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No. 176.

ST. HELENA.

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(For Report for 1894, *see* No. 154 of this Series.)

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ANNUAL.

No.	Colony.	Year.
142	Malta - - - - -	1894
143	Gambia - - - - -	"
144	Windward Islands - - - - -	"
145	Trinidad and Tobago - - - - -	"
146	Gibraltar - - - - -	"
147	Falkland Islands - - - - -	"
148	Hong Kong - - - - -	"
149	Straits Settlements - - - - -	"
150	Lagos - - - - -	"
151	Seychelles - - - - -	"
152	Basutoland - - - - -	1894-5
153	Fiji - - - - -	1894
154	St. Helena - - - - -	"
155	Ceylon - - - - -	"
156	Mauritius - - - - -	"
157	Labuan - - - - -	"
158	Gold Coast - - - - -	"
159	British Guiana - - - - -	"
160	Sierra Leone - - - - -	"
161	Jamaica - - - - -	1894-5
162	British Honduras - - - - -	1894
163	British Bechuanaland - - - - -	1894-5
164	Newfoundland - - - - -	1895
165	Gambia - - - - -	"
166	Bermuda - - - - -	"
167	Leeward Islands - - - - -	"
168	British New Guinea - - - - -	1894-5
169	Zululand - - - - -	1895
170	Sierra Leone - - - - -	"
171	Gibraltar - - - - -	"
172	Malta - - - - -	"
173	Barbados - - - - -	"
174	Turks and Caicos Islands - - - - -	"
175	Falkland Islands - - - - -	"

MISCELLANEOUS.

No.	Colony.	Subject.
1	Gold Coast - - - - -	Economic Agriculture.
2	Zululand - - - - -	Forests.
3	Sierra Leone - - - - -	Geology and Botany.
4	Canada - - - - -	Emigration.
5	Bahamas - - - - -	Sisal Industry.
6	Hong Kong - - - - -	Bubonic Plauge.
7	Newfoundland - - - - -	Mineral Resources.

No. 176.

ST. HELENA.
1895.

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The ACTING GOVERNOR to Mr. CHAMBERLAIN.

The Castle, St. Helena,

May 29, 1896.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to forward the Blue Book of this Island for 1895.

The Governor, Mr. Grey-Wilson, C.M.G., administered the Government till the 27th December, when he left on six months' leave of absence, and I assumed the administration under Her Majesty's Commission dated 23rd September 1895.

I am glad to be able to report continued improvement in the general state of affairs financially and otherwise. There was, however, considerable anxiety during the greater part of the year lest the prolongation of the severe drought from which the Island has for some time suffered should cause serious loss of stock to the farmers, who had already experienced the failure of their hay and potato crops.

All such gloomy forebodings have now been removed by a seasonable fall of rain and there is every prospect of a good year coming.

Revenue and Expenditure.

The revenue of the year 1895 was 9,762*l.*, which is the largest since the year 1888, and the expenditure was 8,063*l.*, leaving a surplus of 1,699*l.* The revenue and expenditure for 1894 and the average of the preceding five years is given below:

	1894.	1889 to 1893.
Revenue - - - - -	9,162	8,049
Expenditure - - - - -	7,874	8,276

The higher average over revenue arises from deficits in the first three years, since which time there has been a surplus.

St. HELENA. 1895. The following table shows the main heads of income and expenditure.

	1894.	1895.	Increase.	Decrease.		1894.	1895.	Increase.	Decrease.
Customs - - -	£ 4,688	£ 5,024	£ 336		Administration - -	£ 5,224	£ 5,460	£ 236	
Taxes - - -	652	752	100		Hospital - - -	881	814	—	67
Rents - - -	794	827	33		Pensions - - -	1,769	1,788	19	—
Post Office - -	1,959	2,021	62		Total - - -	7,874	8,062	—	—
Other sources -	1,069	1,137	68		Surplus - - -	—	1,690	—	—
Total - - -	9,162	9,761	599		Total - - -	—	9,761	255	67

The chief source of revenue being Customs, the increase under this head is the greatest and it is due principally to additional imports of flour and rice, amounting to nearly 3,000 bags, and 1,000 tons of coal. There is nothing to call for special remark as regards the other sources of revenue.

Assets and Liabilities.

The surplus assets of the Colony at the end of the year amounted to 4,148*l.*, the figures being—

Assets - - - -	£ 21,157
Liabilities - - -	17,009

Pensions.

The pension list remained unaltered and is still a heavy charge on the Colony.

Savings Bank.

1894.—Number of depositors 145, amount deposited 7,014*l.*
1895.—Number of depositors 164, amount deposited 3,874*l.*

Although the amount deposited during the year is less than in the preceding one, still the increase in the number of depositors shows a healthy state of affairs and that thrift is on the increase amongst those for whom this class of Bank was specially created.

The value of the investments amounted to 14,022*l.*

Imports and Exports.

The imports from the United Kingdom amounted to 22,263*l.* and from the Colonies and elsewhere to 11,481*l.*, total 33,744*l.*, an increase of 1,967*l.* over 1894, this does not include oil and bone and provisions transhipped by the whaling vessels, which amounted to 8,642*l.*, a considerable decline from the preceding year when oil and bone to the value of 14,717*l.* were transhipped.

The importation of beer rose from 173 to 326 hogsheads, and from 234 dozen to 652 dozen, which is, I think, a normal consumption. The decrease of 1894 was probably owing to large stocks in hand, as the imports of the previous year were abnormally high, viz., 366 hogsheads and 1,603 dozens. Wines reached a much lower figure than has been the case for the last four years, being 1,328 gallons less than in the previous year. Spirits increased by 232 gallons. Tobacco showed a slight decrease. The duties on the whole showed a small increase of 84*l.*

The exports were very trifling, reaching only 334*l.* after deducting specie to the extent of 3,980*l.* This is to be deplored, for the export trade in potatoes seemed to be on the increase and had attained to 772*l.* in 1894. Last year, however, only 109*l.* worth of potatoes were exported to Ascension; and wool to the extent of 225*l.* to England.

Shipping.

The number of vessels which have communicated with the Island exclusive of those boarded by licensed traders was 203, which is eight more than in 1894. The following figures show the results of the previous five years which give 207 on the average.

	1890.	1891.	1892.	1893.	1894.	1895.
Number of vessels - -	211	211	223	199	195	203

Commander Hewetson, R.N., the harbour master, reports: "I do not anticipate that there will be any decided increase unless the island is connected to the outer world by a cable. The number of English men-of-war calling was 12, which is one more than in 1894. The ships only stay here a short time on account of their being out of touch with the Admiral."

The vessels boarded by licensed traders were 187 in number, and from these 545 letters were brought ashore and posted. It is probable that many more letters would be posted were the postage reduced from 6*d.* to 2½*d.* 464 ships which did not communicate were observed from the signalling stations.

Population and Vital Statistics.

The total population at the time of the last census, in 1891, was 4,116, including garrison and shipping, but it is now estimated at 3,921. The garrison has been increased from 151 men to 204; but emigration has been going on steadily as the Cape Colony offers many inducements to the younger people of this island. The encouragement of this emigration is to be deprecated, for if

ST. HELENA.
1895.

it goes on the labour question will be a serious one, and if any industry on a large scale is attempted, such as the extended cultivation of coffee or fibre, it could hardly be carried out without imported labour. The fishery scheme if accomplished would provide work in a direction where it is most needed, that of the employment of women and children. The female population considerably outnumbers the male. The births are nearly double the deaths, being 29 per 1,000 against 15 per 1,000, which has been the case for years past, and yet the population steadily decreases, and in a way which in time must result in a residue of females and decrepids. Many of the girls are anxious to go to the Cape as domestic servants if they could see their way to finding the passage money, but as long as the present high rate of passage money continues, there can be no relief in this direction.

General Goodenough, when he was here on inspection duty, initiated a fund amongst the soldiers (which now amounts to about 20*l.*), in order to assist some of the girls to emigrate, and the valuable aid of the Salvation Army here, and at the Cape, has been enlisted to look after the welfare of such girl emigrants whilst on the voyage and on landing, but as yet the fund is not large enough to be of material service.

A slight epidemic of measles prevailed during the latter end of the year, but it was generally of a mild type; on the whole, the year was healthy.

Hospital.

Dr. Welby was in charge throughout the year, and the general management of the hospital is very good. Miss Williams succeeded Miss Blennerhasset as superintendent, with Miss L. Hart as nurse, and under these two ladies, who are most assiduous in their duties, the management is most satisfactory; 137 patients were admitted and the deaths were 10.

Lunatic Asylum.

Total number of inmates, six.

One was admitted during the year, and there were no deaths. The condition of the asylum and the treatment of the patients is engaging my attention, for I find that hitherto no steps have been taken to amuse or instruct the inmates during their lucid moments.

Education.

There is not much to report under this head, the need for some efficient legislation for the compulsory education of children, who are now running wild about the Island, has resulted in the revision of the Education Ordinance of 1874, and a new Ordinance on this subject will probably be issued during the current year.

ST. HELENA.
1895.

Meteorology.

The rainfall at three stations was as follows:—

Central	-	32.305 ins. : 9½ ins. less than in 1894.
East	-	20.96 " ; 3½ " "
West	-	23.80 " ; 9 " "

The greatest monthly rainfall was 7.940 inches at St. Matthew's Vicarage in June.

The greatest daily fall was 1.260 inches in the same month at the same place. Dry in comparison with previous year.

The maximum temperature at Woodlands (west) was 80° in March and May, and the minimum at Woodlands (west) 49° in August.

The mean for the year at St. Matthew's Vicarage at 9 a.m. was 62°. The mean maximum and minimum at the same station were 67° and 57° respectively.

98 per cent. of the year was windy and 2 per cent. calm; the greatest wind pressure was 8lbs. on the square foot.

The mean pressure of the barometer at 9 a.m. at St. Matthew's Vicarage was 28.132.

Agriculture.

The year under report has not been a good one; the long continued drought had severely affected root crops and pasturage, and the condition of the live stock in the Island when I landed in December was such as to remind me of Pharaoh's lean kine, and the supply of milk and butter had fallen considerably below the demand; the effects of the scarcity of moisture were to be seen everywhere, the hill sides, the fields, and the gardens alike suffered, for the failure of the springs hindered the irrigation of the latter, and many of the cottage farmers lost their usual crops. The gardens were also infested by insect pests.

The hay crop was a total failure, as also was the potato crop, not even seed potatoes were saved; I think, however, that, apart from natural causes, agriculture in this island has suffered from a want of energy. The arduous cultivation of the soil has given place to the easier task of cattle farming, for the plain reason that the ground in many places is played out for want of manuring, and that as long as beef and mutton are required for the garrison there is a market for live stock, but even this market is limited and the competition has hitherto been great, for contractors could not buy all that the farmers were ready to sell. It seems to me, therefore, a pity that much first class land should be under pasturage, when, at all events, a portion of it should be devoted to crops suitable for fattening purposes. Scientific manuring is a thing almost unknown, and much manure that is available in the island is wasted for want of proper application; I look forward, however, to the newly revived Agricultural Society to do much in the future, already a beginning has been made, although its operations do not come within the year under report. Seeds of

ST. HELENA.
1895.

the newest varieties of root and green crops have been imported, and a general interest has been aroused, which I hope will not be allowed to subside. The fruit crop suffered much during the year from insect foes; peaches, which were abundant, were entirely destroyed by a maggot, the product of a fly which lays its eggs on the unripe fruit, and the larvæ, finding their way into the interior, gather round the stone and grow with the fruit, which in time may ripen and be tempting to the eye, but which would be found a mass of decay on being opened. I estimate that tons of peaches were so destroyed throughout the Island. The tree here being a large standard it is not so easy to apply insecticides as in England, where the peach is chiefly cultivated as a wall fruit. Specimens of the fly, larvæ and pupæ have been sent to England for scientific investigation, and we await with interest the expert's report.

There is a great want of purely insectivorous birds in the Island, especially those that capture their prey on the wing. The birds that have been imported and acclimatized are mostly finches (*Fringillidæ*) which live chiefly on grain and to a lesser degree on insect grubs, but what we require are the flycatchers (*Muscicapidæ*), warblers (*Motacillæ*), tits (*Paridæ*), and swallows (*Hirundinæ*). I have written to the Cape to see if such birds can be obtained, there are great difficulties in the way of feeding in transit, but the Cape passage is the shortest. A few years ago Mr. Grey Wilson obtained from thence a bird called the White-eye (*Zosterops Capensis*), of which a number were liberated at Plantation, but they did not succeed and are presumably all dead as none have been seen for some time.

Industries.

The only industry in the Island which is carried on to a small extent, and is capable of much extension, is coffee growing. The St. Helena coffee, which has descended from the true Mocha stock imported by the East India Company, is of excellent quality, and the trees bear wonderfully well, considering they are never manured. The dry season seems to have been favourable to them for the crop was exceptionally heavy, a small patch of coffee in Plantation grounds, containing about 286 bushes, yielded about 428 lbs. of dried coffee, an average of $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. per bush, but in Sandy Bay the yield of coffee per bush is nearly double. I am glad to see that this industry is engaging the attention of the islanders, one small farmer in Sandy Bay has put much of his property under coffee cultivation and he finds it more profitable than general farming. Mr. Jackson, of Jamestown, is willing to purchase from growers the fresh fruit at a fixed rate per pound and he has erected machinery for cleaning and roasting the berry.

I am of opinion that tea could also be grown to a limited extent for home consumption, and I brought out with me a practical tea grower, a native of Assam, who for nine years was overseer of a large garden. He approves of the climate and soil, and

ST. HELENA.
1895.

from a few plants of the China variety, which we discovered in Plantation grounds, he made, after pruning the bushes and allowing them time to flush, a small sample of fair black tea. Some Assam seed has been sent for, and on its arrival a small nursery will be established and plants distributed to several residents, who have expressed a wish to try the cultivation.

Bee-keeping.

I am glad to see that three residents on the Island are taking much interest in bee-keeping. I have arranged for importation of the Italian bee to improve the existing stock, and have introduced the Californian bee-flower (*Phacelia tanacetifolia*).

Fisheries.

I am still convinced that fish curing is the industry for St. Helena, but it must be carried out by English agency, the islanders are too apathetic to start it properly, but when once started it ought to give employment to a number of women and children. Rupert's Valley would be an admirable site for the purpose, and the old slave barracks are just suited for drying sheds, the anchorage is good and a small landing pier could be made without much expense. I am having some experiments made in dry curing, and the result will be submitted to London experts for opinion. The fish cured have been cavally, mackerel, bonito and albicore, of which about 360 lbs. are ready for shipment.

The mackerel prove to be of good size, weighing, when caught, about 1 lb. and when dried from 4 to $5\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. Fish loses about 80 per cent. in process of drying. The dried cavally runs from $12\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. to 1 lb. 14 ozs. Bonito about $3\frac{1}{2}$ lbs., and albicore about 15 lbs., each. The latter fish is the same as the tunny of the Mediterranean, in which so large a trade is done. I know of one fishery in which about 60,000*l.* is invested. The fishing in the Mediterranean is done by nets of a mile in length, here nets are not used for any kind of fish, and the boats are small open ones, quite unsuited for large operations.

I have, &c.

R. A. STERNDALE,
Acting Governor.