

The Part Taken by India in Feeding the World.

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what diminishes, but in the Punjab, in Rajputana, Sind, and much of Uda, wheat still remains, as in the days of Menu, the staple food of the more opulent classes, although but little used in southern India. Still, there has been a great increase of wheat consumption in the cities of southern India, notably in those of Bengal. The great increase of population in India—wheat eaters as well as others—and this increasing urban consumption per unit, account for the steady diminution of the percentage of the crop exported in recent years, and afford assurance that, without the adventitious aids of famines and dearths, Indian wheat exportation is likely, soon, to be a thing of the past.

A year or two ago, so good an authority as James Turner delivered an address in Calcutta, in which the statement was made, that, in the three preceding years, wheat consumption in lower Bengal had risen from 23,000 to 62,000 tons per annum, or from less than 300,000 bushels to 2,400,000 bushels.

The annual average unit consumption of wheat in India having been .6 of a bushel during the last 10 years, and, the population increasing 1.1 per cent per annum, it is not difficult to determine how soon exports will cease, unless there shall be a material increase of the acres employed in wheat production, which is highly improbable.

So long ago as April 16, 1891, a leading Indian economist stated in the daily Englishman of Calcutta: "People do not realize the fact that all the wheat India produces is required for home consumption, and that this fact is not likely to be realized until a serious disaster occurs, and that, even now, less than 9 per cent, is exported. It is a self evident fact that a slight expansion of consumption, or a partial failure of crops of other food grains, will be sufficient to absorb the small proportion now exported. Besides, we have a steady increase of consumption, in consequence of the natural growth of the population, as well as in the gradual improvement of the condition of a considerable part of the people in the cities. It is not generally known that the local consumption of wheat in Calcutta exceeds 100,000 tons annually, and yet, the flour mills of the town do not supply an extensive area. Calcutta and its suburbs consume such a large quantity of wheat because of a comparatively well-to-do population. I believe that, comparatively speaking, India will, in a few years, cease to export wheat, and soon thereafter become an importing country."

At the rate, the Indian population increases, the "few years" of this Calcutta authority will end about 1935 even if there be no increase of unit consumption in the urban districts.

Just as great misconceptions exist regarding the cost of growing wheat in India, and in relation to Indian dietaries, as there do in regard to the increase of the wheat bearing lands of the empire. These fallacies have been propagated largely by ignorant partisans of all stripes. One breed assures us that, as rises and falls the price of an ounce of a certain metal, so rises and falls the price of a bushel of wheat, while the opponents of this absurd theory, to be just as inconsistent and as much in error, assure us we can not compete with the Indian grower because wheat is grown in that favored country for as little as 13 cents per bushel. Grave senators, and great statesmen (?) were found propagating these baseless statements during the recent heated campaign, though the cost of growing wheat in India is actually greater than in the United States, and Indian competition finds its stimulus in the poverty of

the Indian populations, rather than in rates of exchange.

It costs more to grow wheat in India than in any other exporting country, because of the astounding inefficiency of Indian labor, and by reason of the prevalence of methods and instruments of agriculture that were old when the first European book was written.

While the agricultural labor of India commands but 5 to 80 per day, it is, by reason of its inefficiency, vastly more costly than that engaged in agriculture in the United States. In India, the ground is, prepared for seeding by from 8 to 30 plowings, that, in their totality, are far less efficient than one plowing with an American gang plow that covers from five to eight acres a day, as against half an acre in India with a forked stick drawn by two diminutive bullocks. After this long and tedious process, the seed is scribed in by hand through a hollow reed, and the ryot is fortunate enough if he secures as good a stand from his 10 to 12 pecks of seed as the American does from five or six, put in with a drill. During the entire growing season, the Indian field—not fenced—has to be guarded day and night from depredations by birds, quadrupeds, and bipeds, and, in the more favored districts, the field is irrigated, at a cost of from \$1 to \$3 per acre for water. When the harvest begins, we find the peasant using, in most districts, a sickle that has an iron blade not more than six inches long, with which sitting on his hunches, he cuts one-twelfth of an acre daily—his being an average day's work—which is gathered and bound by an assistant. When nightfall comes, the peasant and his assistant carry the entire harvest from the field upon their head. If the ryot's labor is counted at 50 per day, and that of the assistant at 40, we find the cost of harvesting the India acre no less than \$1.08, while the Kansas farmer, cutting a 15-foot swath with his header, puts his wheat in the stack at a cost of not over 70c an acre. If we estimate the value of the wheat lands of the United States at an average of \$30 an acre, and the rate of interest 7 per cent, we find the land rent to be a trifle over \$2 an acre. In India the wheat lands pay a land-rent tax of \$3 to \$3.50 an acre according to quality, and the average yield is but \$9.35 bushels an acre, as against 13 bushels in the United States.

As a matter of fact, counting the cost of the water used in irrigation, wheat is grown in India at a cost fully 50 per cent, in excess of the average in the United States.

Heretofore, Indian exports have been due, in a very great measure, to the ryot's need of money wherewith to pay government dues, and his inability to procure this money from the limited number of wheat eaters among the Indian population. The necessity for silver will be no less hereafter, but domestic consumers of wheat constantly increase, while there is no increase of the wheat-bearing acres, whatever. The result will be, that greater and greater proportions of the product will be absorbed at home, though the Indian population, as a whole, increases in poverty instead of in prosperity, and more and more of the cultivated acres will probably be devoted, year by year, to those coarse foods upon which the masses subsist.

Evidence of the increasing poverty of the Indian rural population (181,000,000) is found on every hand, and proceeds from the nature of this old civilization. From earliest ages, the Hindu father has divided his holding, no matter how small, among all his male heirs. This subdivision has been so long continued that the holdings over vast areas are now wholly insufficient for the subsistence of a family, and, with every season of dearth, comes pinching want and starvation. To such an extent has this subdivision been carried—subdivision of the right of occupancy only—that purely agricultural populations numbering 16,000,000 occupy less

than 8,000,000 acres, or under half an acre each.

The Hon. Mr. Dakin—minister of water supply for the Australian colony of Victoria—tells us, in "Irrigated India": "Almost every year witnesses a stress in one or more parts of the Indian peninsula, and it is fortunate when this can be coped with out of the superabundance of the more favored districts. It is under this horrible pressure of human suffering that the English government of India has adopted the policy of constructing irrigation works and railways with loan money. The first provides food while railways carry the surplus of irrigated areas to the starving."

Governor-General Lord Lawrence told us, years ago: "The actual condition of the masses of the Indian people is a bare—I might say a most miserable—existence. We, its rulers, are at our wit's end to devise new sources of revenue."

A high official of Bengal said, referring to the great Orissa famine of the sixties: "Increasing exports are, by no means, evidence of prosperity in India, often the very reverse. The province of Orissa was depleted of produce which was exported to pay the government taxes, and famine resulted. The increase of crops for exports interferes with the necessary production of food for the people."

Sir James Caird, British royal commissioner to inquire into the great famine of 1874-7, when 7,000,000 perished said: "It is very remarkable that the doubling of the Indian external trade from 1870 to 1890, put forth as proof of the prosperity of agriculture, appears to have had no beneficial effect upon the land revenue. May this not show that the railways are carrying off more than is safe for the agricultural class to part with?"

As the land-tax is never lowered in India, but is frequently increased, we may conclude that the increase of 3 per cent, in the land revenue between 1870 and 1890 indicates an increase of less than 3 per cent in the acres and crops, though, in the meantime, the Indian populations increased by more than 10 per cent, as must their requirements have done.

In speaking of the 780,000 people inhabiting the district of Ulwar, Sir James Caird says: "There are three classes of people in the state, as distinguished by their food, in the proportion of 4, 16 and 80. The first (4 per cent), consume, without stint, milk-porridge, ghi, sugar and good flour. The second class (16 per cent), have buttermilk porridge, a little ghi, no sugar and only coarse grain. The third class (80 per cent), have only water-porridge and coarse grain."

The Governor of Bengal stated: "Half our agricultural population never knows, from year's end to year's end, what it is to have its hunger fully satisfied."

The author of "Irrigated India" says: "The pressure of war and despotism have been removed, but the pressure of population remains. There are, in the presidency of Madras, 15,000,000 people who live upon an average of one-half penny a day, the earnings of a family of five persons amounting to but 18d a week."

Sir Wm. H. Hunter, long and prominently connected with the Indian government says: "Fully one fifth the people of India go through their entire lives on insufficient food."

And in his "Indian Empire" he tells us: "In Bengal, 24,000,000 struggle to live on 15,000,000 acres, or a little over half an acre apiece. We see, therefore in India, a dense population of husbandmen. Wherever their numbers exceed one to the acre, the struggle for existence becomes hard. At half an acre apiece, that struggle is ter-

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