

1900.
NEW ZEALAND.

INDIA FAMINE RELIEF:

CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO A CONTRIBUTION OF £5,000 BY NEW ZEALAND.

Laid before the General Assembly by Leave.

No. 1.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Right Hon. the PREMIER.

Westminster Chambers, 13, Victoria Street, London, S.W.,
24th May, 1900.

SIR,—

Referring to your cablegram of the 8th instant, instructing me to pay to the India Office, or other proper channel, the sum of £5,000 for the relief of those suffering from the famine in India, I beg to state that on communicating with the India Office the Private Secretary of the Under-Secretary of State called at this office and explained that that office could not well receive the contribution, and after some discussion it was suggested that it be remitted direct to the Governor-General, and placed at his disposal for the purpose named, in such manner as he may deem fit.

Not receiving any reply from the India Office, I remitted by telegram the £5,000 direct to Lord Curzon at Calcutta, informing him at the same time for what purpose it was sent. Subsequently I received a letter from the India Office, suggesting that the money be remitted direct to the Central Committee of the Charitable Famine Fund at Calcutta.

I enclose copy of the correspondence which has taken place with respect to the matter.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

W. P. REEVES.

Enclosure 1 in No. 1.

The AGENT-GENERAL to UNDER-SECRETARY of STATE for INDIA.

SIR,—

13, Victoria Street, S.W., 8th May, 1900.

I have the honour to inform you that I have been instructed by my Government to pay to the India Office the sum of £5,000 as a contribution from the Colony of New Zealand towards the relief of those who are suffering so severely from famine in India.

I have therefore to request the favour of your informing me in what manner the Right Hon. the Secretary of State for India would desire me to make the payment.

I have, &c.,

The Under-Secretary of State, India Office, S.W.

W. P. REEVES.

TELEGRAM to LORD CURZON, Calcutta.

REMITTING by cablegram five thousand pounds placed by New Zealand at your disposal for relief of those suffering from famine. Agent-General for New Zealand.

Enclosure 2 in No. 1.

The UNDER-SECRETARY of STATE for INDIA to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

India Office, S.W., 22nd May, 1900.

In reply to your letter of the 8th May, 1900, I am directed by the Secretary of State to acknowledge the good-will and liberality of the Colony of New Zealand in contributing the sum of £5,000 towards the relief of sufferers from famine in India. I am to suggest that you should remit the money direct to the Central Committee of the Charitable Famine Fund at Calcutta.

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

follows: (1) The provision of extra comforts in the shape of food and clothing over and above what is provided by the State; (2) the maintenance of orphans; (3) the relief of persons who, though in want, are unwilling to declare themselves publicly as applicants for charitable assistance; and (4) the provision of help, mainly in the form of agricultural implements and cattle, to those who may have lost their property in the famine, and who, without such help, would be unable to make a fresh start in life. The relief of distress in the Native States will be a special feature in the administration of the Famine Fund, and it is hoped that this fact will appeal strongly to the generosity of the people of this country.

In 1897 the charitable contributions to the Famine Relief Fund amounted* to £1,134,000, and the money was expended thus,—

	£
Object (1), extra comforts	70,700
" (2), orphans	10,300
" (3), special classes of sufferers	178,000
" (4), giving sufferers a fresh start	758,000
Reserve for orphans and miscellaneous	117,000
Total	1,134,000

The Viceroy, when speaking at a public meeting in Calcutta, held on behalf of the Famine Fund, said, after he had himself visited the famine districts, " If any rich man in this city is in any doubt as to whether he should subscribe, I would gladly give him a railway-ticket to a famine district, and take what he chose to give me on his return. He might go with a hard heart, but he would come back with a broken one. Whatever you give us will make no difference in the extent and character of our outlay. That is fixed for us by the high conception that we entertain of our public duty. But, for all that, there is an ample field for private generosity, both in supplement to that which the State can do and must do, and often in pursuit of that which the State cannot do at all. It is our task to keep the people alive, and to see them safely through the period of their sufferings. But no expert knowledge is required to recognise that there are a hundred ways in which the condition of their sufferings may be alleviated, while they still last, and a fresh start in the world be given to the sufferers when the worst is over. The legitimate objects of private charity have indeed been carefully analysed and scientifically laid down, both by Government during the last famine and by the Famine Commission afterwards. We ask your money to provide warm raiment, clothes, and blankets for the poor workers, who spend their nights out-of-doors, either in the open air or under flimsy mats of straw. In the Punjab, as you know, it is still very cold at nights. Later on, when the rains come, the same covering will be required to ward off the chills that bring fever and dysentery in their train. Think, again, of the good that may be done by the distribution of small comforts—of milk and arrowroot and cornflour, and other medicinal sustenance—to the aged and infirm, to invalids, and, above all, to children. My one happy experience in connection with the whole famine is my recollection of having saved the lives of two poor little children in Kathiawar, who were very nearly gone, but for whom I ordered milk to be supplied until they were quite recovered, as I have since heard, with satisfactory results. There is not a donor, however humble, in India or in England, of even a rupee or a shilling, to our cause who may not be honestly confident that that petty sum will bring a ray of light, a dawning of hope, into the heart of some unhappy peasant who for months will not have known what light or hope were."

2nd April, 1900.

No. 2.

The COLONIAL TREASURER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

The Treasury, Wellington, 6th July, 1900.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 24th May last (No. 1184), advising me that you had remitted to the Governor-General of India, as a contribution by New Zealand to the Famine Relief Fund, the sum of £5,000, as requested in my telegram of the 8th idem, and enclosing copies of correspondence on the subject.

I desire to thank you for your prompt action, and the course you adopted in making the payment.

I have, &c.,

R. J. SEDDON,

The Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

Colonial Treasurer.

* At an exchange of 1s. 4d. per rupee.

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