

In order that the Government and people of New Zealand may be informed how their gift will be spent, I am directed to forward six copies of a paper which was prepared under the orders of the Secretary of State for India some weeks ago. It will be seen that the Indian Government undertake to save life and prevent suffering at the cost of the Indian Treasury, so far as it is possible to secure these ends, while charitable contributions are devoted to objects outside the bare saving of life and prevention of suffering.

The Agent-General for New Zealand.

I am, &c.,

HORACE WALPOLE.

Enclosure to Enclosure No. 2.

INDIAN FAMINE, 1900.

THE present famine was caused by the failure of the accustomed rainfall during the autumn of 1899, and the effects of this failure were greatly aggravated in Bombay, Rajputana, and the Central Provinces, and to a less extent in the North-west Provinces and the Punjab, by the lateness of the usual winter rains.

According to the latest accounts the tracts affected by the present famine contain a population of 85 millions, of whom perhaps 62 millions may be severely affected. Of the 85 millions, 43½ millions are inhabitants of Native States, and 41¾ millions are in British territory. The most severely affected tracts are the Central Provinces, the northern parts of the Bombay Presidency, and the Bombay Native States, the greater part of the Rajputana States, and a large part of the Central India States. At the end of March, 1900, the number of people in receipt of relief were:—

British Provinces.			Native States.		
Bombay	...	1,249,000	Rajputana States	...	457,000
Punjab	...	211,000	Central India States	...	129,000
Central Provinces	...	1,513,000	Bombay Native States	...	468,000
Berar	...	355,000	Punjab Native States	...	19,000
Ajmer-Merwara	...	112,000	Central Provinces Feudatory States	...	46,000
North-west Provinces	...	3,000	Baroda	...	60,000
Madras	...	11,000	Hyderabad	...	246,000
Total, British provinces	...	3,454,000	Total, Native States	...	1,425,000
Grand total			...		
			4,879,000.		

Of these people six-sevenths were employed on relief-works, and one-seventh, who by reason of age, infirmity, or custom are unable to work, are gratuitously relieved without being subjected to any labour test. The Government undertakes to prevent death and to relieve misery from famine in British India at the cost of the Indian Treasury, so far as organization and effort can accomplish these ends. The relief operations in Native States are conducted by the Native rulers and their officials; but the British Government in India lends money, and sends skilled officers to assist in relief-work, to those States where such help is needed.

It is believed that the food-supply of India will suffice to meet the present need. The afflicted tracts are traversed by or are near to railways, so that the distribution of food will be practicable. As in the famine of 1897, the Government do not propose—save in special cases of peculiar local difficulty—to interfere with the supply and distribution of food; what they undertake is to provide employment and pay for all who need it. Prices are not generally higher than they were at the same season in 1897; in parts prices are lower. There was a great rise in prices about the end of October; since then the advance in prices has not been marked.

One notable feature of the present famine is that Guzerat, Kathiawar, and Baroda are very seriously affected. These are the richest and most fertile tracts of Western India, and it is said that these regions have not suffered seriously from famine for about a century. The Central Provinces, which were famine-stricken in 1897, are again severely distressed. They enjoyed good harvests in 1898; and some of the districts which suffered most severely in 1896–97 are not so badly off this year.

So far as can be foreseen, the loss of plough and milch cattle will this season be greater in many parts of the famine area than on any similar occasion as to which we have full returns. If so, the village people will have much difficulty in regaining their prosperity; and it is to help them in this struggle that charitable funds will be largely devoted. After the famine of 1897 the return to agricultural prosperity was, save in some parts of the Central Provinces, more rapid and more complete than had been anticipated.

It is expected that the severity of the famine pressure will not abate until the end of June, and distress may be keener as the heat increases and drinking-water becomes more scarce. After June, if the rains are favourable, the numbers on relief will rapidly decrease; but food will not be cheap again until the end of August, and not until the end of September will the prospect of next season's crops be assured; while relief operations may in some tracts be required, even under most favourable circumstances, until the end of November.

While the Government assumes responsibility for saving life and relieving misery from famine, there is a very large field for the operation of charity outside the Government relief. General and local relief committees are appointed in each province or State, and in each district, as the experience of past famines shows that this organization is the best for distributing charitable relief. On the committees sit Indians, missionaries, and other Europeans, besides officials; and many members of these committees in 1897 laboured most strenuously to relieve the deserving and to make the funds go as far as possible. The four objects to which any sums which may be collected will be devoted, in accordance with the recommendations of the Famine Commission, are as