

postal arrangements) form, together with the North-West Frontier Province and Kashmir, one postal circle under the Postmaster-General of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province. It is divided into seventeen postal divisions. The following table shows the advance in postal business in the Punjab during the two decades since 1880, giving also the figures for 1903-4. The figures exclude the North-West Frontier Province and also (for the most part) Kashmir.

	1880-1.	1890-1.	1900-1.	1903-4.
Number of post offices and letter-boxes . . .	842	1,269	4,900	6,850
Number of miles of postal communication . . .	8,397	9,474	13,512	15,318
Total number of postal articles delivered :—				
Letters	16,990,413	18,589,127	26,935,983	27,544,764
Postcards	1,906,717	12,632,567	31,430,787	38,130,426
Packets	226,198	891,453	3,159,862*	3,441,282*
Newspapers	1,778,007	2,966,000	3,284,176†	3,181,412†
Parcels	199,764	252,332	423,098	536,224
Value of stamps sold to the public . Rs.	6,33,510‡	8,46,980‡	14,63,578	18,33,466
Value of money orders issued Rs.	66,30,053‡	1,20,69,110‡	2,42,07,579	2,27,01,278
Total amount of savings bank deposits . Rs.	...	56,49,794	1,09,11,336‡	79,79,023

* Including unregistered newspapers. † Registered as newspapers in the Post Office.
‡ Including Kashmir.

These figures include both the imperial and the local or District post. The latter system was a substitute for the posts which landowners were in early days bound to maintain for the conveyance of official correspondence in each District. As the District came under settlement, this personal obligation was replaced by a cess levied on the land revenue, and eventually in 1883 the cess was merged in and became part of the local rate. The expenditure on the District post averaged Rs. 1,50,274 during the five years ending 1902-3, and amounted in 1903-4 to Rs. 1,42,253. In 1906 the cess was abolished, and the system was amalgamated with the imperial post. The value of the money orders paid during the year 1903-4 amounted to 329 lakhs, or nearly 102 lakhs more than the value of those issued.

The Punjab contains two main tracts which are not secure against drought: one in the south-east comprising most of the plains Districts of the Delhi Division and that of Ferozepore; the other, the Districts of Gujrāt, Jhelum, and Rāwalpindi in the north-west. The north-west of Gurdāspur and the

Famine. Area liable to be visited.

Sharakpur and Ajnāla *tahsils* (in Lahore and Amritsar Districts respectively) are also insecure. But hitherto famines have been frequent and severe only in the south-eastern tract, of which Hissār is the centre. This area lies on the edge of the sphere of influence of the south-eastern monsoon, and any deflexion of its currents leaves it almost rainless; but the Western Jumna and Sirhind Canals, especially the former, have greatly circumscribed the area liable to famine. In the north-west the rainfall, though liable to fail, is much less capricious than in the south-east, and here scarcity has never deepened into serious famine. Well-irrigation in the insecure tracts is largely impossible or unprofitable, owing to the depth of the water below the surface.

Generally speaking, the autumn crops used to provide the agricultural population in the Punjab with their staple food and most of the fodder for the cattle, the spring crops only being grown for profit. To a great extent this still holds good, especially as regards fodder; but of late years the area under spring crops has greatly increased, and now, even in the insecure tracts, it almost equals that under autumn crops. The loss of a single harvest, or even of both the annual harvests, does not in itself necessitate measures of relief. Such measures are required only after a succession of lean years, and thus the point when failure of the monsoon spells famine can, as a rule, be accurately gauged. Besides a rise in prices, not always a very trustworthy sign, indications of the necessity for measures of relief are usually afforded by the contraction of private charity and credit, activity in the grain trade, increase in crime, and aimless wandering in search of employment or food.

History of
famines.

The first famine in the Punjab of which any information exists occurred in 1783-4 (Samvat 1840), and is popularly called the *chālisa kāl*, or 'famine of the year 40.' It affected the whole country from the Sutlej to Allahābād, and was acute in the neighbourhood of Delhi. Hariāna was desolated and the people perished or emigrated. The mortality must have been great, and few villages now existing in this area boast a history anterior to the famine. Famine again occurred in 1833-4, 1837-8, 1860-1, 1868-9, 1877-8, 1896-7, and in 1899-1900. In 1833-4 the conditions were those of severe scarcity rather than of famine; and though there was suffering in Hissār and Rohtak Districts and the Fāzilka *tahsil*, no relief, beyond large suspensions of revenue, was given. The scarcity was, however, the precursor of serious famine in 1837-8, when the tract between Allahābād and Delhi was most

seriously affected, but Hissār, Rohtak, and Fāzilka also suffered. Relief works were opened for the able-bodied, but the relief of the infirm and helpless was left to private charity. The main features of this famine were the prevalence of aimless wandering and the extraordinary amount of violent crime.

The famine of 1860-1 affected only the Districts between 1860-1. the Jumna and the Sutlej, and was the result partly of the Mutiny, and partly of deficient rainfall in the two preceding years, followed by a failure of the monsoon in 1860. The principles adopted in 1833-4 were again followed. Gratuitous relief was given mainly in the form of cooked food.

Practically the same tract was again affected in 1868-9, but 1868-9. the great influx of famine-stricken immigrants from Rājputāna exhausted the resources of private charity. The principle that it was the duty of the people to relieve the infirm and weak had to be abandoned, and Government acknowledged its liability to supplement charitable aid. Large works under professional control and minor works under civil officers were also utilized for affording relief. The excess mortality in the two Provinces was estimated at 1,200,000. About 3 lakhs of revenue was remitted in the Punjab.

The great famine of 1877-8 hardly reached this Province, 1877-8. in which only scarcity existed. Fāzilka and the Districts of the Delhi Division, which were not protected by irrigation, suffered most.

After 1878, in spite of occasional short harvests, the Punjab 1896-1900. had a respite from actual scarcity till 1896-7. In 1895 the monsoon ceased early in August, and a poor autumn harvest was followed by a deficient spring crop in 1896. In the latter year failure of the monsoon caused widespread scarcity in the Punjab, as in other parts of India. The whole of the Delhi Division, except Simla, and parts of the Lahore and Rāwalpindi Divisions were affected. A total of 22½ million day-units were relieved, of whom half were in Hissār. Relief cost 22½ lakhs, 22 lakhs of land revenue was suspended, and at the close of the famine 11½ lakhs was advanced for the purchase of seed and cattle. After one good year the monsoon failed again in 1898 and 1899, and famine supervened in the same tracts. The scarcity of fodder caused immense mortality among cattle, and the distress among the people was intense. Relief was afforded to 52 million day-units at a cost of 48 lakhs. In addition, 44 lakhs of land revenue was suspended, and 19 lakhs granted for the purchase of seed and cattle as soon as favourable rain fell in the autumn of 1900. The Charitable

Relief Fund also allotted 12 lakhs to the Punjab. Hissār was again the most deeply affected tract, accounting for two-thirds of the numbers relieved.

Effects of
famine on
popula-
tion.

Of recent years the immediate effects of scarcity on the population of the Province have been practically negligible. The famine of 1899-1900, the most severe since annexation, affected the health of the people, so that many were unable to withstand disease which under more favourable circumstances might not have proved fatal. It might have been anticipated that the two famines of the decade 1891-1900 would have appreciably affected the population in Hissār and Rohtak Districts, but the Census of 1901 showed an increase of 5,711 since 1891 in the former, and an increase of nearly 10 per cent. in the latter. Generally speaking, as regards mortality, the after-effects of famine are almost more potent than famine itself. Practically no deaths from actual starvation were recorded in the Punjab in the recent famines. During famine cholera is most to be feared; but when famine ceases, after a plentiful monsoon, malaria, acting on a people whose vitality has been reduced by privation, claims a long tale of victims. At such seasons the mortality is naturally greatest among the very old and the very young. This is shown by the fact that, at the recent Census, Hissār returned only 999 children under five in every 10,000 of its population, as compared with the Provincial ratio of 1,340. This paucity of children, however, is to some extent due to a diminished birth-rate. The famine of 1899-1900 lasted exactly thirteen months from September, 1899. Up to December the birth-rate was fairly normal, but after that month it rapidly declined until the close of the famine. In July, 1900, it was only 22.3 per mille, as compared with 40.5, the annual average for the month in the five years 1891-5. On the other hand, the re-establishment of normal conditions, after famine, is followed by an abnormally high birth-rate. Thus, in Hissār, famine ended in August, 1897. Up to July, 1898, the birth-rate remained low; but it then rose rapidly and remained well above the average until September, 1899, the highest figures occurring in October and November, 1898, when they reached 81.7 and 76.7 per mille, as compared with 57 and 50.8 respectively, the averages for those two months in 1891-5.

Whether it will ever be possible to render the Punjab free from liability to famine is a difficult question at present to answer. The two great remedies are the extension of railways and irrigation. As to the former, from the point of view of

Protective
measures.