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Crushed By Famine and Plague, Chinese Sell Daughters and Wives

Starving by Millions and Dying by Tens of Thousands, Inhabitants of Certain Provinces Resort to Even Cannibalism.

IN THE provinces of Kiangsu and Anhwei, China, the spectre of famine hovers over between 2,500,000 and 3,000,000 people. Between 50,000 and 100,000 men, women and children are encamped outside the walls of the city of Nanking in improvised shelters which are little better than burrows, or under the open sky, crying for food or waiting apathetically for death to overtake them.

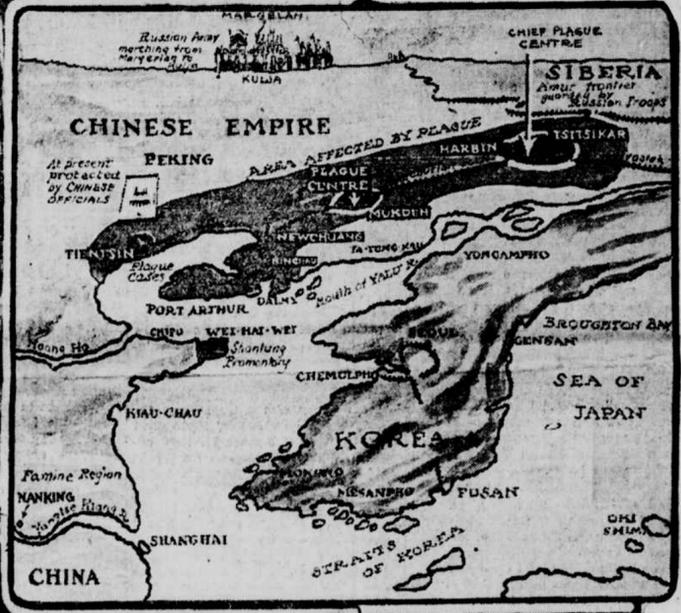
Down from the north the other spectre of plague is slowly making its way. From Harbin it has followed the line of railway to Dalny or Port Arthur. It has crossed the entrance of the Gulf of Pechili and made its appearance in Shantung. It is now within one hundred or one hundred and fifty miles of the valley of the Hwai River. If it gains a foothold in that region, it is believed that the number of deaths, which now mounts into the thousands daily from starvation and exposure, will be increased manifold and the whole stretch of low-lying country to the north of Nanking will be laid waste.

Every day the horror of the situation is growing, according to reports received at the State Department in Washington from consular officers in touch with the missionaries who, for the most part, are directing the work of relief. The people throughout the valley, as well as the refugees who have gathered around the towns and cities of the region, have reached the point at which the scant stores of grain and food have entirely disappeared. Hundreds of thousands are entirely dependent upon distribution of food to keep themselves alive until the winter is over and the land which was inundated by the floods begins to yield again. The supplies contributed by the United States and other foreign countries and the government itself are sufficient to tide over only a small portion of the famine sufferers.

Hundreds of thousands who cannot obtain the rice gruel which is distributed as extensively as the meagre stores will permit subsist as best they can on bark and weeds and by digging into the frozen earth for roots and herbs. Many have sold all but the merest scraps of their clothing to buy food, and are unable, in their emaciated condition, to withstand the rigors of the winter. In many cases it is doubtful in which form



PLAQUE GERMS FIND FINE BREEDING GROUNDS IN THE DIRTY STREETS OF CHINESE TOWNS, WHERE PIGS ARE THE ONLY SCAVENGERS. All varieties of filth are thrown into the roadway. The houses, too, reek with an uncleanness which seems age old. Physicians go about with veils soaked in iodoform to prevent inhaling the germs.



SHADED PORTION OF MAP SHOWS AREA WHERE PLAQUE IS RAGING. NONE SURVIVE WHO CONTRACT THE DISEASE. A RUSSIAN ARMY IS THREATENING TO OCCUPY KULJA, NEAR THE FRONTIER.



WEALTHY DEALERS IN HUMAN BODIES ARE SEIZING THIS OPPORTUNITY TO BUY SLAVE GIRLS FROM STARVING FAMILIES THAT HAVE NOTHING ELSE LEFT WORTH BUYING.



NIGHT SCENE IN A CHINESE CEMETERY IN THE PLAQUE DISTRICT. While many Chinamen bury their dead underground, many more follow the custom of placing the coffins on the surface of grounds reserved for that purpose. This is a fertile source of spreading the plague.

death will come, whether by starvation or freezing.

In the meantime the plague, in its pneumonic form, in which it will undoubtedly spread with great rapidity through the famine camps, is drawing nearer. The fear of epidemic also lies in the almost inevitable outbreak of famine fever, a loathsome disease which manifests itself in eruptions of the skin and the swelling of the limbs and is almost always fatal. With little vitality left, the people would be swept away by the scourge.

The stronger among the survivors, who gather in the camps about the cities, resorting to extreme measures to maintain their existence, have adopted the plan of organizing bands to loot the shops, particularly in Nanking. Unusual precautions are taken to prevent them from entering the walled towns, but they elude the vigilance of the authorities by going in at different gates singly or in small groups, which excite no suspicion, gathering later at an appointed meeting place. This plundering was stopped for a time, but there is fear of fresh outbreaks.

The weaker, both in the famine camps and throughout the valley, in some instances have taken to cannibalism, and eat the bodies of the dead. In the country region nearly all domestic animals have disappeared. Dogs, cats and donkeys have either been sold or eaten. The sale of girls and women into slavery has become common, but even this affords little relief, as there is no market. Where any offer to purchase is made the price is so low that the proceeds of the bargaining are of little avail with food as high as it is.

The valley of the Hwai River, where famines have occurred for many years, is a flat country that was once probably a delta that has been filled by the earth swept down by the floods. The silt washed down from the interior gradually spreads over the river bed and builds up the banks until the surface of the stream is higher than the

surrounding country, like the lower Colorado or the delta of the Mississippi before dikes were erected. A heavy rain in the interior, which is largely deforested, results in a flood, which sweeps over the banks and inundates the valley. Crops are destroyed and the people, who, at most, have scarcely more than is necessary to keep them alive, are brought face to face with famine.

The valley is a populous one despite the ever present probability of disaster. The farms, as a rule, are not more than two or three acres in size, although they yield proportionately large crops of wheat, sorghum and rice. The people, expecting floods, live in huts built on natural or artificial hillocks, subsisting on the fruits of their soil and keeping themselves warm by burning grass or brushwood. In this environment they eke out a bare existence, generation after generation, without thought of migrating to the vast uncultivated stretches of Manchuria and Mongolia, where there is land in abundance for anyone who chooses to settle upon it.

The Chinaman, who is largely fatalistic, is slow to move from his home, no matter how squalid it may be, and stoically accepts whatever lot fate may deal out to him. When the famine comes and food can no longer be obtained at home he loads his chattels, usually consisting of a few pans and some clothing, upon a barrow, and goes to the nearest town or city. Oftentimes one may see whole families migrating in this fashion, the grandmother or grandfather riding on the barrow and the other members of the family trudging along at the father's heels. In the famine camps shelter is provided by means of grass or brush mats, which are bent in the shape of a horseshoe with the open portion on the ground. One end is banked up with earth to keep out the wind. If such a structure cannot be built the family chooses a bare spot and patiently awaits relief or death.

The extent of the present famine is indicated in the latest report to the State Department. According to this, which

covers only a part of the whole region, out of less than 80,000 families in a single "hsien," a county town, 40,200 were without a bushel of grain, an ox or a donkey. In the counties of Nansuchow and Mengchen alone 750,000 people receive aid.

Most of the people, according to this report, die at home, being too weak to go into the field and dig for greens. Many lie down in the streets to die when they become exhausted. The sale of girls between the ages of twelve and eighteen is common. Men offer their wives for sale, but there is no market for them. Under the present conditions such sales are looked upon as justifiable. The purchasers, instead of being regarded with hostility or contempt, are acclaimed as benefactors. Children are sold for a few bits of cash or given away to save them from starvation.

The following incident, related by one of the Chinese gentry to the American consul in Nanking, illustrates the general condition in the stricken region. In one hut lived a family of eight—the parents, two sons and their wives and two children. The food supply having become exhausted and every available article of value sold, the wife of the elder son offered herself for sale in order that something to eat might be obtained for the others, but the wife of the younger son interposed. "She has children and I have none," she said. "She is needed more than I." Neither was successful in carrying out the design. Some days later the entire family was found dead.

Every moment it is feared that an epidemic will break out among the 50,000 or 100,000 people who are encamped outside the walls of Nanking. Many of them are sleeping on the ground in several inches of mud and water, and their condition is becoming worse each day.

The plague, which has been at its worst at Harbin, but appears to be abating there as it moves southward, will probably persist until summer comes and the people live more in the open air. It is particularly contagious in the pneumonic form, the germs being scattered by the

breath or sputum. As it is the habit of the Chinese families to keep to their huts during the winter time for lack of clothing, and to exclude all fresh air because of lack of fuel, in many cases it is fatal to entire households. It is expected that terrible havoc will be wrought if it penetrates the famine region.

"It is very likely that the horrors of the famine and plague in China have been understated," said the Rev. Willard L. Beard, district secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. "It is hard to understand the sweep of those disasters. The highest estimate that I have seen of the deaths

from the present epidemic is 65,000. That is not large. While I was in China, I saw 50,000 people die of cholera in one year in the city of Foochow alone. Another year, 50,000 died of bubonic plague in the same city. That was only one town. What the deaths were throughout the province we cannot even guess.

"The pneumonic plague is even more deadly than the bubonic form. Frequently, the death rate of sufferers is 100 per cent; that is, all who take the disease die of it. The seizure is frightfully sudden, and death follows usually in six or seven hours. A story comes to

us from Chefoo that shows the awful swiftness of the disease.

"A servant in the house of an English tradesman asked leave to go home for the night, as one of his family was ailing. The master let him go, but he did not return. In a day or two the merchant sent to inquire for him. He learned that the man was dead from the plague. His wife, his mother, his brother and his brother's two wives, had all died with him. As the servant had not come back, the master's household was not infected.

Inoculation has been tried as a preventive of the bubonic plague, and it suc-

The Unfortunates Offered as Slaves Bring Little Money Now and Brigandage Is Frequent—Relief Work by Foreigners.

cess has been very doubtful. Against the pneumonic form it is practically useless. When the present epidemic broke out, the Chinese government called on Dr. Mesny, a French bacteriologist, of the Tientsin Medical School, to take part in the fight. He hurried to Harbin and threw himself into the work, which was largely in the hands of American and English physicians. He had been inoculated, and he took all possible precautions against the infection.

"One evening, when he had been attending plague patients in the relief hospital, he dropped into a doze after dinner. When he awoke, he suddenly recognized the symptoms of the plague appearing in himself. He dressed and hurried to the Russian isolation hospital. He would not even allow the doctors to take his temperature, for fear of infecting the thermometer. He knew that his wife would hurry to him if she knew of his danger, and asked that she should not be notified until after his death. The doctors kept him alive for two days, and then he died.

"Every man who is in the field knows that he is likely to meet the same end by one of the most horrible diseases that is known. Yet they take it as part of their ordinary duty. Twelve days after Dr. Mesny's death they lost another colleague, Dr. Arthur F. Jackson, a missionary, of the United Free Church of

Scotland, a Cambridge University man, and a highly trained physician. He was at Mukden, supervising the work of quarantine of the railway and the fumigation of the mails. He was attacked, and died within a few hours.

"The news from the famine country is even more revolting to a foreigner than the horrors of the plague. There hundreds go barefoot, almost naked, in the cruel winter weather. The sale of children into slavery is not uncommon in famines, but in the present one the market has been so glutted that there is no demand for them. Ordinarily, a boy sold for adoption to a fairly well-to-do family will bring \$20 to \$30, while a girl is of small value.

"The Chinese way of showing that a thing is for sale is to fasten a straw to it. Our missionaries in the stricken provinces frequently see children playing in the streets with straws stuck in their hair. One little boy, whose clothes had been sold for food, was buried up to his neck one night in a wagonload of manure to keep him from freezing. Next day his father sold him for a cattle of bread. A cattle is a pound and a third.

"Slavery is technically forbidden by the Imperial law, but it is very widely practised, notwithstanding. While I was in China I rescued three slave children at different times. One had been stolen and sold to a wandering theatrical troupe. Another was taken from his widowed mother and sold to a young bride who believed that she was about to bear a daughter and wanted to have a husband ready for her. Her child proved to be a son, and she was glad to be rid of her bargain.

"When children cannot be sold or given away, as at present, still more horrible things happen. It is known that parents have eaten their own children under the stress of famine. Such cases have been reported from the Anhwei district. On the point of starvation, children are nearly always abandoned and left to die by the roadside.

A widow in Kiangsu lost all her crops in the flood. She sold her plough for a few pounds of rice; then her other farming tools, trying to keep herself and her four small boys alive. Then she tried to sell her donkey, her last possession. No one wanted the beast, and at last she killed it with her own hands and used it for food.

They had lived on the meat for nearly two weeks, when one night the rest of the carcass, which was left outside the hovel to keep it frozen, was found by a

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