

COLONIAL REPORTS—ANNUAL.

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No. 240.

ST. HELENA.

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ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1897.

(For Report for 1896, see No. 213.)

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Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.  
*September, 1898.*

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1898.

COLONIAL REPORTS.

The following, among other, reports relating to Her Majesty's Colonial Possessions have been issued, and may be obtained for a few pence from the sources indicated on the title page :—

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No. 240.

ST. HELENA.

(For Report for 1896, see No. 213.)

GOVERNOR R. A. STERNDALE to MR. CHAMBERLAIN.

The Castle,  
St. Helena,

9th August, 1898.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to forward the Blue Book of this Colony for 1897.

Mr. W. Grey-Wilson, C.M.G., administered the Government up to the 24th May, when he left on being appointed to the Governorship of the Falkland Islands, and the Honourable Major E. H. Peacock, Commanding the Troops, took charge of the Island till my arrival, when I assumed the Government on the 7th June.

The condition of the Colony has been on the whole flourishing. The seasons have been fairly good with ample rainfall, and the large increase to the garrison and employment of labour in the Public Works have conduced to the general prosperity.

Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee was celebrated in the Island with a heartiness that was to be expected from the known loyalty of the St. Helenians. Further allusions to this will be made under the head of "Social" in the Report.

At first sight the financial statement might appear unsatisfactory, but on analysis it will be seen that the actual normal expenditure is somewhat under the income, and much has been done for the improvement of the Island.

ST. HELENA, 1897. The difficulties in establishing any profitable industry have not yet been overcome, but the matter has still my earnest endeavours, and negotiations are still pending regarding fibre, fish, and minor undertakings.

#### FINANCIAL.

##### *Revenue and Expenditure.*

The Revenue of the year was £8,802 13s. 11d., and the Expenditure was £13,004 5s. 11d., showing an excess of payments over receipts of £4,201 12s. 0d., but this is not an accurate statement of the financial position, for the Revenue was normal, whereas £4,395 of the Expenditure was for Extraordinary Works such as the new water works, advances for timber from America, &c. The amount of actual ordinary Expenditure stands at £8,608 which is under the Revenue, and the Revenue itself is somewhat lower than in past years owing to a falling off in the Postal receipts on account of sale of stamps. I anticipate an increase of Customs Revenue with the strengthening of the garrison which has taken place.

##### *Assets and Liabilities.*

The Assets are £21,821 6s. 2d. and Liabilities £20,818 13s. 3d., showing a credit balance of £1,002 12s. 11d.

The Parliamentary Grant of 1871-2 of £5,758 is not included in the Liabilities.

#### TRADE AND SHIPPING.

The Export trade of the Island is practically nil, being confined to a small business in potatoes, which during the year amounted to about 1,117 bags, value £679, the best year since 1894. To the United Kingdom the Exports, exclusive of £3,666 in specie, were of the value of £648, consisting of skins and wool.

The Imports during 1897 amounted to £34,365 being £3,415 more than the previous year. Judging from the appearance of the shops and the increase of the garrison, and also from the fact that home remittances by shopkeepers by means of Treasury Bills were greatly in excess of the previous year, viz., £18,178 against £12,755, I am justified in assuming that trade has been brisk.

##### *Shipping.*

There has been a slight increase of 11 in the number of ships that have called and traded. The number of those which anchored was 147. Those which hove to and traded with the licensed traders, 174.

The following ships of Her Majesty's Navy visited the Island ST. HELENA, 1897. during the year :—

8th April	...	...	H.M.S. "Philomel."
9th "	...	...	H.M.S. "Widgeon."
29th "	...	...	H.M.S. "Philomel."
12th May	...	...	Transport "Dunera."
26th "	...	...	H.M.S. "Widgeon."
29th June	...	...	Transport "Dilwara."
18th October	...	...	H.M.S. "Widgeon."
1st December	...	...	Transport "Avoca."

#### AGRICULTURE.

The year has on the whole been a prosperous one, with abundance of rain. The hay crop was fair, and the potatoes plentiful and comparatively free from blight. I obtained from Las Palmas, through the liberality of Mr. T. Millar, junior, of that place, some sacks of seed potatoes of the Palmera variety and they have succeeded very well. This variety is a most prolific cropper. I had sent some during the previous year to the Island but they were over-carried to the Cape and were in a bad condition when returned, so the experiment proved a failure, but the second attempt was very successful, and from those grown at Plantation I have now a quantity of seed tubers for distribution.

The advent of the West India Troops has created a demand for yams, not the St. Helena yam, which is an arum, but what is here called the Coast yam (*Dioscorea alata*), a creeper with very large tuber which used to be grown here formerly for sale to the coolie ships. As the number of these vessels has fallen off the cultivation was dropped, and now I have had to import seed tubers from Sierra Leone to be distributed to farmers at cost price.

The Tagasaste (*Cytisus proliferus albus*) from the Canary Islands, which I introduced in 1896, has succeeded in some parts of the Island, but the bushes are as yet too small to cut for fodder; it was very highly spoken of by Dr. Morris, C.M.G., of Kew, and also by some Spanish Naval Officers who visited St. Helena, but I notice that Professor Wallace in his "Farming Industries of Cape Colony" states that it is hurtful to horses.

I found on my arrival that the Agricultural Society was flagging and had not had a meeting since my departure from the Island in July 1896, but it is now reviving and is of great use in discussing matters relating to farming.

The question of manures is now a subject of discussion. The guano deposits of the Island are nearly, if not quite, worked out. On Mr. Deason's farm the native carbonate of lime is used, but a cheap and effective manure has yet to be invented, as the high

ST. HELENA, 1897. rates of freight preclude the importation of chemical preparations from England. Fish manure, which is so much used in Europe, would be the cheapest and best for this Island, but until a fishery on scientific methods is started the wealth of food and fertilizing matter will still, as heretofore, remain in the depths of the sea which surrounds us.

Small growers are, I think, turning their attention more to market gardening, as the West Indian portion of the increased garrison consume more vegetables.

#### INDUSTRIES.

I regret to say no progress has been made in the establishment of a fishery, which is a subject I have had at heart for some years, but I do not despair of something in this direction being yet accomplished, if not on a large scale for export, still on a smaller footing for home consumption. It is now becoming a matter for serious consideration what we are to do in the future for supplying fish for the poorer inhabitants who hitherto lived upon the economical food provided by the waters round their Island. Since the arrival of the West India Troops the demand for fish has been great and prices have doubled. Mackerel which used to sell from 2*d.* to 6*d.* a dozen are now a penny a piece, and an equal rise has taken place as regards albicore. The fishermen do not see the force of working longer hours to keep the price of fish down; it is to their advantage to have short hours and high prices.

The scientific European mode of fishing has been so successful at the Cape and Natal that I hope to see it tried here some day, providing cheap food for the poor, manure for the farmers, and an export trade of salt fish to South America. I have suggested to the Officer Commanding the Troops that we should revive the old custom of the past century and have one or two regimental fishing boats; if this were done, and a sufficient supply for the garrison obtained, prices would once more come down to their former level. He is quite willing to try the experiment, but at present the getting of a suitable boat is the difficulty.

A concession was granted during the year to a syndicate of four gentlemen who were disposed to try the preparation of fibre from the *Furcraea* aloe; I however recommended them to send one of their number to visit the plantations and factories in Natal and Mauritius before commencing operations here; this was done and Mr. J. Brown of Las Palmas, who was the member despatched, was favourably inclined to the scheme and stated that he would visit this Island after making enquiries as to machinery &c., but nothing more has been done as yet.

One of the ladies here, Mrs. Jackson, has been trying to start a lace-making industry (similar to that which has been so

successful in Madagascar) with a view to giving employment to the women and girls of the place, a very laudable project, and I hope to be able to state in my next annual report that she has been successful in her endeavours. There are so many idle women and children in the Island whose husbands and fathers are absent in South Africa that a movement of this kind is highly desirable. Emigration has brought about this state of affairs and, though it relieved the Island a few years ago, the evil effects which I anticipated are now felt, for labour is scarce and wages have risen. I am now paying labourers on the Public Works 2*s.* 6*d.* a day instead of 2*s.*, and have had twice to assist Messrs. Solomon & Co., Admiralty Coal Contractors, with men to coal men-of-war on emergency. This pressure, however, may be but temporary as we are laying down new water works, building houses, and the Royal Engineers are preparing new barracks for the increased garrison.

ST. HELENA,  
1897.

#### PUBLIC WORKS.

During the early part of the year the following Extraordinary Works were completed at a cost of £700, *viz.*, the construction of a flushing dam at the head of the town for the purpose of cleansing the Run, which is an open sewer passing down the whole length of the town to the sea; this excellent work, designed and carried out by Mr. Grey-Wilson, is of the highest value, especially now that we have so many troops quartered in Jamestown. The flushing used to take place about every other day, but finding it capable of daily use the water is now discharged every morning at 6 o'clock. It was practically a finished work before my arrival; all I have done to it is to replace clay puddling on one side of the basin, which was leaking, by concrete, which the estimate allowed.

A new crane had been erected on the wharf which comes into the works of the year, but as yet it has not been used on account of the proximity of partially submerged rocks which prevent the approach of boats; these required very careful removal and, acting under the advice of Captain D. B. Thomson of the 28th Bombay Pioneers (who was here on a visit); I indented on the Crown Agents for 50lbs. of dynamite in commercial cartridges, and on arrival the work of chipping them to pieces by small charges was commenced but was stopped as the roller season set in early. It is now in hand.

A sum of £2,400 having been sanctioned for the new scheme of water works arranged for by Mr. Grey-Wilson, an accurate survey of the line, with working plans and sections, was made for me by Captain Thomson, the Royal Engineer Officers on the Island being fully occupied on the new barracks for the troops. Between Jamestown and the intake at Drummer's Point, a distance of 1,700 yards, there was a considerable amount of earth-work and masonry which I think had not sufficiently been taken

ST. HELENA, 1897. into consideration in estimating the cost; however, I anticipate that the work will contrast favourably with similar operations elsewhere as the cost of supervision is small, though that of labour has risen, and I expect it to be completed by the end of the current year if indents from home are promptly complied with.

The estimated quantity of 6-inch pipes was landed *ex* "Luke Bruce" on the 27th February and the work of laying was taken in hand.

The ordinary Public Works comprised extensive repairs to the Gaol almost amounting to rebuilding; the roof and wood work had entirely to be renewed, the former being white ant eaten to such an extent that it is a wonder it had not collapsed.

A store house for mineral oil was also completed on the Wharf during the year, and the future warehousing of such oils in Jamestown was prohibited.

During the year we imported a very fine lot of American red cypress wood which is the best timber for resisting the white ant. Our consignment of 152,695ft. was shipped by Messrs. Lucas E. Moore & Co., of New Orleans, and is of exceptionally fine quality both in grain and size.

#### VITAL STATISTICS AND HOSPITAL.

The health of the Island continued good, the death rate was only 11·29 per 1,000, whereas the birth rate was 32·07 per 1,000. The death of the Officer Commanding the Troops, Major E. H. Peacock of the Leicestershire Regiment, occurred on the 16th of July and cast a great gloom over the Island, as he was deservedly popular. The population at the end of the year was estimated to be about 3,897.

#### EDUCATION.

The total number of children taught in the four Government Schools, the two Benevolent Society's, three Hussey Charity's, the Military, and the Baptist's Sunday Schools was 764, an increase of 14 over the previous year. Much yet remains to be done in this direction as many of the children in outlying parts are somewhat neglected, but when the new Education Ordinance becomes law the rules regarding compulsory education will be more stringently carried out.

#### CRIME AND GAOL.

There has been very little crime during the year under report and less than the previous year under all heads; for instance, the total number of offences reported to the police was 101 against

Supreme Court. The Gaol was almost empty during the year, which allowed of extensive repairs, almost amounting to rebuilding, being carried out; the daily average in prison was 1·3.

#### LEGISLATION.

There were no Ordinances of any importance passed during the year, and the only Government regulations calling for notice were, making it compulsory to stow mineral oil on the Wharf outside of Jamestown; and a Proclamation prohibiting the landing of cattle from South Africa on account of the prevalence of Rinderpest there.

#### SOCIAL.

The great function of the year was, of course, Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee, which was enthusiastically celebrated on the day. There was a parade of the troops in the garrison, when sixty guns were fired with a *feu de joie* between each twenty guns. All the Masonic and other institutions were present with their insignia and banners, and the day passed with sports, and in the evening fireworks, and a Ball given by myself at the Castle. Mr. W. A. Thorpe broached several hog-heads of ale at his own expense for all comers to drink Her Majesty's health, and a few days after about 2,000 of the poorer classes were entertained at tea on Francis Plain. The permanent memorials of the occasion were a fountain in the Public Gardens given by myself, and the surplus funds in the hands of the Jubilee committee were devoted to the purchase of two ambulances for carrying sick people to Hospital which have proved to be of great comfort and utility. An illuminated address was also forwarded to Her Majesty and graciously acknowledged by Her.

#### SCIENTIFIC AND METEOROLOGICAL.

In connection with the Public Gardens a Museum has been started, there being a suitable building available in the grounds, and I hope in time to have a complete collection of all the fish, marine mollusca, &c., as also mineralogical and botanical specimens. At present for want of funds we can move but very slowly. My own duties are so numerous that I cannot give the time and attention I should like, but I have given lessons in taxidermy to some of the islanders, and specimens are being collected by degrees. Captain D. B. Thomson, during his six months stay in the Island, collected a valuable series of the indigenous ferns, which are now arranged in glass cases. Specimens of the Island flora are being arranged, and several consignments of living plants have been forwarded to Kew. There has been a serious botanical loss to the Island in the destruction by a storm of the only existing tree of the *Psidium*

ST. HELENA, middle of a field at Longwood was carefully fenced in by  
1897. Mr. Deason, and many attempts have been made to propagate it  
by seeds, cuttings, grafting on allied stocks, &c., but all in vain,  
and it is now, with the valuable ebony tree, *Melhania melanoxylon*,  
a thing of the past in the indigenous flora of the Island. A very  
curious fan-leaved palm with six massive branches radiating  
from the main stem at about six feet from the ground, which  
grew close to the house at Plantation, was also blown down and  
destroyed by high winds. The branches, which were about nine  
inches in diameter, were cut off by me and planted in various  
situations; I never expected any good results from the operation,  
but after some months two of them, planted in moist ground,  
have thrown out young leaves, after having apparently dried up.

The meteorological phenomena of the year have been quite  
abnormal. It is rarely that thunder and lightning occur, and  
hail is quite unknown, but on the 21st of October, at 9 p.m.,  
lightning was observed with rumbling of thunder throughout the  
night; on the following day the thunder between 11 a.m. and  
8 p.m. was continuous, one very loud peal frightened my horses  
as I was driving down Ladder Hill at 11 o'clock, about the same  
time heavy showers of hail fell in the neighbourhood of Wood-  
lands; towards midnight of the 22nd the wind increased from  
1½ lbs. pressure to the square foot to 8 lbs., which continued till  
midnight of the 23rd, and with the high wind the storm passed  
away.

I have, &c.,

R. A. STERNDALE,  
*Governor.*

The Right Honourable J. Chamberlain, M.P.,  
Secretary of State for the Colonies.

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