

**RELIEF FOR THE PEOPLE OF
FRANCE: REPORT OF THE
COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF
NEW-YORK, MAY 1872**

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Relief for the People of France: Report of the Committee Appointed by the Chamber of
Commerce of New-York, May 1872 by Various

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**RELIEF FOR THE PEOPLE OF
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RELIEF FOR THE PEOPLE OF FRANCE.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

APPOINTED BY THE

Chamber of Commerce of New-York,

FOR THE

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

RELIEF OF THE SUFFERING POPULATION OF
FRANCE.

MAY, 1872.

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TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

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REPORT.

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd ;
 * * * * *
 * * * * * It is twice bless'd ;
 It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes."

In a recent national emergency, when the misfortunes which afflicted the people of France were awakening the sympathies of every American heart, the sensibilities of the members of the Chamber of Commerce of this city were deeply enlisted. The questions relating to the results or duration of the war which was then raging between two nations, with each of which we had always enjoyed relations of amity and good will, were in no sense involved in the movement which had for its object the relief of distress which had overwhelmed the population of one of them ; but it was especially recognised and gratefully remembered, that the feelings of friendship existing between France and the United States had grown up from traditions the most sacred in the history of both countries. It was well considered, therefore, that in ministering to the wants of an impoverished people, our action would affect no question of nationality, while it would promote and elevate the principles of beneficence and humanity.

The Chamber of Commerce could scarcely fail to recall the circumstances under which on previous occasions its kindred efforts had been blessed in behalf of other nations suffering from great and sudden calamities. The famine in Ireland, five and twenty years ago, was shorn of a portion of its terrors by the entrance into the waters of that country of a noble barque laden with the means of preserving human life ; while at a later day the smitten population of Lancashire, in England, welcomed a like intervention in the advent of the "George Griswold," freighted from the same considerate source.

It is proper in this place to recur, for a moment, to the condition of the opposing forces in the recent war between France and Germany during the mid-summer and autumn of the year 1870. A

series of fierce encounters, gallantly contested by both parties, had resulted disastrously to the arms of France. The German army, after a succession of victories almost unparalleled in the history of modern warfare, found itself confronting the gates of the capital of France, and its leaders were demanding an entrance in tones which did not admit of delay. The invading columns had overrun the fairest portions of the rural districts, bringing with them that stagnation of trade and industry which is among the terrible accompaniments of war.

In many places the production of food essential to human life had almost ceased, and it appeared as if famine were about to encircle with relentless grasp the unoffending population, a large proportion of which consisted of old men, women and children, wholly or in great part exempt from any share in the responsibility for these disasters. But the spirit of the French people, which has so often shone so brightly amid defeat, was still unconquered, and the end, though near at hand, in the estimation of all dispassionate observers, could not with certainty be predicted. And although public sympathy for these sorrows was alive, and only awaited the fitting time and circumstances when it should be made manifest, yet it was felt that the occasion had not arrived for invoking the aid which was subsequently so generously extended.

The suggestion which inaugurated the movement which is the subject of this report, was first made at a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, held on the 20th of December, 1870, in the hall of the Young Men's Christian Association. For the reasons above stated, this suggestion was not acted on, but was referred for consideration to the Executive Committee, by whom it was favorably reported, in a series of resolutions introduced at a subsequent meeting on the 2d of February, 1871. These resolutions were unanimously adopted.

The relations between the two nations in conflict had in the interval materially changed. An armistice, which all hoped would be the harbinger of a permanent peace, had been agreed on, and it seemed as if the moment had arrived when the sensibilities of none could be offended by the enlistment of the sympathy which undoubtedly existed in the community, earnestly anxious not further to postpone the mission of mercy. A Committee of thirty members, subsequently increased to sixty, was formed, and the practical details of their work will be found in a further portion of this report.

At the first meeting of this Committee, as soon as the forms of organization could be complied with, and before the subscription

lists had been opened, it was determined to send to Mr. WASHINGTON, the United States Minister, in Paris, the sum of fifty thousand francs, as an earnest of further and more substantial effort. By that mysterious agency which binds the two hemispheres together, this measure of practical relief was made known to those whose duty it was to administer it on the day following the action of the Committee. The Atlantic telegraph cable conveyed to the house of Messrs. J. S. MORGAN & Co., in London, a transfer of the sum thus appropriated, and the beneficiaries were soon made aware that the urgency of their necessities was known and appreciated by their friends in America.

The officers elected by the Committee at their first meeting were a Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary, and to them the duties and powers of an Executive Committee were confided, and under their direction the work was chiefly carried on. At a later period, the Rev. HENRY W. BELLOWS was added to this Committee, and to his matured experience and sound advice much of the success of the movement is due.

The work of the Committee had now fairly commenced. Appeals to the citizens of the entire country—to the manufacturer and merchant of the East, and the farmer and artisan of the West—were prepared, and by the kindness of the Hon. WM. ORTON, President of the Western Union Telegraph Company, and Mr. J. W. SIMONSON, Manager of the Associated Press, were extensively and effectually and, it may be stated, gratuitously circulated. The Executive Committee met in daily session, and received valuable aid from Mr. GEORGE WILSON, the efficient Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce.

Donations of food and clothing began to flow in from this and neighboring cities, and the United States Store Ship "Supply" was placed at the disposal of the Committee, for the transportation of these contributions and of the provisions subsequently purchased.

General sympathy with the effort grew steadily. The aid of religious organizations had been invoked, and the following pastoral letter from the Right Reverend Bishop POTTER, of New-York, which was read in the Churches throughout his Diocese, is a specimen of the means which were employed to evoke the Christian sympathies of all who were charitably disposed:

To the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of New-York:

Very Dear Brethren:

Your Bishop, who has so often appealed to you, and never in vain,

for objects of religious interest, appeals to you to-day in behalf of a suffering nation. The French people, who once stretched out a helping hand to us in our great need, have been smitten and overshadowed by a storm of war. Vast portions of France have been laid utterly waste. The mournful remains of desolated families are left by the retiring scourge to face the horrors of famine, and to prepare for the pestilence which is sure to break out in the midst of a vast wreck of physical energies. Besides all present distress, it is to be remembered that throughout extensive districts the seed for another harvest is wanting.

Many of our countrymen, as well as many in other countries, are hastening to minister relief, so far as they may, to this great misery. Already our ships are being freighted with supplies to help save the perishing.

At such a moment you will agree with me that we have nothing to do with political questions. You will rejoice to take part in a great national effort to minister to the necessities of a sorely afflicted people.

The French Relief Committee of the Chamber of Commerce of New-York, having kindly offered to make itself the Almoner of the nation's bounty, has proposed that Collections be made for this object in all the Churches of the country on the second Sunday in March, the 12th, *i. e.*, the *Third Sunday in Lent*. In this proposal, made known to me as I was preparing to take some action toward the same general end, I very cordially concur. The time is short, but the need is urgent.

I would, therefore, most urgently recommend that Collections be made, if possible, in your Churches, on Sunday next, or as speedily as your circumstances will permit: and I would moreover respectfully suggest that you avail yourselves of the agency of the said Relief Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, of which Mr. CHARLES H. MARSHALL is Chairman, and Mr. CHARLES LANIER, No. 27 Pine-street, New-York, is Treasurer.

Commending you, dear Brethren, to the blessing of Almighty God,

I am most affectionately,
Your Friend and Brother,
HORATIO POTTER,
Bishop of New-York.

NEW-YORK, *March 9, 1871.*

At an early stage of their proceedings, the Committee addressed a general appeal to the people of the whole country, which was

circulated by telegraph, and through the medium of the Associated Press published in almost every newspaper in the United States. The anxiety which was naturally felt for a favorable response was of brief duration. The American people, whose hearts are never closed to the claims of human suffering, did not allow this occasion to pass without showing their sympathy for a nation in distress. From the distant shores of the Pacific, San Francisco sent by an unseen messenger a sum exceeding ten thousand dollars in gold. Chicago, that fair city of the growing West, soon to be called on to bear a calamity greater for her than that she sought to alleviate, poured out her stores of grain and provisions to aid in the good work; while Milwaukee, St. Louis and other places of note gave of their abundance, either in money or products for the same object. And the cities of Philadelphia and Boston were not backward in assuming their share of the work. Through Committees of their own organization, large sums were received and distributed, and in the latter city a brilliant fair was held, the results of which were large beyond all expectation. The Government steamer "Worcester" was despatched laden with supplies from Boston, and the ship "Relief" subsequently followed from Philadelphia; and though owing to the difficulties of distribution, their cargoes, as well as that of the "Supply," were sold and converted into money, it may be confidently stated that no loss was sustained in consequence of this step, and while the charity was rendered more effective for those it was designed to benefit, it parted with none of its dignity and grace.

As the movement progressed, it was participated in by Churches of all denominations, in which collections were taken up for the purpose at the solicitation of their Bishops and Pastors. The commercial organizations in this city gave also substantial proofs of their sympathy. From the Stock Exchange the sum of five thousand dollars was received, while at the Produce Exchange a meeting was held which was largely attended, and which resulted in subscriptions to the amount of nearly sixteen thousand dollars. This meeting was addressed by the Reverend Dr. BELLOWS, Mr. WM. W. WICKES, Vice-President of the Exchange, Mr. ARCHIBALD BAXTER, the Hon. WILLIAM E. DODGE, President of the Chamber of Commerce, and others. To them and to Mr. STEPHEN W. CAREY, Secretary of the Exchange, the Committee are deeply indebted, nor must mention be omitted of those who generously offered their gratuitous services. Among these were Mr. JOHN H. MCCREEBY and Messrs. CONKLIN & Co., who provided lighterage free of charge. Mr. WILLIAM PATTERSON, who offered free storage room for provi-