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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed April 28, 1933

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Authority on Meteorology

DROUGHTS IN INDIA

As spring advances the people of India look forward with intense anxiety to the coming of the southwest monsoon, the rainfall of which determines the success or failure of the crops. Outstanding cases of scanty monsoon rains and their results between the years 1865 and 1920 are thus described by Hans J. Wehrli:

1865. Drought consequent upon the early retreat of summer monsoon followed by low precipitation the next year resulted in the death of one million people in Orissa, one-third the total population.

1866-1869. Delayed summer monsoon prevented proper cultivation of the fields and an early retreat of the monsoon ruined the remnant of crops in the fields. In these years one and one-half million people and three million cattle died.

1896-1897. Drought conditions extended the limits of the famine zone to include 300,000 square miles and 90 million people, the farthest extension of the famine zone.

1899-1900. The weak development of the monsoon yielded inadequate rainfall in western India and by June the monsoonal rains had ceased in many sections. All crops, not irrigated, were lost, and the major part of the livestock starved. The drought area extended over 200,000 square miles and affected a population of 28 million. In one district of the Punjab 92 per cent. of the livestock died, and in Gujarat similar conditions prevailed.

1918. Summer rains were inadequate and delayed, ruining the rice and wheat crops. As a consequence of insufficient food, the population was debilitated and the incidents of fatality in the influenza epidemic much increased.

1920. Early retreat of the monsoon resulted in a 40 per cent. decrease in the crops of the Punjab district.

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