

AN AWFUL VISITATION

INDIA IS SEEING VERY SAD TIMES THESE DAYS.

The Country Famine-Stricken, Cholera-Scourged, and Plague-Visited—Locusts are Also Causing Damage to Crops—The City of Bombay in a Very Unsanitary Condition.

India is famine-stricken, cholera scourged, and plague-visited. Famine was bad enough, famine and cholera seemed a heavy scourge, but the appearance of the bubonic plague, or black death, in Bombay has filled the cup of calamity to its trembling brim. India is indeed stricken this year.

What the famine is may be gathered from the fact that less than half the usual rainfall has been received, and the greater part of what has fallen came unseasonably. Rice, wheat and the cheaper grains, upon which millions live, have slowly shrivelled under the burning sun. Pastures have become crisp and yellow. Every breeze carries its two-fold burden of heat and dust. Cattle are mere skeletons, and starving humanity abounds. In many parts of the famine-stricken districts the population numbers as high as 700 to every square mile. Imagination can fill in the details of the suffering which crop failure means in these close-huddled millions of our fellow-beings. Even the guarded wording of Government reports show how desperate a conservative government considers the situation. I quote from the Weekly Allahabad Pioneer of Oct. 8:

"The continued draught is proving disastrous to the standing crops, except where irrigation is practicable, and rain is very urgently required throughout the provinces. Agricultural operations for the spring sowings are retarded for want of sufficient moisture. Prospects continue to be unfavorable.

FLIGHTS OF LOCUSTS

passed over several districts and caused slight damage to the crops in Meerut, Budaun, Ghazipur, Lucknow, and Unao. The numbers employed on relief works and in receipt of gratuitous relief on Saturday, Sept. 26 were: Banda 2,111; Hamirpur, 1,935; Jhansi, 823; Jalaun, 576; Hardoi, 6,073. Total, 11,512. Of these 696 were dependents gratuitously relieved on the works, and 6,631 persons were gratuitously relieved under other provisions of the famine code. Supplies are reported deficient in Cawnpore, Fatehpur, Benares, Hardoi, Bahraich, and Bara Bank. Fodder is becoming scarce and is dear in many places. Prices are very high and generally rising."

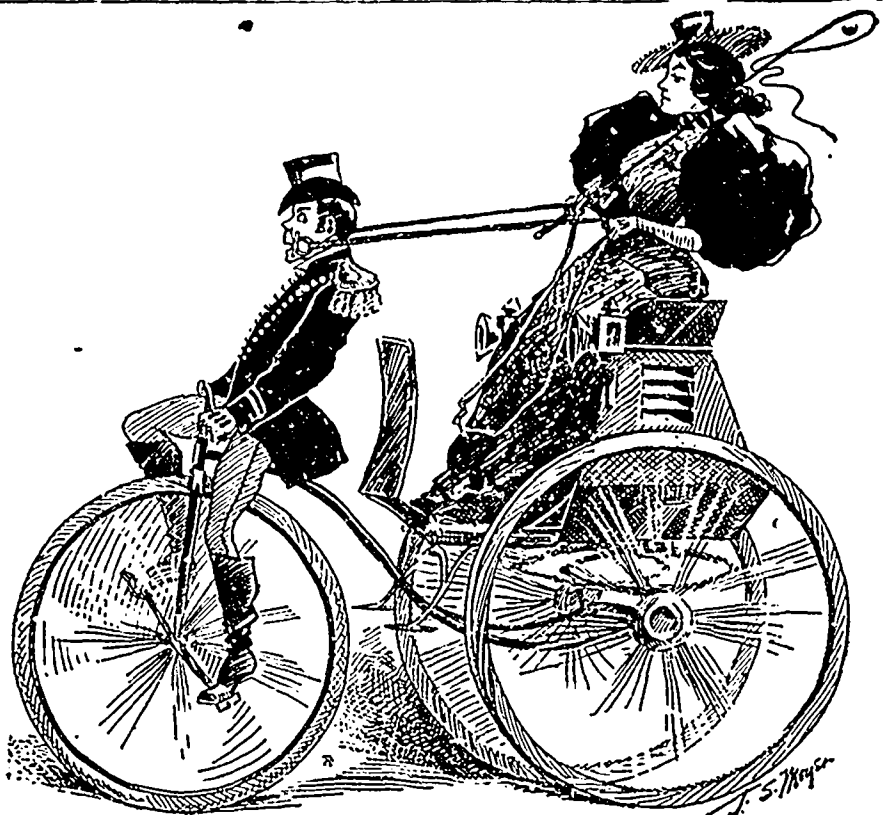
A private letter received from an old friend in Lucknow says:

"We are just entering on a famine here. The very cheapest rice is 2 annas a seer—equivalent to 2 cents a pound, three times its regular price,—and already some are dying. We are beginning to give out help, and as a test to keep out the professional beggars we have started a surki yard. The way a professional beggar won't break surki is a caution. But when they stick to it we give food or wages, as we think best. Poor people, who only earn from 5 to 6 rupees (\$1.50 to \$1.80) are suffering. That amount will hardly keep the head of the family in food. We shall try to buy rice cheaply in Calcutta, ship it in, and sell it to our own people, native Christians at cost. The rascally grain dealers, all Brahmins, have cornered all the grain, and when the Government tries to force down the price they simply shut up shop. Cholera is very bad, and now that the black plague has broken out at Bombay we feel that we are drinking the dregs of calamity."

The heartless grain dealers make huge profits out of this hunger of India's millions. Selfishness in its most

CRUEL AND FIENDISH

phase never eclipsed that of the calcul-



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ating grain dealer of India in famine times. The conquerors of the empire are the personification of mercy and justice, compared to these, of one flesh and blood, believers in the same gods, with the multitudes who slowly starve to death before their shops for lack of money to buy the grain which the dealer bought cheap and sells dear.

The Government authorities provide relief for the hunger-bitten people in three ways: First, by shipping in rice from other districts and selling it to all who can buy, usually below cost; in the second place, "relief works" are opened in the afflicted districts. Irrigation, canals, roads, railroads, &c., are built by the labor of famine-stricken men, who are paid in money or grain, as they choose. These relief works confer a double benefit on the country. They give help to the needy and provide better roads, better irrigation channels, and generally further the interests of commerce and agriculture. In this improvement all share when times of plenty return. The Government also supplies, gratuitously, help or food, medicine and medical services to those too far gone with want or its attendant diseases to work.

Practically speaking, all the ordinary functions of government are in abeyance at such a time, while the energies of public officers are directed to the work of feeding the starving and caring for the sick. All this help is English. Natives have little pity for one another.

Now the black death has added a new horror to the situation. Its appearance in Bombay puzzles the city health officer, the sanitary board and the citizen, so far as can be ascertained, it has not come from Hong Kong, where it has raged so fatally since 1892. Suspicion rests upon Mecca. Pilgrims to and from that

HOLIEST AND FILTHIEST SPOT

on the planet make Bombay their port of arrival and departure, and it may be that this awful scourge comes from Arabia instead of from China. In any case, it has come, and parts of the great city of Bombay are full of the cries of mourners.

The sanitary authorities are bending all their energies to rid the city of filth. All who voice public opinion unite in advocating drastic sanitary reforms, regardless of the expense involved. A centrifugal pump has been placed on one of the main docks along the front of the bay, and every night pumping is carried on, and sea water mixed with carbolic acid as it is discharged from the pump is poured through the drains. The drains of houses where the plague is raging or threatening are being whitewashed. The flushing of all pip-

ewers is being undertaken by means of large flushing tanks, holding 600 gallons each of phenyl solution.

Dr. Weir, the Bombay health officer points out that the drainage is wholly insufficient.

"There has been an enormous increase of the water supply since 1892," he says, "from 16,500,000 gallons to 20,000,000 gallons or more daily and very little increase in the number of drains. The island is flooded or irrigated with water, and unless drains are constructed to take away all the water that comes into the city the life of a healthy population will not be possible; what has been seen in countries of marsh and wet, the poisoning of life from malarial fevers will be seen here. It is not possible to look to the future except with anxiety."

In spite of all precautions that plague broke out in five new places in the city, and the percentage of fatal cases was daily rising when the mail left. Thousands of inhabitants fled, panic-stricken, to their native villages or down the seacoast. Thousands of devout Hindus make daily pilgrimages to shrines and to the seashore, at which latter place they solemnly cast in their cocoanut offerings to the gods of the great deep.

With the famine and cholera to cut a swath before it,

THE GRIM REAPER.

of which we first hear from Procopius, and, with the dread ravages of which England and the continent, as well as Africa and Asia, have learned to their undoing, may pile up a ghastly score of victims.

In the year 1348 100,000 died of the same disease in Venice, leaving hardly enough inhabitants to carry on any of the many lines of Venetian industry. The same year 60,000 died of the plague in Florence, a third of the population of England perished, and the country did not make up for the victims of this unconquerable plague until the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth. In 1720 a ship from the Levant brought the plague to Marseilles, and 60,000 of the inhabitants fell before it. Ten years later the same disease almost depopulated Moscow, while toward the end of the eighteenth century Egypt and Morocco lost more than 1,000,000 inhabitants.

It was this same plague that was mentioned in Boccaccio's "Decameron." To the readers of English fiction it will be recognized as the disease which filled the loathsome charnel houses of Florence, as described in Lytton's "Rienzi."

Sanitary officials at all our seaports should leave open no door of opportunity through which this terrible scourge may enter our American cities.