

complain repeatedly of the unfair and indiscriminate distribution of rye, saying the Government was giving to those who had plenty to eat and withholding relief from the hungry. They also resented the haphazard opening and closing of kitchens by the Red Cross Society, the full efficiency of which is destroyed by red tapeism.

The relief work in Kazan Province is hampered by quarrels between Gov. Strijevski and the Liberals. The Governor interfered in the distribution of non-official relief for fear of political agitation by overzealous agents, and in one village he poured soup into the street, and in others confiscated bread from the hands of the peasants. Doctors and nurses who were fighting typhus were arrested and some of them placed in jail. The correspondent personally witnessed the arrest of the Superintendent of the kitchens at Tchistopol on the charge of feeding persons capable of working.

A trip by sleigh into the northern part of Kazan Province took the correspondent into one of the worst sections of the famine region. As the party approached the hamlet of Alanshipshack, which can be taken as typical of many others, every chimney in the village was cold, and this in spite of the fact that the thermometer registered 25 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. Hut after hut was entered by the correspondent, and everywhere there was cold, dampness, and a foul atmosphere. The family were huddled around the brick stove, in which the tiny fire kindled in the morning had long since gone out. The houses in this hamlet were banked in snow as a protection against the cold, and the windows were covered with rough hides.

Persons suffering from ergotism were found in seventy-four out of seventy-eight houses visited. The symptoms of this malady are a burning sensation in the liver, followed by chills, spasms, and permanent contraction of the limbs, and finally blindness and idiocy. The disease has cost the lives of many unborn children. A total of one-tenth of the population has been permanently disabled by ergotism.

The family of a man named Rakhmatull may be taken as a fair sample of many others. The mother's hands, neck, and face were horribly contorted. One son was dead, another had become an idiot, and the two daughters were voiceless. Almost every house visited presented variations of this disease.

Four-fifths of the cattle in this district have been killed by the same poison, and fully 5 per cent. of the crop is ergotic. The peasants are fully aware of the unwholesomeness of this grain, but they have no alternative, and must eat what they can get. There were thousands of cases of ergotism before the Government was stirred to action. The malady is now diminishing.

The correspondent's overland journey from Kazan into Samara showed him other conditions typical of that section. Here scurvy prevailed instead of ergotism, but the diet kitchens, which supply a menu costing each person 2 cents a day, are making a fairly successful fight against the disease.

Children are the easiest prey to the famine, and in many cases the school buildings have been converted into asylums, where the youngsters are sheltered and fed by the Red Cross. At Tchelpy a building forty feet square housed 120 children, whose greenish complexions, gaunt eyes, and transparent temples indicated that death would follow shortly should the daily meal be suspended.

A lamentable feature of the situation is the misuse of Government relief. Many salaried officials and prosperous residents are receiving Government rations, and in several instances the local Prefects have used the rations to influence the elections.

TO FORM A RELIEF COMMITTEE.

Prominent New Yorkers to Meet To-day—Russian to Address Them.

The terrible conditions in Russia and China due to famine and consequent starvation and pestilence have induced prominent men in this country to make greater efforts to obtain funds for the suffering people. A committee will probably be formed to-day for the purpose of collecting a large sum for the relief of the Russian peasants.

Several well-known New Yorkers will meet in the United Charities Building. They will be addressed by Nicholas Shishkoff of Samara, Russia, who was a member of the Council of the Empire during the existence of the recent Duma, and was one of the first Liberal leaders of the hereditary nobility. He will describe conditions in the famine districts, and suggest a method by which money raised in this country may be safely placed where it is most needed. This is almost as important as raising the money, says Mr. Shishkoff, owing to the "grafters" among the Russian officials.

Mr. Shishkoff's mission in this country is to raise funds for his starving countrymen. He bears credentials from the United Zemstvo Famine Relief Committee. For five months he worked in the stricken provinces.

Those whose names are signed to the invitations for to-day's meeting are R. Fulton Cutting, Edward T. Devine, Felix Adler, Bishop David H. Greer, James Speyer, J. Pierpont Morgan, Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, and Jacob H. Schiff. Mr. Cutting said last night that arrangements would probably be made for the organization of a large committee for the raising of relief funds. An appeal to the American people would be drafted. In it would be embodied reports from men in close touch with the famine situation.

Money has been cabled already from this country to hundreds of families in Russia. It was sent by Russians living here to their starving relatives or friends. But it is uncertain whether some of the money reached those to whom it was dispatched.

The conditions responsible for the starvation that confronts the Russian peasantry are ascribed to two causes. One is the heavy taxation levied upon the tillers of the soil. The other is the effort by the Government to push Russia to the front as one of the great industrial countries of the world. This, say students of Russian political economy, resulted in an exportation of grain that has depleted the granaries of the peasants.

In China the famine is due entirely to physical conditions—floods and now a drought. The American National Red Cross has cabled \$45,000 to J. L. Rodgers, the American Consul General at Shanghai, and has sent \$10,000 worth of food-stuffs. Appeals for more supplies and money have been issued. In all \$60,000 has been sent from this country for the relief of Chinese sufferers. Of this \$25,000 was raised by The Christian Herald.

FAMINE DECIMATING MUJIKS.

Officials Getting Government Rations, While Peasants Starve.

KAZAN, Russia, Feb. 20.—A correspondent of The Associated Press has returned here after a twenty-five days' trip through Kazan, Samara, and Ufa, three sample provinces of the twenty affected by famine. The correspondent investigated the situation in all directions, traveling 500 miles by sleigh in districts remote from the railroads, where the distress is most acute.

The population everywhere was found to be absolutely dependent on outside relief. The relief machinery organized by the Government, the Red Cross, the zemstvos, and private societies is working with reasonable smoothness, and few localities are utterly neglected. But the Government allowance of thirty-six pounds of rye per person per month is most inadequate, and this amount is cut by eighteen or twenty pounds by the cost of transportation and milling. Men, and even women, between the ages of 18 and 55 are excluded from receiving the Government ration.

In the Province of Ufa there is scarcely half the quantity of grain necessary for the normal existence of the people, and the peasants are in such a weakened physical condition as a result of a succession of bad harvests that supplementary assistance will be necessary to make it possible for thousands to survive until the Spring and have strength enough to plant the new crop.

Non-property holders are excluded entirely from the Government allowance of relief, and are dependent upon outside charity. The correspondent found sporadic cases of scurvy in all three provinces. In Kazan Province there is a terrible malady of the eyes, due to the general and chronic undernutrition.

On the steppes the misery has been sharpened by a lack of fuel, and great apprehension has been caused by the slaughter and sale of live stock. Half of the cattle is gone, and some villages have to-day not more than two or three horses or cows. In the Province of Samara alone 1,000,000 head of cattle have been sold.

The worst sufferers are the Bashkirs, a tribe of mixed Finnish and Tartar race, who cling to their nomadic habits and are dependent upon their wages as field hands. This source of revenue was cut off this year, and the Bashkirs began early to slaughter and eat their horses, and as a result entire villages became affected by scurvy from the monotonous diet.

The inability to obtain work has everywhere brought the greatest hardship. The customary home industries are at a standstill, and the famishing freed serfs succumb to the exhausting labor of quarrying and stone breaking, which constitute the Government relief work.

The free kitchens originated by Count Tolstoy in 1891 and maintained privately by the Red Cross and the zemstvos are unequally distributed, and in many localities they are lacking, or are only now being organized. In Ufa they feed a total of 210,000 persons, in Kazan 230,000, and in Samara 100,000, many of whom are children.

The correspondent heard the peasants