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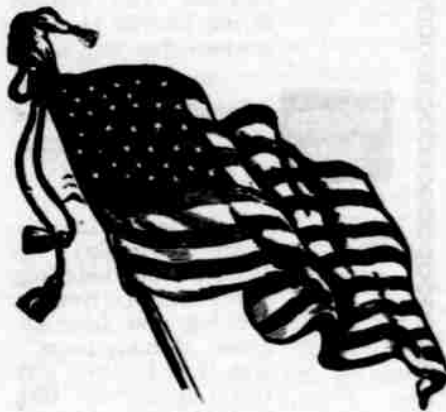
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OBSERVATIONS

The world has not forgotten the fearful Russian famine of 1891-2. "The poorest dog which hangs about the streets of America can pick up better food than the Russian peasant clamors for," said the Northwestern Miller in November, 1891, in an article describing the condition of the Russian peasants and calling for contributions for the relief of the stricken people. "Day after day, we read of the Russian famine in the daily papers, but we really do not half believe the tales therein told. We imagine that there is something behind it all which cannot be discovered. That human beings can sink so low as to eat 'hunger bread,' made of tree bark, powdered peas and goose foot, passes our comprehension. We talk about our own poor, and we think we know something about poverty, but the absolute want of food, which causes a man to fight for bread which even an animal would disdain—this, thank God, is unheard of here. Yet that it is true, to a

certain extent, in Russia, is undeniable." The people of the United States were quick to respond to the despairing appeal of starving humanity in a less favored country, and the record of that response, as contained in a little book by W. C. Edgar, entitled "The Russian Famine of 1891 and 1892: Some Particulars of the Relief Sent to the Destitute Peasants by the Millers of America," is a splendid commentary on the benevolence of the people of this nation. In the light of Mr. Bryan's oft-repeated protestations of sympathy for the unfortunate and distressed, the part taken in this generous movement by the man who is now the popocratic candidate for president is not easy to understand, and it is not surprising that the thousands of Russians and affiliated foreigners and their American born children in Mr. Bryan's own state, and in all parts of the country, should take a stand of unalterable opposition to the man who stood in the way of this country's great gift of nearly 6,000,000 pounds of flour and corn meal to the starving peasants of Russia.

Largely through the efforts of the Northwestern Miller of Minneapolis, seconded by proclamations by the governors of Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Massachusetts and other states, there was raised an amount of food supplies sufficient to fill one of the largest ocean steamers. Mr. Edgar, in his book, says: "After the contributions secured for the cargo amounted to several million pounds, it was suggested by Senator Washburn of Minnesota that the flour, having been given by American millers and transported by American railroads, it would be in keeping with the spirit of the undertaking to have an American vessel carry it to its destination. To this end he consulted with Secretary Tracy, and immediately on the assembling of congress, offered in the senate a joint resolution authorizing the secretary of the navy to charter a steamship in which to forward the flour to Russia. This resolution passed the senate by a heavy vote, but when it came into the house it was defeated. The action of the house was wholly unexpected, and surprised even the partisan members, who voted against the resolution more with a mistaken idea of going on record in favor of retrenchment and reform than with any serious objection to the measure. Many others were evidently ashamed of their action, being spurred to a realization of their mistake by the unanimous censure of their constituents and the press, irrespective of party."

Mr. Bryan's opposition, as the Congressional Record shows, was based on serious objection to the measure, and if he was ever ashamed of his action there is no public record of it. The measure was supported in the house by such men as Breckinridge, Blount and Bou-

telle. Mr. Blount, in the course of his remarks on the resolution, said: "It is a simple proposition. Liberal donations have been made by the American people for the relief of the starving people of Russia, and there is no proposition here to take money out of the treasury for that purpose. It is simply proposed to lend certain vessels of the United States, or, if that cannot be done, to make an appropriation of \$100,000 to procure vessels to transport these supplies to sufferers in Russia. Now, what precedents have there been for this action? In 1847 the congress of the United States provided ships for the conveyance of relief to the suffering Irish people. In 1880 the two houses of congress provided, just as this joint resolution does, for the chartering of ships of the navy department to transport supplies for the relief of the Irish people, with the difference that in 1880, so eager was the American congress to answer the call which came from distressed Ireland, that the proposition was voted that there should be an indefinite appropriation, so that there should be no possible obstacle in the way of the consummation of the national wish."

The president of the United States sent a special message to congress in which he said: "The secretary of the navy has no steam vessel at his disposal that could be used for the transportation of these supplies, and I therefore recommend that he be authorized to charter a suitable vessel to receive them."

Congressman Boutelle in a speech said: "The quality of mercy is not strained." There is no necessity in this case for straining it through a committee. We know the distress exists. We know that some of our generous people have come forward to vindicate our feeling of humanity, to vindicate the sentiment of friendliness existing between these two great nations, by tendering timely and prompt offerings of relief to a suffering people. Let us not seek by technicalities to delay this generous and worthy act. The Constitution of the United States ought not to be pleaded against a case of humanity when the liberality and generosity of our government and our citizens toward foreign peoples are involved. There was nothing in the Constitution of France that sent Lafayette here to tender the use of his sword in behalf of the young republic. There was no organic provision for the tendering of the services of Rochambeau and DeKalb, Von Steuben, Pulaski, and those other heroic men who came across the sea to mingle their young blood with that of our defenders of liberty, and to write their great names on the brightest pages of our country's history."

Mr. Breckinridge said, in part: "It is

constitutional; it is human; therefore it is American. If we are not going to do it, let us say so frankly. Let us say 'We have not the power,' or that 'We have not the will,' or that we do not think that in this day we ought to furnish contributions to anybody in any national aspect. Then the country and the world will understand that in the intrecourse of America with foreign people we can commit war, we can cover our seas with ships of war, we can give medals to sailors, we can decorate those who have saved our ships in foreign ports, we can thank Russia for relieving Melville in the Arctic ocean, but that we are powerless to aid out of our abundance, when God has blessed us with sunshine and rain, and when out of the fertile boom of American soil has come a teeming crop, and He has given scarcity and famine to others."

Here is Mr. Bryan's position: "It might be proper to suggest that if other sections of our country whose industries are less susceptible than the farmers to the influence of the weather, were as liberal, transportation for the gift of the northwest could easily be provided without an appeal to congress. But we are now asked to appropriate \$100,000 if necessary, to charter a ship to carry the food to Russia. *** Will not a precedent be established? Will not other nations, and those, too, more like ours in form of government and more humane in their treatment to their own citizens, justly feel offended if we withhold from them the aid which some gentlemen seem willing to grant, without investigation, to one of the most despotic of nations? I hope this bill will be referred back to the committee, so that an amendment may be reported, striking out the appropriation of \$100,000."

After some delay the Atlantic Transport line offered the use of their steamship, the "Missouri," for the purpose of transporting the donations, free of charge, so that Mr. Bryan and other representatives notwithstanding, the supplies went forward to Russia. Mr. Bryan's opposition greatly incensed the Russians in the northwest, who were large contributors to the relief project, and they have not forgotten what Mr. Bryan said and did in the first session of the Fifty second congress.

In the public mind Iowa is associated with political heresies. It is true that most of the fads and isms that have stalked across the country in recent years have found a hospitable welcome in Iowa. The James B. Weaver school of politics has flourished for many years. In every congressional district, aye, almost in every county, is some prominent and more or less influential graduate, with the Weaver diploma and the Weaver degrees. Although Gener-