

MILLIONS STARVING TO DEATH

The Direful Results of the Famine in India.

Inhabitants to the Number of 300,000,000 Occupy a District Less Than Half the Size of Canada.

(From Friday's Daily.)

Above the noise of everyday events the clamor of political intriguers, the din of more or less disreputable warfare, the cry of starving India, increasing in volume from day to day, so demands for itself a hearing that it can no longer be disregarded. How much longer the lives of white men in the outlying districts will be safe, while the natives are experiencing death in its most ghastly forms, is a question which is beginning to agitate that portion of the public mind which is personally interested in the fate of that unhappy country. White men are already regarded by the ignorant classes as responsible for a great amount of the suffering; but, while there may be grounds for complaint, it is certain that no nation would have accomplished more than has England while laboring at such a disadvantage. Of course, mistakes have been made. In the distant past, conditions, to a certain extent, righted themselves. During years of drought, followed by famine, the population was so decimated that in the succeeding years of plenty there was an abundance for all. But, as it was noted that the drought usually affected but one or two provinces at a time, the government caused the poorer people to be moved around from place to place, thus preserving life, until, at present, in a territory but little over half as large as the Dominion of Canada, there is a population of 300,000,000 of people. During the last two years the drought has become general and now 130,000,000 are suffering from the famine which, with slow insistence, seems likely to desolate the entire country. In its wake follow bubonic plague, cholera and smallpox. The germs of all these diseases find the best of soil for development in the feverish, impoverished bodies of the starving people. And now the water supply has become so short that, with the limited means of transportation, it is difficult to send a sufficient supply into the localities where it is entirely exhausted to enable each inhabitant to receive even a few drops daily.

Early in the history of the famine masses of the people traded all their worldly possessions for bread. Next, many of them sold their girls to the Mohammedans, receiving in return, in some instances, but 35 cents. The boys are not marketable and are turned adrift and may be seen in great, homeless groups, sometimes 50 together, literally starving to death. They eagerly lick up the sweepings of the granaries, and are so emaciated as to be hardly recognizable as human beings. The natives may blame themselves largely for existing conditions. They refuse to adopt modern methods of farming. The English government is doing its utmost, but the people often refuse to be placed on the relief list until too weak to recover. The viceroy recently declared that conditions are steadily growing worse. The plague is spreading alarmingly and another drought is threatened. He announces his intention to spend all the money in the treasury for the relief of the sufferers. Outside contributions have been made but available funds are inadequate to meet demands.

A full-grown man at the relief works may only receive 4 cents per day. However, 5 cents daily will keep a Hindoo alive indefinitely, for, in his land, the supporting of life on a minimum of cheapest food has been reduced to an art. A few grains of rice, supplemented with roots and grass seed, will furnish him a fair meal. When the garrison of the British fort at the siege of Lucknow were reduced to daily rations of four ounces of corn made into gruel, some of the Hindoo auxiliaries offered to live for a week on the water in which the corn was boiled. If the whole civilized world unite in the work of assisting people who are satisfied with so little the worst features of this famine, the details of which are too horrible to describe or read, would be alleviated.

To their abstemiousness, the English are largely in debt for the loyalty of the native soldiers. Each man knows that when his time of usefulness has expired the government guarantee of a pension sufficient to purchase a yearly unit of white cotton, and rice for his daily meals, is assurance of a sufficient provision for his old age. The religion

of the country prohibits the use of animal food. As available funds for the relief committee are only sufficient to reach about 15 per cent of the sufferers it is feared that wandering groups may resolve themselves into armies of bandits who, having disposed of their homes through want, will for years constitute a menace to the safety of the more fortunate inhabitants of India. Crowds of distressed human beings are daily streaming into the cities, and even in Bombay people without means of obtaining food starve in the streets. Famine prices prevail. Owing to financial depression mills are closed down and in many cases the wages of those still employed have been reduced. What sufficed perhaps for mere existence in prosperous times means now slow starvation covering a period of weeks or even months. Those dying in cities are buried in ditches, if in the open country they lie where they fall. Near some of the relief works men are constantly engaged in burning bodies; often large numbers of them together. It is a fearful sight, but seems the only way of protecting the living.

The suffering seems to be largely among the agricultural classes of which 80 per cent of the population of India is composed. Large sections of the arable lands depend entirely for their productivity upon irrigation, the source of which is in rivers and streams which are supplied by rains. Every recorded Indian famine may be traced to failure of rainfall. A number of years ago the Indian forester announced his theory that the responsibility for droughts might be placed upon the great herds of goats (sometimes 15,000 or 20,000), always apparently starving, which attacks the shoots of every young tree in the course of their depredations. Thus when old trees die off there are no young ones to take their places. Rains, which depend so largely upon the existence of forests, fall short, then famine and plague follow. The early rains come in June, are known as the southwest monsoons and originate in vapors drawn from the Indian ocean and the Arabian sea. Breaking on the Malabar coast for three months, they may be expected to flood India, the average fall of water being about 100 inches. At such times crops are abundant. But when these rains fail, as was the case last year, famine is the result. The "later" rains or northeast monsoons arrive in November and December from the Bay of Bengal. These also failed last year. Insufficient rainfall may be expected at intervals of from five to 25 years. Existing conditions are the worst recorded. The present drought, following so closely that of 1897, has rendered the ground so dry that there is a scarcity of water, even for drinking purposes, heretofore unknown.

Bluffers at Nome.

Reports of mistreatment of newcomers at Nome by men who have been there some time, and who operate in a clique to keep the chechakos from taking gold from the beach are given, says the Alaskan, by George W. Hazen, who has returned from Nome. He says:

"Men wearing badges and parading as marshals, and without authority go up and down the beach, and if they see a man taking out gold they will tell him to get, and he must go. It is simply a big case of bluff, and the bluffers are sour doughs imposing on tenderfeet."

"Many men went prospecting in various directions and came back disgusted. It seems there are a few good creek claims, but nothing more, and they are shallow. The reported new strikes are no good."

"It was expected by many they would be able to at least wash out enough to get a ticket back to the Sound, but they are disappointed in that. The government will have to take back many."

"It is not a great and thrifty camp such as is found in a place of a big output. The merchants and gambling houses are not doing much, which is sufficient proof of the matter. Eating houses and hotels, of course, are doing a rushing business."

"The tundra is just like so many wet sponges."

"Water used in the camp is taken from the tundra."

"I went to Nome with a certain purpose and having succeeded in that I am going home."

"I wrote a letter aboard the Falloon setting forth my views in general, and the passengers as a whole passed on them, and said I was more than conservative."

Feeding England's Vast Army.

After water, which is literally the crying need at all times and everywhere, the demand is for bread. Happily the British commissariat supplies the ingredients of the staff of life in fair quality and abundant quantity; and the regimental or camp bake-ovens do the rest. It is a sight which does good to the eyes of the hungry men, whose appetites

are as stalwart as their bodies, to see the bread spread out on the ground in trays fresh from the field ovens, or loaded high in the wagons at the stations ready for transport to the camps. The men selected for service at the ovens are drawn largely from the Indian contingent, and they know how to produce a wholesome article. Of course there are other things besides bread and water, though often the soldier must be content with these when he is moving about rapidly. A regular British army ration for a day includes a pound of bread, a pound and a half of meat, coffee and seasonings. To such things there is usually added the long list of toothsome viands and edibles which the modern canning industry has brought within the reach of the whole world—corn, tomatoes, fish, berries, apples, beef and sauce. Fresh beef and mutton have been a rare visitation at the mess tables in South Africa until lately, when the transport service has been under better organization and train loads of cattle and sheep have been brought in from the outlying country. In some parts of Natal and the Orange Free State the resident population have always depended chiefly on stock raising, and their flocks and herds have come in handy as a food supply for the invading army. The British army authorities, however, have been exceedingly scrupulous in the matter of securing forage, and will tolerate neither stealing nor looting from defenseless and innocent people. All supplies taken from the inhabitants are either paid for on the spot or payment is arranged for on a reasonable basis.—Leslie's Weekly.

The Deacon's Scheme.

Opposite the railroad depot there was a grocery kept by a colored man, and as we had some time to wait for the train three or four of us crossed over to look at his stock. Business was very brisk with the merchant, though all his customers were colored. We noticed that sugar, tea and codfish seemed to sell above all else, and during a temporary lull the colonel approached the battered old scales on which everything was weighed and picked up some of the weights. The hollow in each one had been filled with lead, and when quite sure that the pound weight would balance 20 ounces at least he said to the old man:

"I see you have filled your weights with lead."

"Yes, sah; yes, sah," he replied as he rubbed his hands together.

"What was the idea?"

"To keep the dirt out o' de notes, sah. Can't no dirt git in dar now."

"Was it your own idea?"

"No, sah. I never should hev got dat idea if it hadn't bin fur Deacon Williams. De deacon said it was de way dey did down in Greenville, an he fixed 'em up fur me widout cost."

"The deacon buys all his groceries here, doesn't he?"

"He do, sah; yes, sah, he buys 'em all yere, an he was tellin me only dis mawnin dat he neber did see de beat o' how dem groceries held out."

He was advised to take his weights over to the cotton warehouse and have them weighed, and he picked them up and in a slow walk and very much puzzled he proceeded to the warehouse. When he returned, it was on the run and his eyes hanging out, and as he reached the store he exclaimed:

"No wonder I has gone into bankruptcy fo' teen times an had to sell my mews an hogs an make de ole woman go bar'tut! Dat air pound weight weighs 22 ounces, an every time Deacon Williams has bought two pounds o' sugar an codfish he has taken away three pounds an a half! Shoo, but I'ze gwine to close de doan an put up a sign o' 'Busted Ag'in'!"

M. QUAD.

Will Stay With It.

Alex. Mathews, well known by all Western Washingtonians as an ex-sheriff of Pierce county, who has been in the Klondike since the fall of '97, is in the city from his claim on Sulphur, where he has a large lot of mining machinery which he believes will yet enable him to leave the Klondike a rich man. As none are more deserving than he, it is hoped his fondest expectations will be fully and speedily realized.

Politics Don't Go.

When interrogated yesterday concerning his attitude towards allowing political issues to find their way into the Board of Trade meetings, President Fulda said: "The Board of Trade is an institution wholly devoted to commercial and mining interests, and politics are altogether foreign to its mission, and will therefore not be allowed to take up time at the meetings."

"Yes, I noticed that matters had a decided tendency to drift towards politics Wednesday evening, but as it was the first meeting devoted to the matter now before the board I let things take their course, but you can say for me that the Board of Trade as an organization is not in politics."

The Klondike Nugget

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THE TIME IS FAVORABLE.

The trustees of the Board of Trade have been authorized to raise the sum of \$50,000 for the purpose of bringing before the people and government of Canada the true condition of affairs in the Yukon territory, and for the prosecution of the work of securing needed legislative reforms.

We are of the opinion that such a fund can be used to the lasting benefit and advantage of the territory. Ottawa apparently does not realize and will not realize what is required for the betterment of affairs in this territory until an object lesson of the most forcible kind is brought to the attention of the people of the Dominion. While there may be a question as to the wisdom of the language used in the resolution passed at last night's meeting there can be no doubt of the earnestness of purpose which was behind the proceedings. The objects which it is desired to obtain are worth a hard fight, and in fact must be obtained at all costs.

There is no mistaking the fact that remedial legislation must be secured or another 12 months will see the country in a bad way. What, with Siftonian laws and Siftonian law-makers, the Yukon has been subjected to a squeezing process which has begun to make the territory gasp for breath. Three more years of legislation such as that which has cursed the country during the past three will effectually settle the question. But there is hope, we believe, that substantial reforms will be granted at no very distant date.

The fact that a general election through Canada will be called shortly is a propitious circumstance. A political party whose rule is trembling in the balance will be disposed to give favorable consideration to requests from the Yukon. Beyond a doubt the leaders of the party now in power are looking for a record which has covered their party with disgrace and brought themselves into disrepute.

It is, therefore, we believe, a favorable time to send down to Ottawa a delegation to present our grievances. We are of the opinion that the government will be found affected to a greater or less extent with a contrite heart. Indications point in that direction and the prospects are favorable that the spirit of contrition will increase as the day of election approaches. Immediate advantage should be taken of this condition. A delegation properly equipped with the sinews of war and composed of men of capacity and standing in the community should be able to accomplish lasting results and that within a very short time.

THE EXPORT DUTY.

The substitution of an export duty in the place of the ruinous royalty tax has several desirable features which would tend to relieve the present unsatisfactory condition of affairs, as brought about by reason of existing legislation.

Primarily and principally it would serve to distribute among all classes of our population the burden of taxation, which at the present time falls practically upon the miner alone. Under the export tax system every person, no matter what his occupation or by what means he acquires his gold would be compelled to pay the tax upon all gold taken out of the country by him. As long as he keeps his money here for re-investment, no tax would be collected, and thus every encouragement would be given for the development of the resources of the territory by home capital.

Money taken out of the country is dead money so far as concerns our own development and growth. It will not come back to be used in our channels of trade, nor will it come back for investment. Another point to be considered in this connection is the fact that to a large extent gold shipped out of the country represents profit, and in consequence a tax levied upon gold so

shipped would be far more equitable than the present royalty tax, which not infrequently is charged against net losses.

The imposition of such a tax should carry with it the complete abolition of the royalty and the establishment of a local government assay office where exchange of dust for currency may be effected at the smallest possible cost. Beyond a doubt legislative measures along the above lines would materially in bringing about a period of renewed prosperity for the entire Canadian Yukon country.

UNCLE SAM'S POSITION.

If President McKinley does not keep a pretty tight rein on the imperialist steeds that have hitched themselves to his chariot, he is apt to get carried farther into this China business than will be comfortable for either the Republican party or the United States. It is well to have a vigilant eye to the protection of citizens in a foreign country—in fact that is a part of a government's duty—but when the president of the United States, without explicit authority from congress, sends the army, or a portion of it to a friendly nation with which this government is maintaining diplomatic relations, on the grounds, either real or assumed, that American citizens who are in that country, most of them in private capacities, are not safe or that their property is being destroyed, he is getting dangerously close to imperialism, or at least establishing a precedent that may lead us a good way from the governmental landmarks that are imbedded in the Declaration of Independence and in the constitution.

The lust for territory is so rampant among the imperialists of Europe that it is plain that China, sooner or later is to be partitioned among them. In fact, through the medium of a "sphere of influence," such a partition has practically been already made. A few provinces of the former empire still remain to China, among them Pechili. It is rumored that the powers of Europe are willing that this province shall be in the "sphere of influence" of the United States.—Seattle Times.

Latest authorities on the subject of the Nome diggings express the belief that discoveries of sufficient value have been made in the vicinity of Nome to maintain a population of from 2000 to 3000 people. The number of people now at Nome is variously estimated at figures ranging from 30,000 to 50,000. It would appear, therefore, that the ratio between the actual population and the population which the city of ruby and fame is really entitled to is in the neighborhood of 16 to 1. This startling economic discovery ought to furnish a large amount of campaign material for the use of Democratic war horses in the great political battle now in progress in the states.

It is worthy of note that when the question of granting the Yukon immediate representation in the house of parliament was voted upon, a negative vote was recorded by the member from Alberta, Mr. Oliver. We do not believe that we should be much the gainer if Mr. Oliver's district should be extended to include this territory as is now proposed. The only effects which would accrue from such action would be to postpone the day when representation from the Yukon district will be granted. Any such plan as that involved in the suggested extension of the Alberta district is a fraud pure and simple.

Immense quantities of mining machinery have been brought in already this season and in all probability an amount equally as large will yet come in. The most important feature in connection with this heavy importation of machinery lies in the fact that most of it is brought in under contract with claim owners direct. This insures operation during the coming winter upon a large scale. There is every reason for believing that more men will be employed at steady labor and fair remuneration during the coming season than ever before in the history of gold mining in the Klondike.

Decline in Mercury.

The weather report from the upper country this morning is that between here and Bennett it was about 40 above, being the lowest point reached by mercury for a number of weeks.