

ST. HELENA.

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No. 26.

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COPY of a DESPATCH from Governor BROWNE to the Duke of NEWCASTLE.

(No. 10.)

St. Helena, February 20, 1854.

(Received April 22, 1854.)

MY LORD,

I HAVE the honour to forward the Blue Book for 1853.

2. There has been an increase beyond the estimate on the receipts from wharfage, which has produced double the amount of the ad valorem duty it replaced. The temptations to evade, and the difficulty of collecting, in the case of ad valorem duties, and the absence of that temptation, with a corresponding facility in collecting the small charge for wharfage, are the only causes which can be assigned for this favourable result. There has also been an improvement in other small items, but the amount is trifling.

3. The recent changes in the Customs are, I am informed, as acceptable to the merchants as they have proved advantageous to the revenue, which, for the first time since the transfer of the island to Her Majesty's Government, has been in excess of the expenditure.

4. The number of ships touching at the port continues slightly on the increase, and the amount of tonnage proves that the average size of ships trading to the eastward is becoming annually larger.

5. An increase beyond the estimate in the expense incurred on account of the hospital shows that masters of merchant ships have availed themselves of its advantages to a much greater extent since they have been able to leave their invalids in it without charge.

6. A new jail has been paid for in advance, iron pipes have been laid down, and water has been introduced to Rupert's Valley.

7. A small additional, but necessary outlay, has been incurred on roads and streets, and much Government property has been repaired and improved. The establishments are efficient, and there is a balance in the Treasury.

8. The year 1853 has, however, been remarkable as a peculiarly unfavourable one for all agricultural products. Two potato crops have been entirely lost; animal as well as vegetable food has been much increased in price, and there has been some consequent distress, though not to a great extent; yet the year has not passed without signs of improvement, among which may be reckoned a mutual insurance society, and the introduction of flax, some favourable specimens of which have been sent to England.

I have, &c.

(Signed) J. G. BROWNE.

The Duke of Newcastle,
&c. &c.