

Indian Wheat Supply Continued.

change is shown in the following table giving the percentage and our total imports, obtained from various sources:—

	1900-2 (3 Years' Avg.) Per cent.	1903-9 (7 Years' Avg.) Per cent.	Inc. or Dec. — 35
U.S.A.	62	27	+ 9
Argentina	10	19	+ 10
India	4	14	+ 10
Russia	4	14	+ 3
Canada	9	12	+ 3
Australia ..	4	7	..
Other countries....	7	7	..
	100	100	..

PROPORTION OF IMPORTS INTO U. K. FROM VARIOUS SOURCES.

In view of these figures, it is obviously important to examine the conditions governing the supply in these various countries, which are rapidly taking the place of the United States.

A valuable contribution to this discussion has recently been put forward in a memorandum by Sir James Wilson on the supply of Indian wheat for the British market. India, under present conditions, is unfortunately the least dependable of the sources which are coming forward to supply our needs; whereas in good years she can spare enormous quantities (in 1904 she sent us more than any country in the world), in bad years she sends practically nothing at all, having less than enough for her own requirements. For example, in the year ending March, 1905, she exported 43 million cwts., in the year ending March, 1909, 2¼ million cwts. Her exports are, in fact, the surplus of one of the largest crops in the world. The total wheat area of the world in recent years is estimated at 240 million acres, of which India accounts for 26 million, or about one-ninth. The yield is, however, below the average (11.6 bushels per acre for the whole of India), so that her crop amounts to a little less than 8 million tons—or one-eleventh of the world's total. India is thus a very important factor in the world's supply, but owing to the poverty of the people, and their simple methods of producing and marketing the crop, much of her potential productive power is wasted. In a country such as the United States the enterprise of a single farmer can add almost at a moment's notice 10,000 acres to the wheat-growing area, or substitute one quality of wheat for another. But in India agricultural progress must necessarily be slow. Far the most important and most rapidly increasing wheat area of India is the Punjab, 129 British districts of which will soon have 10 million acres under wheat, and may perhaps provide a million tons for export. Sir James Wilson's comment on wheat-growing conditions in the Punjab is, however, significant.

It is well to remember that in the Punjab there are 1½ million peasant proprietors each cultivating

his own land, and about a million tenants, so that on the average each farmer cultivating wheat probably has not more than four or five acres under that crop, many of them much less. A man farming on so small a scale cannot afford to take risks, and will not adopt a wheat different from what he is accustomed to grow until he is quite certain it is going to pay him better. Nor can the Agricultural Department recommend a new type of wheat to him until they have made quite sure that it will suit him to grow it. It will, therefore, be some years before a general improvement in the quality of the wheat grown in India can be secured. In the Central Punjab, however, from which half the wheat imported from India comes in the new canal colonies, there is a numerous body of prosperous farmers with large holdings of 28 or 56 acres who grow each from 10 to 20 acres of wheat every year, and who have more capital and enterprise than most of their neighbours; and these men, as well as the large landowners, may be expected to adopt any promising new types of wheat brought to their notice, and should their experience show them that these new types give a good return and command a better price in the market, there may be a rapid improvement in the quality of the wheat exported from that area. Much of the wheat grown in India, however, must continue to be grown on comparatively poor, unirrigated, or unmanured land, and we must be content with a very gradual improvement in the average output and average quality of Indian wheat as a whole. To indicate what is possible, I may mention that already in the Punjab many fields of irrigated and manured land give an output of over 30 bushels of wheat per acre, and that several varieties grown on a small scale on the Government farm at Lyallpur yielded over 40 bushels per acre.

India's first problem is thus to find means of securing a certain stable crop, by irrigation on the one hand and by the use of the better varieties of wheat on the other: her second to raise the output per acre by educational work among the peasant growers; her third is to study the requirements of the English market. So far as marketing is concerned, Indian wheat comes to this country in the poorest possible condition, always with a large amount of dirt and waste matter, and with a certain proportion of barley and other grain. More care in the preparation of his grain for market will help the native grower to get better prices in this country. As it is, the quality of Indian wheat is already high, a table given by Sir James Wilson showing that when white Karachi is quoted at 40s. a quarter the amount actually paid for 480 lbs. of pure wheat (allowing for discount, waste, etc.), is well above the price paid for English wheat, though not so high as American wheat will obtain:—

Indian Wheats.		Other Wheats.	
	s. d.		s. d.
Choice white Karachi ..	37 8	British wheat ..	35 3
Red Karachi ..	37 0	Argentine (Rosafé) ..	38 4
Choice White Delhi ..	38 2	Russian (Black Sea) ..	38 10
No. 2 Club Calcutta ..	38 4	U.S. (White Walla) ..	38 0
No. 1 Club Bombay ..	38 9	Australia (South) ..	38 7
Choice White Bombay ..	39 5	Canadian (No. 2 Northern Manitoba) ..	39 10
Hard Red Bombay ..	36 5		