

No. 26.

ST. HELENA.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1890.

(For Report for 1889, *see* No. 118, Old Series.)

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.



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No.	Colony.	Year.
99	Gambia - - - - -	1889
100	Straits Settlements - - - - -	"
101	St. Kitts-Nevis - - - - -	1886
102	Basutoland (Governor's Visit) - - - - -	1890
103	British New Guinea - - - - -	1888-9
104	Natal - - - - -	1889
105	Malta - - - - -	"
106	British Guiana - - - - -	"
107	Barbados - - - - -	"
108	Trinidad and Tobago - - - - -	"
109	Western Australia - - - - -	"
110	Gold Coast (Agriculture) - - - - -	1890
111	Labuan - - - - -	1889
112	Jamaica - - - - -	"
113	Falkland Islands - - - - -	"
114	Basutoland - - - - -	1889-90
115	Sierra Leone - - - - -	1889
116	Fiji - - - - -	"
117	Hong Kong - - - - -	"
118	St. Helena - - - - -	"

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8	Bermuda - - - - -	"
9	Leeward Islands - - - - -	1889
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11	Bahamas - - - - -	"
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13	Gibraltar - - - - -	"
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15	Sierra Leone - - - - -	"
16	Barbados - - - - -	"
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19	British Honduras - - - - -	"
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21	Trinidad and Tobago - - - - -	1890
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## ST. HELENA.

[For Report for 1889, see No. 118, Old Series.]

## GOVERNOR GREY WILSON to LORD KNUTSFORD.

The Castle, St. Helena,

July 16, 1891.

MY LORD,

I HAVE the honour to transmit the Blue Book of this Island for the year 1890.

2. Although the financial aspect disclosed by these returns is not quite so disquieting as I had anticipated, the general condition of the Island justifies the most gloomy forebodings. The revenue was 8,728*l.*, and the expenditure 9,032*l.*; so that we exceeded our income by only 304*l.* The revenue was nominally 220*l.* more than in 1889; but very nearly this sum may be written off on both sides of the account as due to the receipt and refund of duty upon coal now supplied to Her Majesty's ships by local contractors, the naval yard having been abolished. Nearly every item of the revenue, except customs, shows a steady shrinkage; and but for two leaky ships, which yielded a large revenue, the customs would also have shown a startling decline. Thus it is that, although our financial condition is not so desperate as was anticipated, the state of the Island is no better than my fears led me to anticipate, and is by no means so satisfactory as the revenue appears to indicate. Work has been very scarce. The high rates charged by the mail steamers for passages to the Cape have restricted emigration and poverty and suffering, though bravely borne, have in consequence engulfed far too many. Our solitary and isolated position, if strategically important, affords us none of the advantages which generally attend thereon. Too insignificant and remote from the mother country to arouse any general interest, we have for many years been the plaything of fate; but lately we have aroused some interest in the Cape of Good Hope because our apparently defenceless condition appeared to be a source of danger to that Colony.

*Taxation.*

The Tax Ordinance came into operation upon the first of January; and, although its enactment was attended with considerable opposition, there does not appear to have been any friction in its application.

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The Ordinance, indeed, made no increase whatever in the taxation; while it afforded relief, to the extent of nearly one-half of the previous licences, to the owners of fishing and passage boats, who stood in very urgent need of assistance. It also reduced the tax for a ginger beer or tea licence from 3*l.* to 5*s.* The water rate, however, was slightly increased (it yielded 162*l.* in 1889 and 187*l.* in 1890); but only because the general reduction in the Poor Board valuation, upon which the water rate is assessed, had unduly reduced the revenue from water.

Water in St. Helena is so good and plentiful as to be hardly appreciated at its proper value. The very extensive plant by which it is distributed, not only to Jamestown, but to the villages of the Briars, Ruperts, Half Tree Hollow, and to Longwood, is a heritage of the East India Company's liberality, which will necessitate a considerably larger contribution from the public than the present to replace it, or a return to the now forgotten inconvenience of fetching water from a public tank. The highest water rate charged for a large house and garden is 2*l.* a year; the lowest, *i.e.* for houses of the freehold value of 100*l.*, is 2*s.* 6*d.*; for which small sums occupiers can have a constant supply of water. At the Briars and Ruperts very little restraint is now placed upon quantity; while at Half Tree Hollow every cottager has about 40 to 50 gallons put daily, at Government expense, into a barrel near his cottage upon payment of 2*s.* 6*d.* a year. I would invite those who grumble to compare this figure with the rates of almost any other Colony, or to picture the sometimes desperate scarcity of water in British Honduras, the Gold Coast, and Ascension; and they cannot fail to admit that in regard to water St. Helena has much to be very thankful for.

#### *Local Bodies.*

It has hitherto been found impossible to excite any interest in regard to the Health or Markets Boards. Year after year the Sheriff reports that the appeal to the electors has elicited no response, and year after year the Governor nominates the Boards. It is due to the present Board of Health, who have now held office by reappointment since the passing of the Public Health Ordinance in 1889, to state that they have displayed very considerable energy, patience, and perseverance, in carrying out some, at least, of the reforms of the new law; but, so long as the inhabitants of Jamestown view with apathetic indifference all sanitary science, all questions of hygiene, and the, morally and physically, vastly important subject of overcrowding closely connected therewith, so long must a grievous stigma rest upon the Island—a stigma the more poignant by reason of the great social and educational advantages which have long been enjoyed. Our splendid climate no doubt minimizes dangers which might otherwise develop into crushing catastrophes; but no country, and far less St. Helena, posing as a sanatorium, can afford to continue

to despise or ignore the plain, though still feeble, warnings of Nature.

The election of the Poor Board has never failed to arouse interest, because it is a tangible and easily-recognised purse lightener; but to bring home to every householder that the indirect taxation resulting from a contempt of sanitary laws may be heavier and less seasonably levied than a voluntary contribution is a problem demanding very earnest attention, and one which cannot be too frequently forced upon a public who show no appreciation of the vast fields of discovery laid bare by modern sanitary science.

#### *Public Debt.*

The debt of the Island at the end of the year was 6,408*l.* Of this sum 1,250*l.* is the balance of a loan of 19,500*l.*, raised between 1868 and 1872 at 7 per cent., of which 1,000*l.* was repaid during the year; and 5,158*l.* is a loan made by the Imperial Parliament in 1872, free of interest.

#### *Assets and Liabilities.*

On the 31st of December the assets of the Colony were 11,831*l.*, and the current liabilities were 11,018*l.* The assets, therefore, exceeded the liabilities by 813*l.*

#### *Military.*

In January 1889 a detachment of Artillery was sent from here to mount the heavy guns at Sierra Leone, and shortly afterwards (April 1889) another detachment went to Mauritius; and just before the close of that year the removal of the remainder of the battery (save a few caretakers) was accomplished. The reduction of the garrison not only directly stimulated emigration to the Cape, but it left those who remained poorer than before. In my opinion the money circulated by the officers and men of the garrison bears this direct ratio to emigration. Replace the former garrison, and emigration will be checked; leave the strength as it is, and emigration will continue; remove the Imperial troops, and emigration must advance with a rush, and be aided by Government, for it will not be possible for any Government to leave the inhabitants to the terrible sufferings which must then overwhelm them.

In October Colonel Maclean (late R.A.) came out to the Island to report upon the prospects of a Militia, and after a careful and systematic investigation he made a report which is now under the consideration of Her Majesty's Government. It seems impossible that any further information can be desired. It is much to be hoped that an early settlement of the matter may be arrived at, and that the present uncertainty and disquietude may finally be put an end to.

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*Public Works.*

The expenditure upon works and buildings was 1,090*l.*, a sum slightly in excess of the estimate but counterbalanced by a larger reimbursement in aid than was anticipated. The principal works of the year was the thorough scraping and cleaning of the iron water mains supplying the Town and the village of Ruperts. These two water supplies are entirely distinct both as to source and course. The one to Ruperts was raised from a very indifferent to a first-rate one, and the work in town has greatly improved the pressure available at fires and has increased the supply available for calling ships. A serious collapse of the sea-wall and road at the narrowest part of the wharf took place, and the difficulty of making a new foundation below low-water mark caused, in a Colony without a Colonial Engineer, some anxiety. A dam having been first constructed to keep the sea out, the foundation, laid in Medina cement, was rapidly completed during low waters, and our anxiety was at an end. Mr. Woodman, the Foreman of Works, deserves great credit for the manner in which he carried out this work, the whole cost of which did not exceed 100*l.*, including the blasting and transport of about 600 tons of stone used upon the dam and upon a small breakwater to protect it.

Some renovations and considerable general repairs were effected upon the public buildings. Cypress wood has been used exclusively upon public works since 1888, when I first introduced it; and even in those buildings which were infested with white ants no trace has been found of an attack having been made on it.

The hospital drainage system upon being opened was found to include a defective cesspit and to be generally in a most deplorable condition, and had to be entirely renewed. Doulton's pipes and fittings of the most modern description were used, and the new sanitary arrangements are fully abreast of modern requirements.

*Legislation.*

Five Ordinances were enacted, and one Order of Her Majesty in Council was made, during the year.

No. 1. Provides for the custody and care of prisoners removed to St. Helena to undergo their imprisonment.

Under this Ordinance three prisoners from Zululand were brought to the Island.

Nos. 2 and 3 are Supply Ordinances.

No. 4. Provides for the taking of a census in April 1891, and upon any subsequent day which the Governor may notify by proclamation. It is not in contemplation at present to have more than a decennial enumeration, but it appeared desirable to obviate the necessity for future census legislation. The schedule to the Ordinance can be varied by the Governor so as to secure any information which hereafter it may be thought desirable to collect.

No. 5. Prohibits any Zulu not provided with a pass from landing in St. Helena. ST. HELENA.

By Order in Council of the 1st of May the Supreme Court of St. Helena was constituted a Court for Divorce and Matrimonial Causes. The jurisdiction extends only to marriages solemnized in St. Helena between persons of whom one was or shall be domiciled in St. Helena at the time of the marriage.

In 1858 an Ordinance was passed extending to this Island the jurisdiction conferred in 1857 upon the Court of Divorce in England; but this Ordinance was disallowed by Her Majesty upon the ground that neither the Judicial Establishment nor the Bar was such as to justify the entrusting to St. Helena of the working of such very delicate machinery.

The enforced postponement, affecting St. Helena, doubtless, in common with many other Colonies, has, I think, been salutary; for, although our Judicial Establishment and Bar cannot be said to have progressed as is the case in other Colonies, and have, it must be admitted, even retrograded, yet the interval has enabled the laws of divorce and matrimonial causes to be better understood and appreciated generally, and the light of the precedents created by the English Court has prevented a perhaps too generous application of those remedial powers which Sir E. D. Hay appears in 1858 to have regarded as already necessary.

*Council.*

Captain A. E. Mackenzie, of the East Yorkshire Regiment, commanding the troops, was a member of Council until June, when Major A. A. Boggs, of the same regiment, relieved him. Mr. Saul Solomon was appointed a member of Council in March.

*Civil Establishment.*

Mr. R. L. Antrobus administered the Government from the 5th of November 1889 until the 8th of June 1890. I returned from England on the 8th of June, and was sworn in as Governor on the 18th of July.

Mr. R. M. L. Pritchard, the Harbour Master, retired upon pension in March, being succeeded by the second Officer of Customs, Mr. G. C. Bruce. Mr. Herbert Knipe was appointed third Officer of Customs.

The assistant printer, William Bagley, left the service; and Thomas Adams, a policeman, retired on pension.

*Pensions.*

Two pensioners, Mr. J. M. McDaniel, who retired in 1864, and Mahomed Troomal, who retired in 1845, died during the year. The former was 78 years old, and the latter about 84. Both cases bear witness to the excellence of our climate, which appears especially to exercise a conservative influence upon our pensioners. We have still upon the pension list an officer who was born in the last century, and several who are over 80 years of age. The total

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of the list had declined at the end of the year under review to 1,901*l.*, a sum still very nearly a quarter of our entire expenditure.

#### Population.

The population as ascertained by the census taken since the close of the year is a little under 4,000, of whom rather more than half are women; but, as I hope shortly to write a separate report upon the census, I will not here enter into any details. Owing to emigration, our population contains an undue proportion of aged, infirm, and children; but even these adverse circumstances have only occasioned a death rate of 16 per 1,000, if seamen who were landed ill (and generally very ill) and the victims of the great fall of rocks in 1890, are excluded.

#### Education.

The school attendance shows a falling off of 50, as compared with the previous year (869 to 819); but a large part of this is doubtless due to the emigration which has taken place. The efficiency of the schools was fully maintained, and the examinations disclosed genuine progress and good steady work. The Rev. F. H. Baker and the Rev. S. J. Ellis, the Inspectors of the Government schools, have devoted much time and labour to educational work, and deserve the grateful thanks of the Government for their gratuitous services.

It is, perhaps, not fair to compare St. Helena, with its very small higher education, with England and her very large one; but, after due allowance has been made for that fact, it cannot be regarded as unsatisfactory that in St. Helena more than one-fifth of the entire population are receiving education in elementary schools.

How best to diminish the quantity of parrot lore and develop that of deduced and applied knowledge is a question I cannot too earnestly press upon the attention of school teachers.

#### Imports and Exports.

Our exports consist of a few hides and a little wool, but the figures under the head of imports deserve notice. Not long ago an English paper called particular attention to the capacity of St. Helena as a beer-consuming Colony. The following table shows the consumption per head of liquor, tobacco, and sugar:—

	United Kingdom.	St. Helena.
Beer - - - -	28·4 gallons	25 bottles
Spirits - - - -	5·5 bottles	2·6 „
Wines - - - -	2·1 „	12 „
Tobacco - - - -	1·42 lbs.	1·75 lbs.
Sugar - - - -	69·91 „	67 „

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We may, however, fairly credit passing ships and the sailors of Her Majesty's war vessels with some considerable proportion of this consumption.

The value of the imports was 31,958*l.* and of the exports 325*l.*; in neither of which have I included the whale oil, valued at 13,433*l.*, transhipped here. The imports were 3,000*l.* in excess of those in 1889.

#### Shipping.

407 vessels communicated with the Island, of which 211 called and 196 were boarded by licensed traders. These figures are 142 below those of the previous year.

#### Criminal Statistics.

Under this head the figures are very satisfactory. 142 offences were reported to the police; 113 persons were summarily convicted; and in the Supreme Court there was only one conviction, an assault of by no means a serious description.

Serious crime is almost unknown here; but we are troubled with an unusually large proportion of juvenile offenders whose destructive capacity is unlimited.

The gaol was free from illness during this year.

#### Meteorological.

The rainfall in 1890 was 35 inches, or five inches above the average for the country. In 1842 only 19 inches fell, while 90 inches fell in 1845; but of late years we have fortunately experienced no such excessive variations. Four-sevenths of the year may be generally expected to be fine.

#### Savings Bank.

3,762*l.* was deposited during the year, and 1,624*l.* withdrawn. The amount to the credit of the depositors rose from 8,060*l.* to 10,393*l.*, and the number of depositors from 94 to 112, as compared with the previous year; but, as there is no other bank in the Island, and no limit is now placed upon the amount which may be deposited, these figures cannot be taken as representing the savings of people. The net profit upon the transactions of the year was 33*l.* 16*s.* 10*d.*, the amount invested being 9,575*l.*

#### Post Office.

Although the Blue Book takes no cognisance of this Department, which is I think to be regretted, I venture to include a notice of it in my report, as being one of the few, financially, bright spots in our otherwise declining prosperity.

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The gross revenue was 870*l.*, the largest during the past ten years; and the gross expenditure was 192*l.*, the lowest during the same period. 14,934 letters and 2,763 books and papers were sent from the Island. 10,592 letters were received from South Africa; but no record exists of the number of letters received from England, which I estimate at 17,000. The mail service, performed alternately by the Union and Castle Steamship Companies, was most irregular and very unsatisfactory; but there are not wanting signs of the possibility of new steamship companies shortly competing for the South African trade, and indeed the very rapid development of that country renders it certain that the existing allied lines cannot for long maintain their present monopoly. Whether the inevitable competition will benefit us remains to be seen. I am not without hope.

I mention with regret that it has not been found possible to adopt the 2½*d.* rate for correspondence from the Island now almost universally adopted in the Empire. The present 6*d.* rate is a heavy strain upon our very poor population, all of whom have many relatives and friends who have emigrated to South Africa. No satisfactory measure for replacing the deficiency which the reduction would occasion could be devised, and this most desirable reform has had, like many others, to be postponed.

#### *Great Fall of Rocks.*

Upon the 17th of April about 1,500 tons of rock fell from a height of 600 feet upon the town, wrecking 14 houses, killing instantly 9 people in their beds, injuring 7 seriously and many others slightly. To alleviate the distress, and in some measure to recoup the loss inflicted upon the victims, who were nearly all of the poorest class, a subscription was started. The appeal for funds was well responded to in the Island, and received liberal support from both the steamship companies and from a few gentlemen in England interested in the Island. Many St. Helenians resident in South Africa also came to our assistance.

A sum of 290*l.* was thus realised, nearly all of which was distributed, and with the very small remainder a memorial drinking fountain has been erected in the main street of Jamestown.

Messrs. Walter Macfarlane and Co., of Glasgow, supplied a large canopied fountain for a purely nominal sum; Messrs. Ockenden and Mayper brought it out free of freight, and the Government have borne the cost of erection in view of the great advantage which the fountain will be to the Town.

In a tropical climate drinking fountains are an inestimable boon, and I hope some day we may secure one for the upper part of the Town, not by a further catastrophe such as that which the present fountain commemorates, but as the gift of some past resident or friend anxious to have his memory perpetuated in the gratitude of his countrymen.

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#### *Conclusion.*

Mr. R. L. Antrobus's admirable report upon the Blue Book for 1889 goes beyond the usual scope of such reports, and is in fact a general review of the condition and prospects of the Island, collated from the facts and figures not of one but of many years. That such a review should be made from time to time is most desirable. It infuses vitality and interest into figures which taken by themselves are generally dry-as-dust, and it forces upon public attention comparisons and deductions most necessary for the due appreciation of the existing state of affairs.

It is not often that an official of the Colonial Office emerges for a short time from the atmosphere of Downing Street into that of the Colonial Empire upon official duty; but I am convinced that the benefit, not only to the Colony concerned but also to the Colonial Office, is such as to render it most desirable that such a transfusion should be an event of more frequent occurrence.

I have, &c.

(Signed) W. GREY WILSON,  
Governor.

NOTE.—In consequence of the arrival of the Lismore Castle five days before time, this despatch has, I regret to state, been put together very roughly.—W. G. W.