

COLONIAL REPORTS—ANNUAL.

No. 265.

ST. HELENA.

REPORT FOR 1898.

(For Report for 1897, *see* No. 240.)

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

August 1899.



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ANNUAL.

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ST. HELENA,
1898.

No. 265.

ST. HELENA.

(For Report for 1897, see No. 240.)

GOVERNOR STERNDALÉ to MR. CHAMBERLAIN.

The Castle,

St. Helena,

19th May 1899.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to transmit herewith the Blue Book of this Colony for 1898. It is rather longer than previous reports, having been written on the lines laid down in your circular dated 31st January 1899.

I am glad to be able to report that there has been considerable improvement in the condition of the Colony, owing to the increase of the garrison and the extensive works now being carried on by the Colonial and Imperial Governments, which have given employment to the inhabitants to such an extent that boys are being paid full labourers' wages and even women and children help.

More money has circulated and consequently trade has been brisk.

Probably some reaction may take place several years hence when the works are finished and wages fall, but it is to be hoped that permanent benefit will accrue to the more thrifty ones of the working population.

T. HELENA, 1898. The seasons have also been favourable to agriculture, and though the supply of live stock has fallen short of the demand for meat for the troops, so as to compel the military authorities to import cattle for a while, I notice a fair number of young beasts coming on for future requirements.

FINANCIAL.

General Revenue and Expenditure.

The revenue for the year was £9,152 12s. 1d., showing an increase over the previous year of £350. The expenditure was £12,349 3s. 1d., being £655 less than in 1897. Still the expenditure was £3,196 11s. 0d. over receipts. This expenditure was, however, extraordinary and not likely to occur again.

Additional grants were sanctioned during the year for rebuilding two houses, for the formation of a volunteer corps, and for the importation of a fine Spanish donkey for stud purposes. The first instalment of £500 was also made towards the liquidation of an advance of £5,158 made to the Colony by the Imperial Government in 1871-72, and an increase in the salaries of several of the inadequately paid officials was also sanctioned during the year. All these items raised the expenditure above the estimate.

I anticipate, however, a decided improvement in the current year, with a substantial surplus.

The Customs revenue and sale of stamps are rising, and expenditure, I trust, will be kept strictly within the sanctioned limits. I give the total Revenue and Expenditure for the past five years:—

Year.	Revenue.	Expenditure.
	£	£
1894	9,161	7,873
1895	9,762	8,063
1896	9,160	8,872
1897	8,803	13,004
1898	9,152	12,349

Assets and Liabilities.

ST. HELENA,
1898.

The liabilities exceed the assets this year by £2,486 15s. 5d. In 1897 we had a surplus (after deducting a transfer of £1,120 19s. 6d. to the Savings Bank fund) of £4,460, but the following extraordinary expenditure to 31st December 1898 more than swallowed up the amount, viz. :—

	£
Waterworks	2,272
Timber and oil	2,037
Spring water	286
Two new houses	726
Sharpshooters	260
Purchase of "Maldivia"	391
Stallion donkey	67
First instalment Imperial Government loan	500

Total... £6,539

Public Debt.

There is no public debt, but a Parliamentary grant of £5,158 made without interest in 1871-72, is now being paid off by instalments of £500 a year.

Currency.

The same as in the United Kingdom.

Comparative Statement of Revenue and Expenditure of Poor Relief Board for last Five Years.

Year.	Revenue.	Expenditure.
	£	£
1894	958	939
1895	930	919
1896	851	863
1897	826	820
1898	863	850

ST. HELENA,
1898.

Public Market Committee.

Year.	Revenue.	Expenditure.
	£	£
1894	90	89
1895	89	93
1896	83	82
1897	112	110
1898	107	109

Debts of Municipal Boards.

In 1883 the Poor Relief Board borrowed from the Colonial Government the sum of £800 for the construction of a new poor house and lunatic asylum, to be repaid in 16 annual instalments; the last instalment was paid on 31st December 1898.

TRADE, AGRICULTURE, AND INDUSTRIES.

Imports and Exports.

The imports greatly increased during the year under report, being to the value of £62,985, or nearly double those of the preceding year. The increase of the garrison and the extensive works in fortifications and barracks now in progress have given a great impetus to trade.

The imports consist principally of building material, beer and spirits, general goods, and food-stuffs (the latter chiefly from the Colonies), sugar, rice, &c., live stock for the use of the troops, the Island supply of cattle being insufficient.

The most notable increase occurs under the headings: oxen, cement, drapery and dry goods, grain, leather, boots, &c., preserved meats, oilman's stores, wines, and sundries. As there is much competition in cheap goods, I notice that German manufactures are creeping in, as yet, I think, only in fancy articles, but some foreign glass imported seemed to me to be of as good quality as what we have in store of English manufacture, though about half the price.

The exports continue very low, even lower than in the previous ST. HELENA year, and amounted to only £4,391, including £3,816 in specie. 1898. These exports consist chiefly of potatoes.

I give the details of imports and exports for the past five years:—

Imports.

Year.	United Kingdom.	Colonies.	Elsewhere.	Total.
	£	£	£	£
1894 ...	18,994	7,988	4,795	31,777
1895 ...	22,263	8,478	3,003	33,744
1896 ...	21,233	9,587	130	30,950
1897 ...	25,262	7,161	1,942	34,365
1898 ...	50,744	12,241	—	62,985

Exports.

Year.	United Kingdom.	Colonies.	Total.
	£	£	£
*1894 ...	4,280	772	5,052
*1895 ...	4,205	109	4,314
*1896 ...	4,012	727	4,739
*1897 ...	4,314	679	4,993
*1898 ...	3,816	575	4,391

£
* Including specie 3,875 in 1894.
" " 3,980 " 1895.
" " 3,993 " 1896.
" " 6,663 " 1897.
" " 3,746 " 1898.

ST. HELENA,
1898.

MINES, MANUFACTORIES, AND FISHERIES.

There are no mines of any description. The Island is devoid of metallic deposits of any consequence. The manganese ores which are obtainable are not of sufficient quality to pay for export, the percentage of manganese dioxide being only 63·19 (worth 52s. 6d. per ton delivered), which is lower than what manufacturers of chlorine would purchase.

Limestone is found of excellent quality for building purposes, but it has not been made much use of, for, what with the cost of fuel for burning and the difficulties of carriage, it has been found cheaper to import lime from England. I, however, intend to try some experiments in this direction, for the quality of the lime is so good that when some years ago the commander of one of Her Majesty's ships of war was allowed to open fire on an old wall built in the 17th century he made very little impression on it.

I am more sanguine, however, about an industry which is much needed in this Island, that is, coarse pottery-bricks, tiles, and pots of various kinds. There is a dark blue tenacious clay which has hitherto been only used for puddling in engineering works, but which I first used for road metalling, after being burnt. I then tried to make flower pots, but the first attempts cracked in firing, though well burnt and of good colour. I have now succeeded, by using an addition of fine sand in the clay, and am about to build a proper kiln for baking a number of pots at a time.

I am glad to be able to report progress in the manufacture of lace, to which I alluded last year, and great credit is due to Mrs. Jackson and Mrs. Arthur for their energy under extreme difficulties. Mrs. Jackson, struck with the beauty of the Madagascar lace which had been started by the wife of an English Missionary, conceived the idea of a similar industry in St. Helena; she was ignorant of the method of working, but obtained a lace pillow and bobbins from an old worker in Buckingham—I will quote Mrs. Jackson's own words—"Even then without instructions the lace-making was at a standstill—I tried vainly to interest many in the Island until I mentioned the matter to Mrs. Arthur, who took a great interest in my scheme and readily entered into work to discover the different stitches of lace; we toiled on with varying success until she got a book on Torchon lace making; this unravelled the difficulty, and we were able to set to work almost immediately to teach others." I have on several occasions inspected Mrs. Jackson's class, she and Mrs. Arthur have about 20 girls between them, and the progress made is astonishing; many of the pupils are young children, and they all exhibit great keenness and dexterity in their work.

Fisheries.

ST. HELENA,
1898.

I wish I could give a better account of these; want of capital and above all want of energy prevent the Islanders from undertaking what would be their most valuable industry if they would but see it, but old habits die hard in St. Helena, and high wages on the military works have tempted many fishermen from their former avocation; recently fish was only to be had in the markets at double and treble the price it commanded formerly, and the supply even at these prices was limited; there is an abundance of fish in the sea, sportsmen go out and in a few hours return with large catches of albicore and cavally, and, with systematic fishing and fish curing a very profitable industry might be maintained. I have for some years gone into the subject, and I know that salted cavally (*Caraux dentex*) commands a ready sale in South America, where under the name of the Cape Verde cod (*Bacalhue de Cabo Verde*) it is preferred to the Canadian cod. But, apart from the export trade, I have been urging the people here to cure fish for home consumption. The West Indian soldiers are great consumers of salt fish, and their canteen has to import it at a rate of about 3½d. a pound; the Island-cured cavally could be sold at a good profit at 2d. a pound, as large quantities could be taken during the season. Trammel nets have been tried with some success. Commander Gurney, R.N., of H.M.S. "Widgeon," used one daily in the harbour, catching enough fish to supply his crew. Mr. Robert Bruce of the Colonial Secretariat got a net out from England, and in his first experiment he caught about forty fish, including one hammer-headed shark, which I think spoiled sport and somewhat damaged his net. These experiments are, however, a move in the right direction, and the day may come when more extensive operations with nets will be carried out with success.

AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES AND BOTANICAL STATIONS.

The year under report has been favourable for agriculture, and owing to abundance of rain the pasturage has been good, but the local stock owners have not been able to keep pace with the increased demand owing to the strengthening of the garrison, and the military authorities have had to import cattle from England. The ravages of rinderpest in South Africa prevented our getting any from the Cape.

It is too early yet to report on the results of the proposed Botanical Garden at Maldivia. The old Botanical Garden, which is to be made over to the War Office for barrack extension, has been worn out from neglect.

ST. HELENA, 1898. Nurseries of young trees are kept up at Plantation and the plants distributed to applicants. The Cinchona plantation, which was started in Sir Charles Elliott's time on the range below Diana's Peak, is still to be traced; the trees have run wild and thrive, but the cultivation here would not be profitable at the ruling prices for quinine.

Forestry.

This requires encouragement amongst the landowners. Mr. Grey-Wilson did much good in this way, and ample testimony exists of his efforts in the many fine young trees that are growing up in the vicinity of Plantation, especially with various kinds of cedar and eucalyptus. I have for some time tried to redeem the barrenness of Half-tree Hollow, through which the main road from Jamestown to the south runs, but the rock is too near the surface for most trees, and some hundreds of young Cape yews planted have, with few exceptions, withered away. Some olives planted by me in 1896 survive, but the most hopeful species is a kind of evergreen of the fig tribe which in Jamestown grows to an enormous size. One tree of this on Half-tree Hollow, planted by me in 1896, is now in a most flourishing condition, and I am about to make an avenue of the same.

LAND GRANTS AND GENERAL VALUE OF LAND.

There have been no grants of land made during the year under report. All the best land in the Island is in private hands or leased by Government. The value is reckoned about £5 an acre for commutation purposes.

SHIPPING.

The number of ships that anchored was 147, exactly the same as in the previous year. Those that hove to and traded with licensed boatmen numbered 192; vessels sighted, 390.

	Tonnage.
Men-of-war	40,926
Steamers	104,737
Sailing vessels	120,467
Total tonnage ...	266,130

The following nationalities were represented:—

American	7
Belgian	1
British	101
Dutch	2
French	4
German	6
Hawaiian	1
Italian	4
Norwegian	17
Russian	1
Spanish	1
Swedish	2

ST. HELENA,
1898.

The statistics for the last five years are:—

	Tons.
1894	280,634
1895	279,717
1896	220,857
1897	228,569
1898	266,130

The whalers have for the past two years entirely deserted this port, which is a matter of regret, for they used to spend much money in the Island. It is probable that the sperm whale fishery is not so profitable as it was, and that the ships employed in this industry have gone further north in search of the right or whale-bone whale.

LEGISLATION.

Only two Ordinances of special interest were passed during the year, viz.:—

No. 1, of 14th February 1898, "An Ordinance to empower the Governor in Council to fix the rates of postage."

No. 3, of 15th June 1898, "An Ordinance to provide for the management of the lunatic asylum."

Nos. 2, 4, and 5 were to provide for service and supplementary expenditure.

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1898.

EDUCATION.

There are four Government schools, four charitable, a military, and a Baptist Sunday School, the total number of scholars being 790, an increase of 26 over last year. In none of them can more than a good plain English education be imparted, and a good high-class school is much wanted. There are no technical schools as yet. In the town school of the Hussey Charity there is a carpenters' class, and the gardener at Government House Plantation has a class of boys learning horticulture.

GOVERNMENT AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS.

Hospitals.

The civil hospital is supported by the Government, aided by fees from paying patients. The hospital is clean, commodious, and airy, well supplied with good water, and admirably managed, under the supervision of the Colonial Surgeon, by a lady superintendent (Miss Williams) and two nurses. 186 cases were treated, with 15 deaths; the greatest number of cases of any particular disease were respiratory organs 29, deaths 5; local injuries 28, deaths 2. No cases of zymotic disease occurred in the hospital, either amongst patients or officers; the daily average treated was 8·84.

Asylums.

The lunatic asylum is not supported by Government but by the ratepayers through the Poor Relief Board. There are only seven patients, of whom three are maniacal, three quiet, and one melancholic. The Colonial Surgeon visited three times a week; but an Ordinance has been passed during the year for the better management and supervision by visitors.

Poor House.

This is also supported and managed by the Poor Relief Board, who levy a rate of about 20s. per £100 per annum on all real property in the Island, assessed in the aggregate at about £94,900.

Savings Bank.

This Government institution is very popular, there being no banks in the Island. The number of depositors during the year was 174. The total amount of deposits, £3,000 19s.; of withdrawals, £2,240 19s. The total amount at credit of depositors at the end of the year was £17,003 11s. 4d.; of invested funds, £15,299 13s. 5d.

PUBLIC GARDENS AND MUSEUM.

ST. HELENA,
1898.

The public gardens, which are situated near the Castle Square and St. James's Church, are being much appreciated by the residents since they have been improved. There yet remains much to be done, and the want of a competent gardener greatly hinders progress, but I hope in a short time to add to the turf which has been established in parts, and to increase the supply of flowers. The three gates are locked at nine o'clock, at which time the reading-room closes, and now, instead of being the haunt of noisy rough lads and persons of doubtful character, it is much resorted to by those who wish to have a quiet time with a book under the trees, the seats near the fountain being generally occupied, and by numbers of children, for whose benefit I wish to increase the lawns.

Three gold fish, presented by Mr. A. Thorpe, were put into the basin of the fountain, and they have bred to such an extent that we have now many for distribution.

Both the Union and Castle Line Companies have kindly consented to bring out free of charge anything that may be required for the gardens and the museum. The latter is progressing favourably, and I have been able to get the assistance of Mr. Henry Thorpe, an enthusiastic student in natural history, to take the post of honorary curator.

Mr. Rowland Ward, of Piccadilly, presented us, the other day, with a collection of stuffed animals, including a fine South American jaguar and seven species of monkey and other valuable specimens, which are being arranged with tropical scenery in a large glass case, and which will not fail to be a source of great attraction to the St. Helenians, whose island fauna is destitute of any of the larger mammalia in a wild state.

There being no Government funds devoted to the support of the undertaking we are mainly dependent on the assistance of friends.

JUDICIAL STATISTICS.

Police.

The police force is a very small one, consisting only of a sergeant, four constables (now raised to five), and one special constable.

Prisons.

There is one goal in Jamestown, not large as gaols go, but quite enough for requirements; it has been thoroughly repaired

ST. HELENA, during the year, as the whole of the timber was eaten by white ants; there are three wards into which open eight cells. The sexes are on separate floors. The sanitary arrangements are good, and there has been no sickness or a death during the year. The male prisoners are generally employed on outdoor work under the Colonial Engineer.

Criminal.

There is very little serious crime in the Island; only one case of housebreaking was brought before the Supreme Court. Of minor offences 143 were reported to the police, 136 apprehended or summoned, with 120 summary convictions.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Population.

The population according to the census taken in 1891 was 4,116, and on the 31st December last year was estimated at 4,543. There were 53 immigrants during the year, but 119 emigrants, principally to the Cape.

The births were 24·2 per 1,000; the deaths 18·2 per 1,000, which is much higher than in the previous year which was only 11·29 per 1,000. The year was wet and cold and unfavourable to old people, of whom 45 (or more than one-half the total mortality) died at the following ages:—

Between 50 and 60	...	...	...	10
„ 60 „ 70	...	...	...	13
„ 70 „ 80	...	...	...	12
Over 80	...	...	...	10
—				
Total	...	...	...	45
Children under 10	...	...	...	17
The rest	...	...	...	21
—				
Total deaths	...	...	...	83
=				

Public Health.

On the whole the public health was not so good as in the preceding year; there was a good deal of slight ailment with

dysenteric symptoms, which probably affected young children and old people more seriously; still there was no serious sickness or epidemic of any kind.

Sanitation.

Sanitary arrangements in the country leave much room for improvement, but in Jamestown matters are improving daily. When the new waterworks are opened the sanitary regulations regarding drainage will be more rigorously imposed. A new system of drainage for the town is highly desirable, for the existing drains are a series of patchwork of pipes and culverts of various dimensions which prevent perfect flushing. The great open sewer, called the “Run,” which goes through the town has been concreted throughout from the flushing-dam to the sea, and a large volume of water is discharged down it every morning, sweeping it clean.

Climate.

There were no meteorological phenomena to report during the year. The rainfall varies very much in different parts of the Island, the yearly average being:—

Mount Pleasant	...	...	36·06 inches.
St. Matthew's Vicarage	...	...	33·950 „
Woodlands	...	...	23·63 „
Jamestown	...	...	4·82 „

The prevailing wind is the S.E. trade, which blew steadily E.S.E., S.E., and S.S.E. for 332 days during the year; there were only nine days calm.

The temperature on the highlands varied from a maximum of 76 to a minimum of 46, the mean average being 60. In Jamestown the maximum was 80, the minimum 66.

POSTAL AND TELEPHONE.

Post.

There is no inland post, residents in the country go down to meet the mails or send to the post office for their letters. The sale of stamps to collectors continued to fall off, being only £96 11s. 1d. as against £253 9s. 10d. in the previous year, owing to the pattern of the stamps being a common one and not in favour with collectors. I recommended the return of the old pattern from the Crown Agents, and since then the demand has been considerable, £337 worth having been sold during five months of the current year.

ST. HELENA. At the close of the year the new penny postage and the improved parcel rates came into force.
1898.

Telephone.

There is a system of telephonic communication connecting East, West, and Central points with Jamestown. The lines are constructed and managed by the Royal Engineers. In the first instance the Colony gave a grant of £400 and an annual subsidy which is now reduced to £45, and £30 is granted by Lloyd's. The private messages are few and amounted during the year to only £13 14s. 4d. The revenue was £109 1s. 10d., the expenditure £210. The lines are, however, kept up solely for military and official purposes.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

The chief event of the year was the increase in the garrison by the arrival of the head-quarters of the 3rd West India Regiment, and the commencing of military works which gave employment to all in need of it. Emigration, to which the people in late years have been driven, will, I think, now be checked. I have been always averse to encouraging the steady flow of our able bodied young men to the Cape, foreseeing the difficulties that would arise in time and cripple any future industry or engineering work; we are now suffering from a scarcity of labour, especially skilled labour such as carpenters, blacksmiths, plumbers, &c. Our public works have been sadly hindered by the want of carpenters. Wages have increased and even young lads have been getting the wages of adults. In spite of these difficulties, our Colonial public works (excluding fortifications and barracks executed by the Royal Engineers from Imperial funds) consisted of:—

1. The completion of the laying of the six-inch main of the new waterworks from Drummer's Point to the wharf, a distance of over 2 miles.
2. The completion of the gaol, which required a new roof and new wood-work throughout.
3. The masonry of two new houses on the site of old ones belonging to the Government. These houses are being built to meet the increased demand for accommodation. The example of Government has been followed by one or two other house proprietors, and it is to be hoped that visitors from England may be tempted to come out during the English winter (the St. Helenian summer). This Island, with its salubrious climate, superior in some respects to Madeira and the Canary Islands, would prove a valuable health resort if it were better known. Wages are

moderate and living not more expensive than in England. From its geographical position St. Helena might be supposed to have a tropical climate, and so it would have but for the cool south-east trade wind which blows nearly all the year round. The summer temperature in the country seldom rises above 70° to 75°. Englishmen go about with small caps on their heads, yet sunstroke is extremely rare. There is no doubt it is an excellent climate for Europeans, but there are not many openings for white labour; wages are low according to English ideas, 2s. 6d. a day for labourers and 5s. per diem for a skilled carpenter.

The only openings for the investment of capital are in the preparation of fibre from the *furcraea aloe* which grows wild in abundance, and fish curing.

Coffee of an excellent quality is produced but the culturable area is limited; still a great deal more could be done in this direction as much land fit for coffee is used for pasturage.

Taking the people as a whole (I speak not of the cultivated, but of the working classes), they are to be favourably compared with the English agricultural population; with few exceptions all can read and write, and the language is spoken with greater purity than in many of our home districts. There is a good deal of overcrowding in many of their cottages; still in most of them there are to be found neatness and a love of art in the way of pictures, and nearly all are musical. Some of the small houses I have visited have been very neatly kept. As a rule I think they are a happy and contented people with little crime among them and much kindness in helping each other. Strangers are greatly impressed with the general civility shown to them by old and young.

I have, &c.,

R. A. STERNDALE,

Governor.