

Back from the Land of Famine

Returning Traveller Describes Scenes in the Breadless Area—An Awful Calamity.

Despite the exciting march of events in China, public interest in America is still focussed on India and the terrible famine there raging. Money for the relief of the starving millions is still pouring into the treasuries of the various relief committees.

Gilson Willets, the author and journalist, recently returned from a journey through the famine stricken region, was seen yesterday by a representative of the Christian Herald said he:

"The famine is above all, a big famine. You can search all the books in the British Museum and you won't find record of a bigger famine. The breadless area covers 350,000 square miles, which is one third of all India. In this area are 50,000,000 people, one sixth the entire population of India. Ten millions are entirely destitute, and of these government is taking care of 6,500,000, on relief works and in poor-houses.

"Now, as to the question of why the British or Indian government is not able to assume the entire burden of caring for the starving millions. On this subject, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy, is the best authority for the fact that external aid is very welcome and that aid from America is especially appreciated. In a recent public speech he said that no false pride need deter me from giving a frank reply. The government, he added, is straining every nerve, is pouring out its money, is shrinking from no obligation, however severe. From October, 1899, the beginning of the famine, until December, 1900, we anticipate that we shall have spent five and a quarter millions sterling upon direct relief; two millions upon suspension and remissions of land revenue; one and a quarter millions upon advance (that will in many cases never be recovered) for the purchase of seed and cattle; three quarters of a million upon loans to distressed Native States. But over and above this expenditure, which cripples our development in a score of ways, there lies a vast area of need which, do what we may, we can barely reach, and in which extraneous contributions supply an invaluable reinforcement. I may instance the relief of the aged and infirm; of sick patients in the hospitals; of children and orphans; of those men and women who will endure almost any privation sooner than submit themselves to the quasi-publicity of Government relief. [This is a field of enormous and almost undiscoverable extent, the margin of which the already overworked official hardly touches, but which is, in a peculiar and inevitable degree, the property of individual effort and of private generosity. Fast as the money may come in, not less swiftly is it diverted and distributed into the various channels of relief. Here we have no cast iron or official system. The unit of relief organization is the District Committee, in which the non-official element almost invariably predominates. Officials and non-officials, Europeans and Natives, Christians, Missionaries, and orthodox Brahmins welcome the co-operation of all, since all are enlisted in the same catholic service of the relief of human suffering. The latest news that reaches me testifies to a great outburst of practical sympathy in the United States of America.

"As for what I saw personally," said Mr. Willets. "the streets of Bombay were full of starving people. Up-sprang from the gutter in front of the Great Western Hotel where I stopped, a dozen brown bodies with lean forms and robust lungs. They clamored for bread in the Hindustani tongue. They were starving and no one would throw them even a crumb. To give them money, would mean to be surrounded instantly by a mad mob. Thus famine greeted me the very moment of my arrival.

"One day, in a big village, I was watching the grain dealers doling out rice to those who could buy, when two little starving boys, the older one leading his little brother, fell down in front of the shop, from sheer exhaustion. The grain dealer never noticed them, though he might have helped them very practically. The younger boy's chest heaved up and down rapidly, his mouth flew wide open, he rolled on his side his limbs stiffened in death. His brother looked on for a few moments stupidly, then suddenly sprang to his feet and ran away.

"That's about all there is in the death and funeral of a member of one's family in that part of the world, at present. The Hindu has no fear of death, rather welcomes it. Hundreds listed as 'famine deaths', were suicides, their weapon of self-destruction being will. The Hindu, finding himself starving, helpless and hope-

less, simply lies down and wills himself into the other world.

"I took a train northward from Bombay. It started out in the night, almost silently, anyway with the least possible noise, as if reluctant to enter the area of desolation and death. There were very few passengers—only a plague doctor, a cholera expert, an engineer, a famine inspector and Dr. Louis Klopech, then touring the strick-



Courtesy of The Christian Herald.

INDIA FAMINE.

At Godhra Relief Camp—Famine Does Not Spare the Youths of the Land.

en districts in the interest of a relief fund raised by the Christian Herald.

"Twenty five miles from Bombay vegetation grew sparse. Of course, a few weeds grittily clung to life, cactus thrived pluckily, and some of the trees still had leaves enough for shade purposes. Fifty miles up, however, vegetation ceased. From the carriage windows, eyes searched the miles vainly for a single green speck. We had passed even the last weed.

"At a small station, we came to a dead stop and I began uttering blue words against the slowness of train service in the East, when I perceived a horrible, hideous group representing starvation. The anathemas I was still venting stopped in my throat, and like fish-bones, almost choked me. The group included a young mother and her babe, and a long, young man who lay on the ground. The woman stood by him, the child resting a straddle on her thigh-bones. They typified family life in a foodless year. They might have been the originals of the pictures I had seen in the papers before leaving New York. They had become skeletons while yet alive. They might have risen from the grave. Brown skin covered their bones, like leather stretched over a frame. The young woman's shoulder blade had burst through the skin. I could have filled the basin-like stomach of the long man on the ground and in it washed my hands. He arose and slapped his hollow stomach with one hand and, with the other hand, smote his brow. The woman pointed to the brown naked mite on her thigh-bone. They implored in weak, far-away voices, "Salam, Sahib. You are our father and our mother. Give us food, and God will bless you with many children."

"And from that time I saw similar groups, and scenes, heard similar pitiful cries, saw equal distress, on every side.

"Human skulls and bones dotted the sun-baked fields telling terrible tales. The whole country as far as eye could see was level as a prairie, barren as a desert and dust colored. Even the train we rode was of the same color and our khaki suits approximated it as closely as a woman can match ribbons. Rivers, streams, lakes, pools had disappeared, leaving beds, like the fields, parched wastes of earth. Water, except in the few remaining extra deep wells, had disappeared entirely.

"About every ten or fifteen miles there was a relief camp or a poor house. At the camps people were given work at four cents maximum wages a day, hardly enough at best for them to live on. In the poor houses, people who were too weak to work, delicate women and little children, were cared for stintedly at government expense.

"I described these camps and poor houses fully in my letters to your paper from India, described in detail the spectacle of over six million people eating the two meals a day supplied by the government. There are other and many interesting things in connection with these camps, however. For instance, the starving people have to walk from ten to fifty miles to get

to a relief camp. They do not allow people who live in a certain village, for instance, to enter the camp adjoining that village. If they are willing to walk a number of miles to get to relief, they are pretty certain to be genuine sufferers, and we thus get a minimum of imposters.

"In the relief camps people are seldom arrested. They are too busy or too tired to do wrong. Are the people honest among themselves? Yes; for obvious reasons. They have nothing to steal from one another.

"In case of any wrong-doing, however, no corporal punishment is inflicted upon the culprits. If such culprits are well enough, they are dismissed. How do the workers entertain themselves on holidays and Sundays and in the evenings? They

cholera was mowing down people as in battle. The collector, the only white man in the district, met me at the station. To his bungalow, two miles from the station, we rode in his smart tonga drawn by crack ponies. A sepoy, his bare feet in the stirrups, acted as outrider, and two coolies trotted beside the tonga. His bungalow stood in the desert outside the village, amid vast silence. Out there, starving people were suffering in ominous silence. We ourselves sat down to a dinner for epicures, served with all the adjuncts of a London sideboard. The Collector's wife there, with pinched face, a lily parched shrivelling in the furnace air. In their compound was a big tree, the only tree for miles around that boasted of leaves. It was the one green thing in the world for the brave little woman, and it helped to keep her eye bright. But the leaves were coveted by the neighbouring cow herds. Here were leaves enough to keep life in several head of cattle till government would buy them. Under this tree nightly therefore, the collector posted his sepoy. That night I slept in a tent, a guest chamber, luxuriously furnished and cooler than any room in the bungalow. The tent was under the coveted tree. At midnight there was a cry of alarm, and whack! whack! the cow herds were attacking the tree with axes. Lanterns were brought, and the young collector came out in his pajamas and talked to the enemy in their own Gujarati, gave them written orders on the local bunniah for grain, and then we all went to sleep again. "Have to go through that little comedy every seven days," said my host next morning. "Anything to keep that—for her."

Might Have Shot Custer.

Major Thomas Lawson, a prominent Confederate officer, tells an interesting story of General George A. Custer, the dashing Federal commander, who after ward fell in the massacre of the Little Big Horn. Major Lawson served with the Virginia troops. He was in Pickett's charge at Gettysburg and, although still hale and hearty, bears the marks of three serious wounds.

"During the Virginia campaigns," said Major Lawson, "our forces made a night attack. Our regiment charged into Custer's camp and stampeded the Yankees. Chance sent us in the direction of the general's headquarters. In the midst of rout I saw a handsome man rush from a tent a few feet from me. He was only half dressed, and from his long hair I recognized him even in the dim light as Custer. He had no arms at any sort, and the Confederates were in almost complete possession; but hastily pulling a bridle over his horse's head and without waiting to saddle up, he jumped on the animal and galloped off, without arms, to attempt to rally his routed men. He was within ten feet of me for more than a minute, and I drew my revolver to shoot him, but I could not kill so brave a man when he had no means of defense himself. It would have been too much like murder.

"I have always been glad that I did not fire on the gallant Custer that night."

Powers of the Mistral Wind.

The mistral is a famous wind which blows cold and strong in southeastern France. In the districts where it prevails the trees are lean toward the southeast, and the gardens have to be protected on the northwest side, from which the wind comes, by lofty walls. Last winter in Marseilles a carriage in which a lady was driving was blown into a canal by the mistral, and both the lady and the horse were drowned. In consequence of this accident, and of other manifestations of the power of the destructive wind, the Mayor of Marseilles issued an order that no carriages should be allowed to drive along side the canals of the water-front of the harbor while a mistral is blowing.

Cool Weather Ahead For Papa.

Mamma—"Now go and say good night to your governess, like a good little girl, and give her a kiss."

Little Puss—"I'll say good night, but I won't give her a kiss."

Mama—"That's naughty! Why won't you give her a kiss?"

Little Puss—"Because she slaps people's faces when they try to kiss her."

Mamma—"Now, don't talk nonsense; but do as your told."

Little Puss—"Well, mammy, if you don't believe me—ask papa!"

Quartz Thermometers.

In France, Monsieur Dufour has succeeded in making thermometer tubes of pure quartz. Not only are these tubes exceedingly transparent, but their resistance to heat and other advantages make them superior to glass for thermometers intended to measure high temperatures. In such thermometers melted tin takes the place of mercury, and the scale reads from about



Courtesy of The Christian Herald.

INDIA FAMINE.

Victims at Dohad Poor-House—Charity Can Save Even These.

that so many hundreds of thousands are dying, that such distress exists among the living. But the scenes I have described are just as true of the stricken district this moment, as they were when I sailed from Bombay a few weeks ago. The famine will last throughout this year, and its effects will be felt for more than a year to come.

"I stopped overnight at Godhra, where

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465° Fahrenheit up over 1,000°. It could be run up to 1,800°, for quartz does not soften below that temperature.

Ram's Horn Wrinkles.

A man's wealth is never greater than his self.

With some men there is no usefulness without usefulness. Heaven is not a premium given away with a pound of piety.

There is something greater than success, and that is effort after failure.

The complaining Christian, may be one of the lights of the world, but so smoky that the world is glad when it goes out.

His the Greatest Grievance.

Higgins—"That dog of yours is making night hideous right along. The neighbors are all up in arms about him."

Wiggins—"I don't blame them; but if it is bad for them it is worse for me. The brute keeps me awake as well as them; and I have to feed the dog and pay for his license besides. I think I ought to be the one to complain if anybody is."—Boston Transcript.

Who Was It?

"When you rapped me last evening, asked young Spoonamore, had you heard Miss Quickstep, that my rich uncle had cut me off with a shilling?"

"No," she said with tears in her eyes, "I had not. Believe me, my friend, I am so—"

"Well, he hasn't—and I've got another girl."

And in the pale moonlight he was seen to leer horribly.

Good Evidence.

"Do you believe there is such a thing as clairvoyance?" inquired the matter-of-fact friend.

"Well," answered the man who hesitates, "I won't say there is any such thing. But I do know this much: I saw a man go to a pile of cantaloupes and pick out six, and every one of them was good to eat."—Washington Star.

Her Remark.

Husband—"Didn't you tell that cook I wanted my breakfast right on the minute?"

Wife—"I did."

"And what did she say?"

"She said that we all have our disappointments."—Life.

"You seem to be very much interested in that couple in the middle of the floor."

"Yes; you look at them and see if you can figure out which it is that can't dance."

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