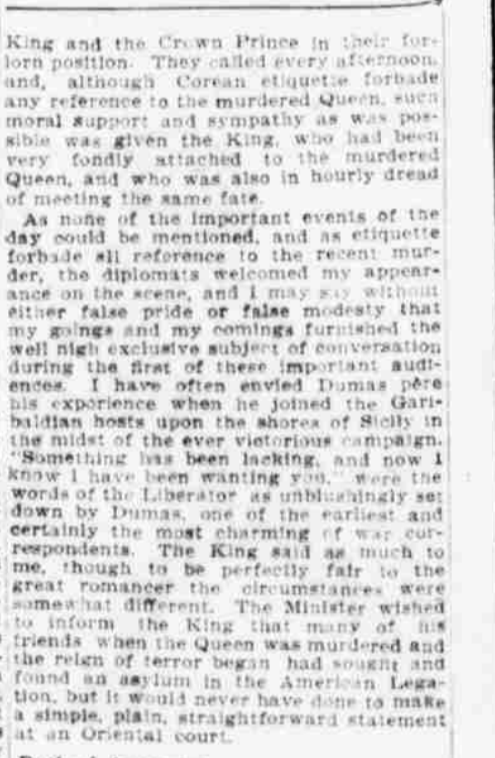
The Diplomatic Corps, of which at the time the American Minister was the dean, did what little they could to comfort the



FEAST DAY IN SEOUL.



LEGATION RUNNER.



CROWN PRINCE



THE PRINCE PARENT

King and the Crown Prince in their former positions. They called every afternoon, and although Corean etiquette forbade any reference to the murdered Queen, such moral support and sympathy as was possible was given the King, who had been very fondly attached to the murdered Queen, and who was also in hourly dread of meeting the same fate.

As matters of the important events of the day could be mentioned, and as etiquette forbade all reference to the recent murder, the diplomats selected my appearance on the scene, and I may say without any reference to my goings and my comings furnished the well nigh exclusive subject of conversation during the first of these important audiences. I have often evaded Dumas père's experience when he joined the Garibaldian hosts upon the shores of Sicily in the midst of the ever victorious campaign. "Something was being lacking, and now I know I have been wanting you," were the words of the Liberator as unobtrusively set down by Dumas, one of the earliest and certainly the most charming of our correspondents. The King said as much to me, though to be perfectly fair to the great romance, the circumstances were somewhat different. The Minister wished to inform the King that many of his friends when the Queen was murdered and the reign of terror began had sought and found an asylum in the American Legation, but it would never have done to make the most careful scrutiny, especially in its international aspects, and declined it for me.

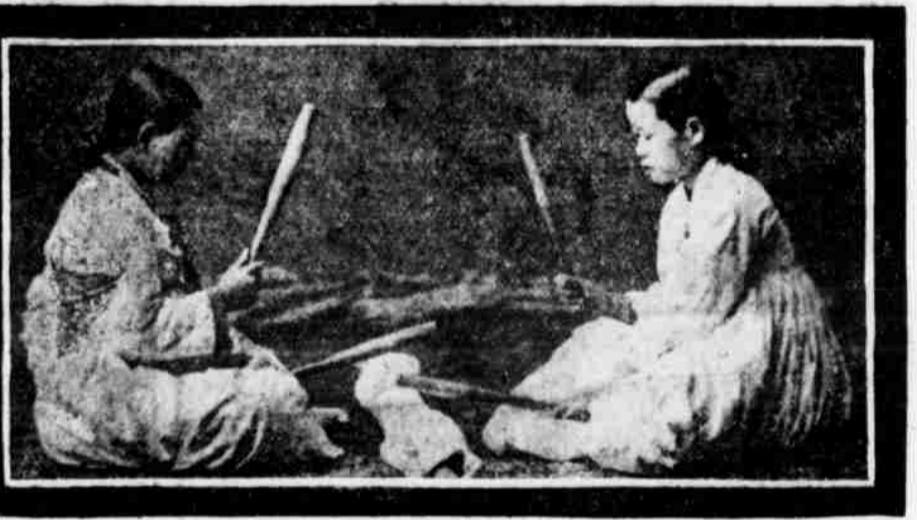
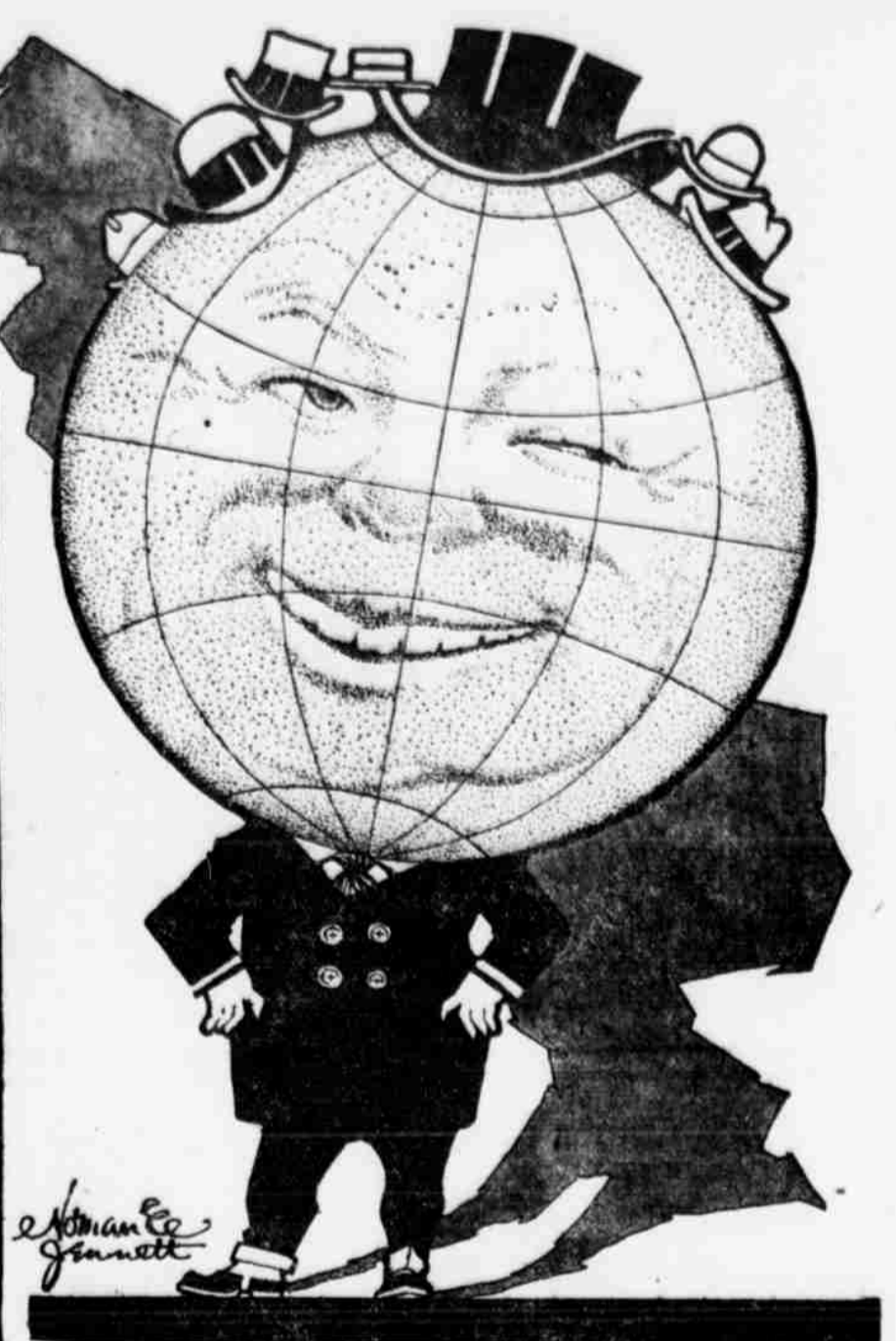
"If I was to be murdered in Seoul I must be murdered in the American Legation," was the conclusion which he reached, and I have no doubt it was one upon which I

was to be congratulated, only the poor King's countenance fell, for he knew mid-night was approaching, when the company of a foreigner would have been worth to him in the matter of security and peace of mind all the wealth contained in his treasury or those undeveloped private gold mines of his up in the mountain districts of his closed land.

In these days of storm and stress which followed the fringed inevitable stigmatism of the Corean court, which like snowflakes before the sun, we found the King and the Crown Prince were upon the reception list whenever we called at the palace, but the honorific curtain of white satin was always raised and His Majesty was always on view. It was impossible even for a democrat to keep his distance, as down from the dais were outstretched the trembling hands of those who had been born to the purple and to celestial prerogatives, but who today were simply weak human creatures in mortal terror of sudden secret death at the hand of the assassins.

The red handed murderers, both native and foreign, remained in control of the palace that stretches around the lotus lake throughout these days of dread and gloom, the master of the situation. At every audience which the King gave he was present, not exactly in person, but in the ominous shape of a shadow on the silk curtain, behind which he crouched and listened to every word that was spoken.

A Striking Fi re
The story of this remarkable old man with his black, piercing eyes and hawk nose is instructive. He could not rule the country himself, so he ruled the dais and uprooted the palace government, one of the most remarkable of the world has ever seen, though he himself, as he doubtless well knew, was destined to perish in the midst of the havoc which



WOMEN IRONING.

ascendancy the sumptuous clothing of spots while will be abolished, the flow- ing sleeves which forbid all labor with the hands, will be "taken in." No yangban will be permitted to smoke a pipe over three feet long (four feet has been the court measurement from time immemorial) and he will have to stand upon his own pins and not be supported by slaves. The "tokkot" method of wearing the hair, so long the distinctive and peculiar custom of Corean manhood, will be suppressed.

If all these reforms, each and every one admirable in its way, are attempted and rigorously enforced, there is no telling what troubles and turmoil will result, for any man will fight if you make him uncomfortable enough, and with all his eccentricities the Corean is a very human animal after all.

If the women's hours are disturbed, as the Japanese propose, we are sure to have another Tong-hak rebellion or uprising of Eastern Learning men. This article has in Corea undertaken a more



PUBLIC LETTER WRITER.

arrangement of the women's hours is a very curious one, which prevails, I believe, only in the capital city and in no other centre of population in the world. Here, when the great bell tolls at eight o'clock it is the signal that all men must retire from

the streets so that the hooded women, scooped up in their houses all day, may sally out and amuse themselves. They go their various ways, lighted by women torch bearers, and no man may appear before them unless he is blind or unless prescription from his doctor. Oh, those medical prescriptions! If the Corean names are to be believed, they are mostly love philters, and many, very many, are forged. At midnight the sound of the great bell booms through the city again, and all well conducted women retire to their homes and mere man resumes his way.

Perhaps the strongest trait of the Corean is his hatred of the Japanese, which has been handed down an undiminished legacy from a score of generations. It is the knowledge of this strong feeling which makes most men who know Corea believe that Marquis Ito and his reforming associates have in Corea undertaken a more

Great Meat Markets of the World.

CONSUL BRITAIN, of Kehl, says there is a movement in Germany to make that country safe in the matter of meat supply. The municipalities are engaged in the consideration of a proposition that would make the raising of cattle largely a municipal matter. The proposition is for cities to establish cattle farms for their own supply.

The various countries possess about one-third as many cattle as the total number of their population. France, however, has more. The indications are that the neighboring European countries can and Germany with only a limited amount of beef, and that consequently Germany will have to import from beyond the seas.

The butchers of Strasbourg went recently to Belfort, France, about one hundred miles from Strasbourg, to buy cattle, and as the law forbids the importation of live cattle, they butchered what they bought in Belfort and shipped to Strasbourg.

"Not only is the scarcity of beef perceptible, but pork and swine are scarce. The statistics credit North America with the possession of 4,764,000 swine, Germany with 16,800,000, European Russia with 12,000,000, France with 5,500,000, Hungary with 4,500,000, Austria with 1,800,000, England with 3,400,000, Italy with 1,800,000, Roumania with 1,500,000, Denmark with 1,200,000, Belgium with 1,200,000, Australia with 1,200,000, Serbia with 800,000, and Japan, Sweden and the Netherlands each with 700,000 to 800,000 head."

He reverses the various remedies to overcome the meat crisis. One suggestion is that the municipalities—for in the cities the famine is most severe and felt the most by the ordinary citizen—should especially for the raising of swine, and that should a meat famine or crisis arise the city government would be in a position to supply the business with meat, thus preventing the tendency to high or exorbitant prices. Many German cities own and control slaughterhouses in which all the cattle are slaughtered under municipal supervision and to which the butchers go for their daily supply of meat.

"By comparison," he says, "it is observed that Austria-Hungary possesses 14,000,000 head of cattle, France 15,000,000, Switzerland 1,500,000, and European Russia 36,000,000. The above figures show that

Dat Muff: A Newsboy's Rhapsody

When I was small an' went ter school
De kids dey'd guy all day
An' pound dem nodules every hour
For sumpt'n new ter say.
An' sum big bloke wud 'link it great
Ter get reel good an' tuff.
An' say to sum pore little shrimps,
"Oh, kid, but yer a muff!"

I knows dat w'en dey'd call me dat
I'd feel me face grow white,
I'd clench me fists an' grit me teet,
An' gee! but I wud fight.

But ain't it strange, for nowadays
(I knows it sounds like stuff),
Dere's nuffin' more I'd radder be
Dan one particlar muff.

Dat ting jest irritates me till
I wish it had er face.
So I cud soak it on der jaw
An' 'trow it rou' der place.
She presses it against her lips
An' rube against its fluff.
An' holds it in her pretty han's,
Dat darned old softy muff.

An' w'en I asks her fer a kiss
She looks so scornful like,
An' curls her pretty lip an' says,
"Wh' all der time dat becom of fur
Is in 'der fluffly stuff
Is in 'der huggid an' kissed. Oh, gee!
I wish I wud dat muff!"

HERBERT ERNEST HANCOCK.