

The S. O. S. Cry of China's Starving

By Rosalind Goforth

An Associated Press dispatch from Peking by way of New York, of December thirteenth, states that representatives of all the famine relief committees in conference there find that fifteen million persons are facing death from starvation and cold. Available resources of all the international famine relief committees, the American Red Cross included, are in a position to help only five hundred thousand. It is stated from another source that \$200,000,000 is needed at once. Mrs. Goforth puts the number of famine sufferers at forty millions. She wrote under date of September 28, and it is to be hoped that number is too high, but if so, how quickly may we send help to these fifteen millions? Gifts by draft and registered letter, enclosing bills or currency, may be sent to Mrs. Rosalind Goforth, Kikungshan, Honan, China, or to The Sunday School Times, 1031 Walnut Street, Philadelphia.

MY HUSBAND and I have just returned from meeting in conference with the missionaries of the North Honan Mission. The facts we have heard regarding the Great Famine—it is said to be the greatest in memory of living Chinese—simply appall one.

We cannot but believe, in spite of the incessant and great calls for help made these last few years, that this cry which is the life and death cry of forty millions of the human race, will reach and touch the hearts of multitudes the world over.

The famine area is about forty thousand square miles. When in the spring and early summer the early rains failed the people kept hoping against hope for the latter rains of July. But these, too, completely failed. The people became panic-stricken, and well they might. Whole regions became as a desert—not a blade of grass or sign of living green. Farmers of property who had grain to spare were forced by starving neighbors to give out the grain, till now even the formerly wealthy landowners are facing starvation with their poorer neighbors. Large numbers began trekking westward over mountainous roads towards Shansi, hearing of good crops in the western part of that province. The first ones safely passed the mountain barriers, but when famine conditions began to be felt in eastern Shansi orders were given for soldiers to hold the passes and drive the Honan refugees back. The starving people were not allowed to enter the villages nor were they even permitted to sleep in the wayside temples. Many lost heart and died by the roadside.

One of our missionaries went to the Mission gate after supper one evening and before dark had counted over five hundred refugees fleeing westward.

We are told of girls being tied to trees by their parents to keep them from following, and left to starve; of children being thrown into the river; of husbands poisoning their wives and children to spare them suffering. Many of the awful details cannot be given; only sufficient to make us realize a little what grim, relentless famine is. Even the crows and jackdaws have left some regions. It is estimated that at least 40,000 Christians are among the famine sufferers.

The Canadian Presbyterian Mission of North Honan is practically in the center of the famine region.

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Among the brief notes taken from the address of one of our missionaries were the following: "The situation is appalling"; "a superhuman, stupendous task lies before us"; "something must be done *immediately* to save the lives of our Christians and others"; "it means for the time being the break up of the church"; "absolute starvation practically everywhere"; "only a remnant of Christians left." Much time was spent in discussing ways and means of relieving the terrible situation. Among various proposals were the following: 1. Special schools to be opened for young people. 2. Orphanages. 3. Supplying seed wheat. 4. Aid for boys and girls now in school, and for new pupils. 5. Assistance for evangelists. 6. Industrial schools. 7. Erection of mission buildings. 8. Irrigation work. 9. Road building.

The chief point urged, however, was the desperate need for funds *now—at once*—to relieve those who would otherwise die, and to buy seed wheat—for the time for sowing will soon be past. If the grain is not sown a harvest can not be reaped next June; but even sown now and reaped then it means nine months of feeding forty millions. The minimum amount one can allow per head to keep body and soul together is one dollar a month. It means therefore that hundreds of millions of dollars must come in from outside sources during the next few months or multitudes *must* perish. Imagine the task of feeding or relieving a population as great as Canada's *multiplied by four!*

The Chinese are coming forward with large sums. Committees are being formed on which Chinese and foreigners will work together. The area is so great, the people so scattered, the situation so desperate, that the task of famine relief will be most difficult and dangerous. Hundreds of missionaries, converts, Government officials, and others will be in imminent peril carrying on the relief work this winter; for death lurks everywhere with famine fever, and typhus is always met in the wake of famine.

Never has there been a more wonderful opportunity of showing to the Chinese people the reality of our Christian message in its love and compassion.

Reader, whoever you are, will you not help us, and send to the extent of really denying yourself something?

"Give! as the morning that flows out of heaven,

Give! as the waves when their channel is riven,

Give! as the air, and the sunshine is given! Lavishly, utterly, carelessly, give.

"Not the waste drops of thy cup overflowing;

Not the faint sparks from thy hearth ever-glowing,

Not a pale bud from the June rose's blowing, Give as He gave—that thou mayest live."

KI KUNG SHAN, HONAN, CHINA.