

the czar's domains much of the trade of China, Japan and Corea.

Besides the financial view of the matter, the construction of the road is regarded by Russia as of great strategic importance, and as the czar depends largely on the military power this is a leading incentive to building the line. Another prominent object is the opening up of Siberia to settlement by emigration from European Russia, which is greatly overpopulated. This latter fact is one of the chief causes which prompt the czar in his expulsion of the Jews. Economic conditions require a reduction of population, and the Russian ruler prefers to expel what he looks upon as the most objectionable class of his people. Others than Jews will have to go soon, or a terrible plague will do the work of depopulation. To avert this, and to retain the native Russians in the czar's domains, the government is making these great efforts to open and develop Siberia as a home for the excess of population. It believes that Asiatic Russia can be thus made a source of revenue and strength instead of constant expenses.

Mr. Galezki has already completed about 200 versts of his portion of the contract west from Vladivostok, 400 versts more are almost ready, and another 400 are in course of construction. A verst, or Russian mile, is about two-thirds of a mile in this country. There are employed on the eastern division about 10,000 Chinese and Chinese, besides an army of convicts and exiles. It is too slow and expensive a process to ship materials overland for the work, so now they are sent from Europe across the Atlantic and America to the Pacific coast and then to Vladivostok.

It may be learned from this great undertaking that Russia possesses a goodly share of what is looked upon as the spirit of modern enterprise. Great changes are going on, not only in the more civilized nations, but even in the domain of and through the agency of the emperor of all the Russias. And it is not beyond the limit of possibility that by this means another half century may behold not alone the dawn of religious and political freedom in the great Russian empire, but the complete ushering in of the glorious day of liberty. Things more strange than this have been wrought in the affairs of men and nations.

### SPAIN'S TROUBLES.

The kingdom of Spain is one that we have a traditional regard for, not because it was once the mightiest among the mightiest on land and sea, but because through its sovereigns our America of today was made a possibility. Of late years it has been a debt-ridden, disorder-breeding, aristocracy-cursed and populace-menaced nation. It has been in a state of more or less violent agitation for some months principally on account of the financial situation, a general rebellion having been threatened as a result of it. Canovas and Sagasta are respectively leaders of the two parties which have in turn controlled the government, the former conservative and the latter liberal. There does not seem to be

much difference between them, while they are united as to one or two things—republicanism and carlistism. The inability of the people to pay taxes to keep the official machinery in operation and that of those in power satisfactorily handle to what is collected is the groundwork of the difficulty.

Recently Gamaza was placed in charge of the finance department and he proposed sundry economical measures, none of which was satisfactory, and as a result serious riots have occurred in places, while the anarchists, whose recent deadly work has been recorded in these columns, are making the most of the situation. It is stated as a fact that if these riots had occurred in any other part of Europe they would have burdened the wires and cables with the details, so dangerous and even disastrous were they; most of them had to be suppressed by the soldiery. They are so common in Spain that that familiarity which breeds contempt has made them unworthy subjects for dispatches. The chateau of the queen regent, situated at San Sebastian, was recently threatened while she was present, during a disorder, and her majesty hastened back to Madrid, where there is more fancied security at least.

Don Carlos the pretender is traveling quietly in Austria with his family while Zorrilla the exile, who has been in Paris more than a decade, is on the anxious seat waiting for the revolution that he expects will convert the country into a republic; he is under oath not to return till that object is accomplished. This is an outline of the Spanish situation with many details omitted. It is a wonder that Vergara and Eulalia were in such a hurry to get back to the country.

### WE ARE BLESSED.

The melancholy days have come,  
The saddest of the year.

The poet had reference to this time of the year, and he must have been in as gloomy a frame of mind when he wrote those lines as was Poe when his somewhat immortal verses on *The Raven* were evolved from his peculiar mentality. These are not melancholy days; they are not the saddest of the year, nor are they specially sad at all. They are beautiful, bright and radiant days, such as should cheer the soul and fill the heart with renewed hope while the mind should fashion only words of praise for a season so delightful and so auspicious to mankind. But this is sparingly engaged in; except as to a very few comparatively, it is not engaged it at all. The chief of the bipeds, the lord of the animal kingdom, has not of late made a great deal of money, and because of this overpowering fact he can see no bluish upon the face of nature when the sun first kisses it, and he wishes that the golden tints which are cast athwart the landscape were gold of a kind that he could handle. Such is man.

The community was never healthier; we believe the same can be said of the nation at large. The weather was never finer. Except in isolated cases there is no actual want, and where it does exist it would most likely be relieved if made known. A more de-

lightful spectacle than this valley never greeted the eye of man. The birds twittering among the burnished leaves, the serenity which pervades the social body, the reposeful calm of the element, and all, all things seem to blend in harmonious union for the encouragement of our kind. Let us, then, be hopeful, considerate and above all grateful that our situation is so pleasant in the midst of the few drawbacks which prevail.

### THE SCIENTIST VERHOEFF.

There are now expeditions from four nations engaged in Arctic exploration, and the relatives and friends of John M. Verhoeff, the scientist of the first Peary expedition, of whom the world read as "lost in a crevasse," believe that he may be still in the land of the living and is liable to again mingle with his acquaintances in a more sunny clime than exists where he was last seen. There is only a supposition that he is dead, but that is brought very close to a certainty from the fact that he disappeared in the frozen regions in a locality where the hope of prolonging life for a few days without supplies being brought in from afar, to say nothing of maintaining an existence for many months, is very slight.

But it is difficult for people to give up hope for a relative whose loss is surrounded by uncertainty, and if Verhoeff is still alive the desire of his friends to see him again may be gratified. The story of his life up to the time when he became separated from his companions in the north is quite interesting. He was a direct descendant of one of the officers of the Old Swiss Guard of Paris. His father was a wealthy merchant of Louisville, and died while the son was yet in his infancy.

Mrs. Verhoeff was a talented lady, and gave much care to the training of her son. He is said to have become possessed early in life of a desire to engage in Arctic exploration. A correspondent of the *Boston Transcript* says, in a biographical sketch of his career:

He early learned to read for himself and delighted in books of travel, telling his young schoolmates that he meant to go to the north pole. He was born with a purpose in life and early began to deny himself any taste or pleasure that would conflict with it. He never ate but two meals a day, and that of the plainest and most nutritious kind of food. He would never wear an overcoat in the very coldest weather, sleeping at night under but one cover. He devoted himself to a rigid course of training in the gymnasium, strengthening every muscle and joint of his body. He rode all the way from Louisville, Ky., to New Haven, Conn., on his bicycle when he entered Yale college, the first attempt at that time to travel on one. All his feats of strength and daring, as jumping from roof to roof on a sleety morning in January, were but tests of his skill. He was a strong, manly, brave youth. He dared to live alone, as he had often done while yet a boy, absenting himself for periods of time, testing his strength of endurance in walking in rough places, until at last he had acquired the strength to walk sixty miles a day continuously.

Verhoeff was accepted as a member of the Peary expedition, and it is said contributed a large sum of money to-