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No. 1432.

# ST. HELENA

## REPORT FOR 1928

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## ST. HELENA.

## ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1928.

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## SITUATION AND AREA.

The Colony of St. Helena consists of the Island of St. Helena with the Island of Ascension as a Dependency.

*St. Helena.*

St. Helena lies in latitude 15.55 South and longitude 5.42 West. It is about 950 miles due south of the Equator, 4,000 miles from England, and 1,700 miles from Cape Town. The voyage from England occupies from 14 to 17 days, and from Cape Town from five to six days.

The area of the Island is 47 square miles. The population is about 3,700, of whom about 1,500 live in Jamestown, the port and only town in the island.

St. Helena is of volcanic origin. The latest account of its geology is a report by Professor Daly of Harvard University, who visited the island at the end of 1921. This report appears in the *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* Vol. 62 No. 2, March, 1927. Professor Daly is of the opinion that St. Helena dates from pre-Glacial time, and is probably pre-Pliocene.

The aspect of St. Helena from the sea is forbidding. It rises abruptly in bare cliffs, which vary in height from 400 to 2,000 ft. The face of this wall of rock is cut by deep narrow gorges.

Above the cliffs the ground rises in a fairly regular slope, but with numerous valleys, to a ridge lying across the middle of the island. This ridge is serrated in form; its general altitude is about 2,000 feet, but two of its peaks, easily accessible and affording magnificent views, rise to 2,700 feet.

The island has been divided into three zones, "Coast," "Middle," and "Central."

The "Coast" zone extends from about a mile to a mile and a-half round the island. Except in some of the valleys, where fruit and vegetables may be grown, the only vegetation is prickly pear.

The "Middle" zone, at an altitude of 400 to 1,800 feet, succeeds the "Coast" zone. The hills and valleys and pleasing scenery in the higher levels of this area are suggestive of parts of Wales and Devon. Oaks, Scotch pines, gorse, and blackberries flourish there, and in 1926 at Plantation during a prolonged winter some primroses made their appearance.

The "Central" zone, about three miles long by two miles wide, is ground each side of the central ridge, the highest ground in the island. In some parts the ground is precipitous, in others undulating with grassy slopes.

*Ascension.*

Ascension Island lies in latitude 7.53 South and longitude 14.18 West, about 700 miles north-west of St. Helena. It has an area of 34 square miles. The population consists of European and St. Helenian employees of the Eastern Cable Company and of the St. Helena Development Company. On the 31st of December, 1928, the population numbered 213.

The island is of volcanic origin, and, as in the case of St. Helena, the most recent account of its geology is a report by Professor Daly which appeared in the *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 60, No. 1, June, 1925. Professor Daly observes that from the time of its discovery no sign of volcanic activity, not even a hot spring, has been reported though geologically the island is extremely young. He thinks it possible that the whole mass above sea-level has been erupted during post-Glacial time.

From the sea Ascension appears bleak and desolate. Green Mountain, however, 2,800 feet high, relieves with its vegetation the barren and depressing effect of the larger part of the island and affords pasture for a certain number of sheep and cattle.

## HISTORY.

*St. Helena.*

There is an abundance of interesting historical and descriptive records concerning St. Helena. The archives of the Administration from 1678 are preserved at the Castle; among them is the original of the instrument "The Laws and Constitution of the Island of St. Helena" issued by Charles II in 1681.

The island was discovered on 21st May, 1502, St. Helena's day, by Juan de Nova Castella, Commodore of a Portuguese squadron returning from India. The Portuguese made no attempt to make a colony of the island but were content to maintain it as a place of "refreshment" for their ships by planting fruit trees and vegetables and introducing goats, pigs, and wildfowl, including pheasants and partridges. It was the practice of the Portuguese to land on the island sick persons of a ship's company, "whom they suspect will not live till they get home; these they leave to refresh themselves, and take away the year following, with the other fleet, if they live so long."

The discovery of the island is said to have been kept a secret until the Englishman, Captain Cavendish, returning from a voyage round the world, anchored there on 8th June, 1588. He found on the island a great abundance of fruit and vegetables, thousands of goats, a great store of swine and wild fowl (the pheasants "big and fat surpassing those which are in our country in bigness and numbers in a company"). He found also "divers handsome buildings and houses, one, particularly, was a church tiled, and whitened on the outside very fair." The only human inhabitants were three slaves and from them Captain Cavendish learnt the news that "the East Indian fleet all laden with spices and Callicut cloth, with store of treasure, and very rich stones and pearls, were gone but twenty days before we came hither."

St. Helena now became a place for "the English, Portugals, Spaniards, and Hollanders to refresh themselves in going, but, for the most part, in returning from the Indies, it being sufficient to furnish ships with provisions for their voyage, here being salt to preserve the meat from stinking; and besides the air is so healthful that they often left their sick people there, who, in a short time, are restored to perfect health." "The greatest convenience of this island for ships" reported an English seaman "is the plenty and goodness of the water."

Eventually in 1645 the Dutch assumed possession of the island, but a few years later abandoned it to establish themselves at the Cape of Good Hope. Their place in St. Helena was taken by the English and in 1661 the Crown granted to the East India Company a charter for its administration.

According to some accounts the island was recaptured in 1665 by the Dutch, who were expelled the same year. They seized it again in 1672. The English Governor and his followers made their

escape in English and French ships to Brazil. There they met an English squadron under the command of Captain (afterwards Sir Richard) Munden, who determined to recover possession of the island. He arrived off St. Helena on the evening of 14th May, 1673, and was fortunate in finding that no look-out was being kept. He landed a shore party at Prosperous Bay, as it came to be called in commemoration of the exploit. There the most active man of the party climbed up a precipice, taking with him a ball of twine to which was attached a rope by means of which the rest of the party were hauled up. The cliff thereafter became known as "Holdfast Tom," the urgent admonition of his comrades to the intrepid climber. As the ships appeared off Jamestown the landing party reached the heights above the town and the Dutch surrendered without striking a blow.

St. Helena reverted by conquest to the possession of the Crown. In December of 1673 a new charter was granted to the East India Company and, with the exception of the term of Napoleon's exile, the island continued under the Company's administration until 22nd April, 1834, when it was brought under the direct control of the Crown.

The Colony is now administered by a Governor aided by an Executive Council. The Governor alone makes ordinances, there being no legislative council, but power is reserved to legislate by Order of His Majesty in Council.

The East India Company, in the terms of their Charter of 1673, attached importance to the island as "very necessary and commodious for refreshing their servants and people in their retournes homewards, being often then weak and decayed in their health by reason of their long voyages under their hott clymes." This service the island continued to render during the period of the Company's administration. It had no possibilities as a trading station, and it remained purely a rendezvous for the protection and refreshment of shipping. The Governorship was often a reward for good service in India, and other offices were filled from time to time by the Company's servants whose health had suffered in the East.

With the disappearance of the Company's administration went its lavish expenditure and its high scale of salaries. The economy of Crown administration and consideration for the British taxpayer ushered in more difficult and less prosperous times for the inhabitants. The substitution of steam for sail and the opening of the Suez Canal meant the ruin of St. Helena as a shipping port. A century ago the number of ships calling each year was five hundred; to-day the number is forty, and in this era of cold storage supplies are rarely needed. More recently the removal of the garrison, in 1906-07, appeared at the time a crushing blow to the island. But the departure of the troops was not an unmixed evil, for it threw the island for the first time on its own resources and led to the creation of the fibre industry on which to-day the welfare of the inhabitants

has come greatly to depend. The future of St. Helena lies in its agriculture and in the character and technical training of its people ; it is probable, also, that before long the scenery and the climatic advantages of the island may gain it a reputation as a resort for those who favour quietude and simple living.

St. Helena has become famous in history as the scene of the Emperor Napoleon's exile and death. The house occupied by him at Longwood and the site of the tomb in Sane Valley where his remains lay for twenty years till their removal in 1840 are now in the charge of the French Government, who were granted the freehold in 1858.

From its earliest days St. Helena appears to have been regarded as a place eminently suitable for exile or for the confinement of political prisoners.

The first exile to land on the island was Fernando Lopez in 1513. He was a Portuguese nobleman who had deserted his countrymen in India and turned apostate. Following on a Portuguese success near Goa he was surrendered to Albuquerque on condition that his life should be spared. His nose, his ears, his right hand, and the little finger of his left hand were cut off and he was thus placed on ship for Portugal. Rather than arrive in his country mutilated and disgraced he was at his own request left on shore at St. Helena with a few slaves. He remained on the island for four years, when on instructions from home he was removed to Portugal.

During the administration of the East India Company, St. Helena was selected for the confinement of an offending rajah who, however, did not survive the voyage. On two occasions Zulu rebels, amongst their number Dinizulu, Cetewayo's son, have been received on the island as political prisoners. During the South African War full advantage was taken of St. Helena's natural advantages as a place of internment. About 4,500 prisoners of war, among them General Kronje, were sent to the island. Their presence brought a wave of prosperity to the island, but apart from that happy circumstance the Boers soon gained and have retained the good will and respect of the inhabitants.

St. Helena had intimate associations with the suppression of the slave trade between West Africa and the Americas.

Slave ships captured by British warships were brought to the island for condemnation, and a settlement for freed slaves was founded at Rupert's Bay. A few found employment locally, but about 10,000 were conveyed to the West Indies and British Guiana.

From time to time St. Helena has had the good fortune to attract interesting and eminent visitors. In 1676 Halley, the astronomer, then a student at Oxford, arrived in the island to determine the positions of the fixed stars of the Southern Hemisphere, and left his name behind him in "Halley's Mount." His observations were to some extent, it is said, hampered by mist and cloud. The same fate about one hundred years later, in 1761, awaited the observations

of Dr. Maskelyne and Mr. Waddington, who visited the island to watch the transit of Venus on 6th June.

Captain Cook landed in the island in 1771 and again in 1774. He wrote that "the children and descendents of the English in St. Helena are remarkable for their ruddy complexion and robust constitution." "As for the genius and temper of these people," he observed, "they seemed to be the most hospitable ever met with of English extraction, having scarce any tincture of avarice and ambition."

Darwin arrived in St. Helena on 8th July, 1836. St. Helena, he was of opinion, had existed as an island from a very remote epoch. He remarked on "the English, or rather Welsh, character of the scenery": "When we consider that the number of plants now found on the island is 746, and out of these 52 alone are indigenous species, the rest having been imported, we see the reason of the British character of the vegetation."

In August, 1910, H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught called at the island, while on his way to open the first Parliament of the Union of South Africa, and in August, 1925, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales spent two days at St. Helena on his way from South Africa to South America.

There still remains on the island one survivor of the Napoleonic period, the giant tortoise at Plantation, said by some authorities to be the known oldest living inhabitant of the world. One report states that this tortoise and a companion who died in 1918 were brought to St. Helena during the Governorship of General Beatson, 1808-13, and that they originally belonged to the French Artillery at Port Louis, being handed over to the British with the ordnance and stores at the capitulation of Mauritius in 1810. Mellis, writing in 1875, mentions a report that the tortoises had lived at Plantation for a century or more. When he wrote they appeared to be fully grown, easily carrying a man.

#### *Ascension.*

Ascension Island was discovered by the Portuguese on 20th May, 1501. It was given its name by Albuquerque who came there two years later.

Vessels called at the island for the turtles. "The sailors never weary of eating them," wrote Roggewein in 1773, "believing that they make a perfect change of their juices, freeing them entirely from the scurvy and other diseases of the blood."

But there was a less savoury reputation attaching to the place. "As the island is a very miserable place to live in, it is common to leave malefactors here when they do not incline to put them to death."

Ascension remained unoccupied until the British took possession in 1815, at the time Napoleon was brought to St. Helena. A garrison was established on the island; "their tents," wrote La

Trobe the following year, "are placed among heaps of volcanic matter resembling cinder heaps in the neighbourhood of London."

In 1821, marines formed the garrison. The spirit they brought with them appears in a private letter written from the island five years later. "We have everything in abundance and live like aldermen. The gardens which are about six miles off on the Green Mountain produce abundantly. The appearance of the island is certainly deplorable, a mass of black and brown lava; but it has its comforts which are every day increasing."

Ascension remained under Admiralty control until 12th September, 1922, when its administration was taken over by the Colonial Office and it was made a Dependency of St. Helena.

At the present time Ascension is an important cable station, and it is also the scene of the operations of the St. Helena Colony Development Company, who are interested in the phosphates and minerals on the island. The Mess of the Cable Company have imported a spirit of cheerfulness into the surroundings. Various forms of recreation—cricket, football, golf, tennis, hockey, and bathing—are available. Sea fishing is a popular pastime and there are possibilities of big game fishing.

An interesting feature of the island is Wide-awake Fair, described by Captain Simmonds in the July number of the *National Geographica Magazine*, 1927. "Here is a wonderful city of birds at Wide-awake Fair, on the western corner of the clinker plains. We of the 'Blossom' went to the Fair on numerous occasions during the breeding season and found the birds assembled by the millions on flattened areas between the ragged cones. The eggs were in such close formation on the ground that it was difficult to step without treading on one or more. Upon our approach the birds rose in deafening chorus and hung over our heads in a threatening blanket of wings and sharp bills that darkened the sun. As a curtain of birds swung down with terrible chattering and screeching, we also ducked and huddled in anticipation of an attack." When the young are fledged the birds vanish from the island till the next breeding season. The eggs are considered a delicacy and taste not unlike plovers' eggs.

The constitution of Ascension is the same as that of St. Helena. The Governor and Council of St. Helena have the same powers in relation to Ascension that they possess in relation to St. Helena.

The Superintendent of the Cable Company acts as Resident Magistrate and has a seat on the Council. Officials of the Company perform such administrative duties as may be necessary.

#### PEOPLE AND LANGUAGE.

With the exception of the English residents and the descendants of English families, settled in the island, the inhabitants are of varied descent. Their ancestors generations ago came from different

parts of the world, but principally from Europe and Asia, and there is difficulty now in tracing any distinctive or prevailing racial element. They are of slight build and of pleasing appearance, they are very law-abiding and are generally praised for their civility and courtesy. In their ideas and sentiments they are essentially and intensely English—as English as is a great deal of the Island scenery.

The language spoken in St. Helena has always been English, and to-day it is remarkable for its purity.

#### CURRENCY.

By the St. Helena Coinage Order, 1925, all coins which under the Coinage Acts of 1870 and 1891 are legal tender in the United Kingdom, and all silver coins which under the Coinage Act, 1922, are legal tender in the Union of South Africa are legal tender in the island of St. Helena.

#### WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.

By the Weights and Measures Ordinance, 1905, the weights and measures for the time being lawfully in use in the United Kingdom and no others are to be used in St. Helena.

#### CLIMATE.

Situated far from any land mass, in the heart of the South-East Trades, and surrounded by the cool waters of the South Atlantic current, St. Helena possesses a mild and equable climate.

There are four seasons in the year, which, however, are not so sharply differentiated as they are in England. Spring is from October to December, summer from January to March, autumn from April to June, winter from July to September.

The length of day varies from 13 hours on 21st December to 11 hours on 21st June.

The sun is vertical on 5th February and on 6th November.

The temperature in the "Coast" zone ranges in summer between 68 degrees and 84 degrees and in winter between 57 degrees and 70 degrees. In the country at about 2,000 feet it is 10 degrees cooler.

In Jamestown, during summer, the heat is sometimes apt to be oppressive. In the country, during winter, fires are often appreciated.

The atmosphere is humid; the monthly mean at 9 a.m. in the country varies from 89 degrees in January to 92 degrees in September.

The average annual rainfall in Jamestown is about 9 inches and the average number of raindays in the year is about 90. In the country at Plantation, 1,650 feet, the annual average of rainfall over 15 years is 38½ inches, and the average number of raindays 211. On

two occasions during the 15 years the greatest fall in 24 hours amounted to 2 inches; apart from those two occasions the greatest fall did not exceed  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

At Plantation the driest months are September to January inclusive, when the average rainfall does not exceed 3 inches each month; the lowest record being .15 and the highest 4.66, both in September. The wettest months are March, May, June, and July, when the average is between 4 and 5 inches; the lowest record being 1.26 in March and the highest being 8.92 in July.

The average force of the wind, which blows almost every day in the year, is 14 miles per hour. On only one occasion in the last 30 years has the wind attained the velocity of 50 miles per hour.

Thunderstorms are of very rare occurrence, the last two recorded being in 1874 and 1888.

Earthquakes in the formidable sense are unknown. Only four "tremors" have been put on record in 400 years.

In the words of Mr. (now Sir Daniel) Morris, who in 1883 reported on the agricultural resources of the island, "St. Helena stands pre-eminent in possessing a remarkably fine and healthy climate. . . . In respect to its climate I regard St. Helena as a most valuable station for recruiting health."

The island is completely free from any of the ills associated with tropical or sub-tropical countries. In particular the climate seems an excellent one for young children or elderly persons. It is also considered beneficial for tubercular or lung trouble.

It is generally held that after three or four years a change of environment is desirable.

No particular precautions are needed. The sun very rarely causes any inconvenience, though on occasions during the summer in rare and exceptional seasons of prolonged drought the direct solar heat may be intense. In the last 25 years there has been only one case of fatal result from the effect of sun.

## I.—GENERAL.

Two new appointments were made towards the end of the year, a Horticultural Officer from Kew and an Assistant to the Superintendent of Works.

In the past, St. Helena was famous for its fruit, its coffee, and its vegetables. In the days of the East India Company the apples, peaches, mulberries, quinces, were said "to have come to perfection." Some St. Helena coffee shipped to England in 1845 fetched 1*l.* per lb. more than any other description, and a sample sent to the London Exhibition in 1851 obtained the first prize for quality. In more recent years some consignments of potatoes were shipped to the Cape and a report on them from South Africa in 1906 stated "that there

is no doubt that the quality is excellent and that they will command the best figure in the market." It was the opinion, moreover, of Sir Daniel Morris in 1884 that by that date if Mr. Chalmers, who had been sent from Kew in 1869, had not been retrenched later tobacco would have become an established industry.

Since the departure of Mr. Chalmers the St. Helenians in horticultural matters have been left pathetically helpless for want of expert assistance, and horticulture has become derelict.

The appointment now made will, it is confidently anticipated, revive interest in horticulture and improve the position and increase the number of small holders. The limited area, however, available for cultivation makes it unlikely that any export trade on a considerable scale will arise. The market for the local produce will be in the island itself, in Ascension, and in occasional supplies to shipping.

Arrangements are under consideration for a short visit during next year of a Forestry Officer. No systematic forestry has ever been attempted in St. Helena and no report has yet been made by a Forestry Officer. Apart from their influence on climate and soil, trees are needed in St. Helena for fuel and to provide timber for building fencing, etc., and there is little doubt that a re-forestation scheme launched under expert advice can provide St. Helena with all the timber, including ant-resistant timber, it will ordinarily require.

The law prohibiting the use of motors has been repealed and regulations for motor traffic are now under consideration. It is probable that only light cars and light lorries will be permitted. The new Assistant to the Superintendent of Works is a skilled motor mechanic, and his arrival synchronised with that of a small motor-roller and of a stone-crusher. With a modest programme of expenditure it is anticipated that within three years the island will possess, as regards surface at any rate, first-class roads. For a century the roads have borne wheeled traffic and there is good metal in abundance. In some parts the gradients are stiff and the width is narrow, but the volume of traffic will never be large enough to create difficulty.

Early in next year Mr. Bathgate, late Assistant Director of Works in Nigeria, is visiting the Colony to advise on public works generally, and in particular on a road programme, on water supplies and the possibility, on a very modest scale, of irrigation, to which the physical configuration of the island seems to lend itself.

The water in the island is reported to be excellent, and it is hoped that provision can be made for improving the supplies in the country and for meeting a possible increase in the demand for shipping.

The possibility of obtaining the assistance of a teacher in Domestic Science, seconded for two years from the English Education Department, is under discussion. St. Helena girls when trained make good cooks and domestic servants. Opportunities for their employment offer in Ascension, in South Africa, and occasionally in England. There is little fear that if well trained there will be difficulty in finding them employment.

For the first time in the history of the island a tourist steamer, an American "luxury liner," called at Jamestown at the beginning of the year. The visit was most successful and as a result three tourist steamers are announced as visiting the island next year. In the opinion of some of the more enthusiastic passengers the visit should extend two or three days instead of a few hours, for there is much of interest to see in the island. The lack of an hotel is, however, becoming a serious want.

II.—FINANCE.

The revenue for the year amounted to £15,549, being £454 below the estimate and £2,437 below the revenue for 1927. The sum of £1,000, payable into revenue at the end of the year as minimum royalty by the St. Helena Colony Development Company in connection with their operations at Ascension, was not received in time to be included in the 1927 accounts and there were arrears also of £130 under "Lands," which were paid shortly after the end of the year. There was a decrease of £3,092 in Post Office receipts as compared with 1927, arising from a reduction in the demands of stamp dealers.

The principal items of revenue were :—

|                          | £     |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Customs... ..            | 4,864 |
| Taxes ... ..             | 580   |
| Fines, Fees, etc. ... .. | 1,501 |
| Post Office ... ..       | 2,651 |
| Lands ... ..             | 998   |
| Investments ... ..       | 427   |
| Miscellaneous ... ..     | 438   |
| Ascension ... ..         | 3,536 |

Under "Fines and Fees" £1,170 is re-imbursments, being payments for work done by the Admiralty. Court Fines amounted to £7 5s. 0d. only.

Under "Miscellaneous" is included the sum of £237 refunded by the St. Helena Development Company of the salary of the Controller of Labour at Ascension.

The principal items of expenditure were :—

|                                | £     |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Pensions... ..                 | 816   |
| Governor ... ..                | 1,136 |
| Secretariat ... ..             | 1,217 |
| Medical and Sanitary ... ..    | 3,107 |
| Education ... ..               | 794   |
| Agriculture and Forests ... .. | 645   |
| Miscellaneous ... ..           | 835   |
| Public Works Department ... .. | 899   |
| Public Works Recurrent ... ..  | 2,938 |
| Extraordinary ... ..           | 2,412 |
| Ascension ... ..               | 2,406 |

Under "Miscellaneous" the sum of £364 is included for depreciation of stores. A large quantity of useless stores, accumulated for some years, has been written off.

Under "Extraordinary" the expenditure for repairs to Government buildings, chiefly Government House, was £1,773, and for road machinery £463.

There were surplus funds at the beginning of 1928 amounting approximately to £5,500. A grant-in-aid of £2,000 was approved by the Treasury, but was not received until the year of account had closed.

The revenue (including grant-in-aid) for the past five years is :—

|             | Revenue | including<br>Grant-in-Aid | Expenditure. |
|-------------|---------|---------------------------|--------------|
|             | £       | £                         | £            |
| 1924 ... .. | 16,727  | 4,000                     | 14,182       |
| 1925 ... .. | 21,731  | 7,000                     | 19,566       |
| 1926 ... .. | 23,945  | 2,500                     | 23,154       |
| 1927 ... .. | 20,486  | 2,500                     | 16,740       |
| 1928 ... .. | 15,549  | —                         | 19,671       |

A statement of what may be fairly regarded as the ordinary recurrent revenue and expenditure for those years is as follows :—

|             | Revenue. | Expenditure. |
|-------------|----------|--------------|
|             | £        | £            |
| 1924 ... .. | 12,727   | 13,643       |
| 1925 ... .. | 12,537   | 14,758       |
| 1926 ... .. | 13,522   | 15,224       |
| 1927 ... .. | 16,600   | 15,940       |
| 1928 ... .. | 14,162   | 15,794       |

In the year 1927 the sum of £5,600 was taken by the Post Office for the sale of stamps.

It appears that the Colony needs an annual grant-in-aid of about £2,000 to balance the ordinary recurrent budget.

*Assets and Liabilities.*—The statement of assets and liabilities shows an excess of assets over liabilities amounting to £4,195.

*Public Debt.*—There is no public debt.

*Banking.*—The Government Savings Bank is the only bank established in the island.

The total number of depositors during 1928 was 234, as compared with 246 in 1927. The total deposits amounted to £3,641, being £407 decrease in the deposits for the previous year.

Stock to the value of £11,698 (cost price) is held by Government on behalf of depositors. It is proposed to increase these investments by £1,000.

The amount due to depositors on 31st December, 1928, was £16,099

## III.—PRODUCTION.

*Agriculture and Industries.*

The welfare of St. Helena is bound up with the cultivation of the land. This was the opinion of Sir Daniel Morris in 1884, "I look entirely to the soil," he wrote, "for the elements to bring prosperity to St. Helena." The same opinion was expressed nearly 40 years later in a lecture given in Jamestown by Professor Daly of Harvard, who had visited St. Helena to study its geology. Mr. Mason, who came from South Africa in 1922 to report on the island's agriculture, came to the conclusion that St. Helena "was a country for the smallholder."

The only industry of importance at the present time is the cultivation of *phormium tenax* (New Zealand flax) and the manufacture of fibre and tow from its leaves.

This plant does not appear in Dr. Roxburgh's list of plants seen by him on the island in 1813-1814. His list, however, does not profess to be complete as his bad state of health during his residence prevented him from compiling a full catalogue.

The first reference so far discoverable is in Mellis' *St. Helena*, 1875, ". . . New Zealand flax with other fibre producing plants all now grow wild, and bear evidence to the very small attention that has been paid by the inhabitants to the soil and its productions, in the fact that none are made use of"; and again, "New Zealand flax; grows wild and is common about the highlands. Hitherto the only use made of this plant has been by the market gardeners for tying up bunches of vegetables, etc; and, although the value of the plant for the fibre it yields has long attracted attention, it is only recently that its cultivation has been undertaken with this object in view. During the last year or so a very considerable extent of land has been planted with it."

Flax first appears in the agricultural returns for 1873, when 100 acres were said to be given over to its cultivation. In the following year machinery was set up for the extraction of fibre from aloe and from *phormium tenax*, and from 1875 to 1881 there were exports of fibre from both plants, the highest returns being 100 tons and 83 tons in 1879 and 1880 respectively. Prices then fell, and after 1881 the export ceased.

Sir Daniel Morris in his report of 1883 wrote: "I commend the subject of the extraction of fibre from the New Zealand flax to the careful attention of proprietors in the island . . . obtaining some return from the hundreds of tons of the material now growing uselessly on such extensive tracts in the island." He obtained a report on a sample of New Zealand flax treated by a machine erected by Mr. Deason, "this fibre," the report said, "would be fairly saleable in large quantities."

In the Colonial Report for 1889 in referring to the production of fibre it was explained that the difficulties of obtaining an adequate supply of water and of proper machinery had still to be overcome.

It was not till 1904-5 that serious attention was again given to the production of fibre, when proposals in connection with the matter were mooted from South Africa and England. It was pointed out, however, that any extension of the cultivation of New Zealand flax meant the breaking up of grass and pasture land, and that the preservation of such land was necessary for raising stock for the meat supply of the garrison.

The withdrawal of the garrison in 1906-7 altered the whole situation. In June, 1906, a deputation consisting of Messrs. H. B. Morrice, H. J. Bovell, and H. W. Solomon interviewed the Secretary of State for the Colonies and urged the establishment of a Government flax mill in the island. With the assistance of a grant-in-aid, flax planting was encouraged, an expert was obtained from New Zealand, and the Government mill was opened in 1907. In 1913 Solomon and Co. opened their first mill, followed three years later by Deason Brothers, and in 1923 W. A. Thorpe and Sons also began milling operations. In 1925 the St. Helena Corporation acquired a lease of the Government mill.

At the present time, therefore, there are four firms engaged in fibre production, and there are eleven stripping and scutching machines operating. There are about 300 people employed in connection with the mills.

The area under the cultivation of *phormium tenax* is estimated at approximately 2,000 acres. The cultivation is suitable for the smallholders and is taken up by them, but by far the greater proportion of the acreage is the property of the millowners themselves.

The export of fibre and tow during the past five years has been in tons:—

|             | <i>Fibre.</i> | <i>Value.</i> | <i>Tow.</i> | <i>Value.</i> |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
|             |               | £             |             | £             |
| 1924 ... .. | 694           | 27,076        | 284         | 7,113         |
| 1925 ... .. | 923           | 33,022        | 420         | 10,953        |
| 1926 ... .. | 751           | 25,531        | 417         | 10,851        |
| 1927 ... .. | 738           | 24,542        | 365         | 7,963         |
| 1928 ... .. | 770           | 22,515        | 380         | 6,933         |

The prices during the year were disappointing, averaging £30 per ton for fibre and £19 10s. for tow. At times it was difficult to find buyers and stocks had to remain in the warehouse paying rent.

Mr. Mason in his report (1922) discussed the flax industry. He observed that the war with its enormously inflated prices had given a stimulus to flax planting, that it had been established in suitable and unsuitable places and many of the latter when prices become normal would be likely to go out of cultivation; that the high prices had led to the planting of ground which under normal conditions would yield much better returns if devoted to the production of

ordinary agricultural crops. He was of opinion that owing to the ease with which money could be made slackness had crept in all round and that a general tightening up of business methods would be necessary if the industry was not to go through a critical stage. He considered that the greatest cause for uneasiness was the general practice of milling leaves too young, and that no time should be lost by the interested parties in putting their house in order. So far as the mills were concerned it would be necessary to study costs and the most economical way of producing fibre. In most cases, he observed, flax did not receive much attention from the time it was planted until it was ready for cutting. A greater yield he thought would result if it was kept free from weeds, especially in the early stages. He strongly recommended some system of grading. On this point Sir Henry Galway had been equally emphatic in the Colonial Report for 1908, "When the flax industry develops to any extent, say in three years' time, it will be imperative for the success of the industry that the Colony has its own grader, and so allow for all the produce exported being graded before shipment. If this is not done it is more than likely that the different mills will send home varying qualities of fibre, and so tend to give the St. Helena article a bad name in the London market."

These questions call for much closer co-operation amongst mill-owners than is apparent at the present time.

For the past few years an attempt has been made by Captain Mainwaring to establish the manufacture of rope and twine out of the local fibre. The export for the last four years has been:—

|             | <i>Tons.</i>      | <i>Value.</i> |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------|
|             |                   | £             |
| 1925 ... .. | 32                | 1,500         |
| 1926 ... .. | 35 $\frac{1}{10}$ | 2,105         |
| 1927 ... .. | 18                | 810           |
| 1928 ... .. | 26 $\frac{1}{2}$  | 1,246         |

The successful development of such an enterprise would be of the greatest benefit to the island.

*Farming.*—The year was a bad one for the farmers owing to drought, the rainfall in the country being 23 inches as compared with an average of 38.5.

*Fisheries.*—At one time an attempt was made to start a fish-curing industry in the island, but the project failed. It is thought that supplies of fish are not more than sufficient for local needs.

*Lace-making.*—This industry was started in St. Helena in 1897 by Mrs. Jackson, a resident in the island. She had been impressed with its possibility as an industry for women and girls from the success which had attended a similar enterprise in Madagascar. In 1907 the Imperial Treasury gave a grant to assist and develop the industry, and an Association was formed under the presidency of the Bishop with a committee of ladies to assist in the management.

The Association dissolved the following year and the industry passed into Government control. A Government lace school was established and Miss Girdwood was appointed Manageress. She soon came to the opinion that the talent of the St. Helenian was strongly in favour of the needle rather than the pillow. Reports on the work of the school were encouraging and it was considered worth while to adopt old Italian patterns and to aim at production of a high quality. It was stated in 1914 that the laces were of excellent quality and workmanship, were chiefly of Florentine and old Italian designs, and that but for the outbreak of war the school would have shown a substantial profit. In 1916 Miss Girdwood was compelled on account of ill-health to resign her appointment; the school then closed and has not since been re-opened. Messrs. Solomon and Co. have opened a depot in town where the lace can now be purchased, but the St. Helena lace finds difficulty in competing with machine-made lace and with work of cheaper quality.

#### *Ascension.*

The only export from Ascension at the present time is that of turtles. The average number of turtles annually exported during the past five years is 37. In former years the export was on a considerable scale, 750 turtles being exported in 1834, 600 in 1850, and 650 in 1853.

Investigations are being made into the possibilities of exploiting the minerals and the phosphates on the island. It is possible also that a fish-curing industry may soon be successfully established, for fish appear to abound in the waters of the island.

#### IV.—TRADE AND ECONOMICS.

The total value of the overseas trade of the Colony in 1928 amounted to £80,307 as compared with £83,952 in 1927.

The Customs revenue amounted to £4,863 as against £5,011 in 1927, the difference being due mainly to the fact that in 1927 two years' supply of paraffin had been imported.

#### *Imports.*

The value of imports during the year was £49,030, distributed as follows:—

|                          | £      |
|--------------------------|--------|
| United Kingdom ... ..    | 39,735 |
| South Africa ... ..      | 7,595  |
| Foreign countries ... .. | 1,700  |

£49,030

The imports from South Africa and foreign countries are food, drink, and tobacco.

The principal differences as compared with 1927 were :—

| Increases—                       | £     |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Coal and Coke ... ..             | 305   |
| Earthenware and Glassware ... .. | 323   |
| Drapery and Dry Goods ... ..     | 1,796 |
| Flour ... ..                     | 1,475 |
| Hardware Metal, &c. ... ..       | 232   |
| Machinery ... ..                 | 605   |
| Stationery ... ..                | 302   |
| Sugar ... ..                     | 296   |

Decreases—

|                                  | £     |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Butter and Margarine ... ..      | 235   |
| Foodstuffs (unenumerated) ... .. | 1,135 |
| Paraffin Oil ... ..              | 1,187 |
| Rice ... ..                      | 890   |
| Timber ... ..                    | 529   |
| Wine ... ..                      | 270   |

Government imports in 1928 were valued at £2,713, excluding munitions of war, as against £1,827 in 1927.

#### Exports.

The value of exports in 1928 was £31,267, as against £34,274 in 1927, distributed as follows :—

|                       | £      |
|-----------------------|--------|
| United Kingdom ... .. | 29,321 |
| South Africa ... ..   | 1,946  |

The exports to the United Kingdom and South Africa are classified as follows :—

|                              | United Kingdom. | South Africa. |
|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
|                              | £               | £             |
| Raw material ... ..          | 28,691          | 1,330         |
| Manufactured articles ... .. | 630             | 616           |

The principal differences in value as compared with 1927 are :—

| Increases—            | £     |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Rope and Twine ... .. | 436   |
| Hides ... ..          | 148   |
| Decreases—            |       |
| Fibre ... ..          | 2,027 |
| Tow ... ..            | 1,030 |
| Specie ... ..         | 391   |

The quantities of fibre and tow exported in 1928 were 770 tons and 380 tons respectively, as compared with 738 tons and 365 tons in 1927. The value of fibre and tow had fallen considerably in 1928.

## V.—COMMUNICATIONS.

### Shipping.

The number of ships calling at St. Helena and Ascension during the year was 35, as compared with 39 in 1927.

The ships were classified as follows :—

|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| Mail steamers ... ..   | 25 |
| British warship ... .. | 1  |
| Other vessels ... ..   | 9  |

The tonnage entered and cleared was 132,315, as compared with 143,131 in 1927.

The only steamship line calling regularly at St. Helena and Ascension is the Union-Castle Line, which carries mails outward and homeward once a month.

### Roads.

There are about 60 miles of road to be maintained in St. Helena, and the expenditure on this service in 1928 was £803 16s. 2d.

During the year, the Ordinance prohibiting motor traffic was repealed and at the end of the year a motor-roller and a stone-crusher were imported.

### Posts, Telegraphs, and Telephones.

Postal communication is monthly between St. Helena and England and between St. Helena and South Africa.

There has been a slight general decrease during 1928 in the business of the Post Office as compared with 1927.

The statistics are :—

|                                |        |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|
| From England—                  | 1927   | 1928   |
| No. of bags Mail ... ..        | 228    | 224    |
| Parcels ... ..                 | 1,697  | 1,448  |
| Registered Articles ... ..     | 1,133  | 928    |
| Money and Postal Orders ... .. | £1,736 | £1,578 |
| To England—                    |        |        |
| No. of bags Mail ... ..        | 73     | 66     |
| Parcels ... ..                 | 165    | 123    |
| Registered Articles ... ..     | 2,049  | 1,783  |
| Money and Postal Orders ... .. | £6,362 | £6,039 |
| From South Africa—             |        |        |
| No. of bags Mail ... ..        | 15     | 12     |
| Parcels ... ..                 | 428    | 408    |
| Registered Articles ... ..     | 497    | 449    |
| Money and Postal Orders ... .. | £324   | £420   |
| To South Africa—               |        |        |
| No. of bags Mail ... ..        | 19     | 14     |
| Parcels ... ..                 | 142    | 142    |
| Registered Articles ... ..     | 511    | 451    |
| Money and Postal Orders ... .. | £1,546 | £1,463 |

The Eastern Telegraph Company have cable stations at St. Helena and Ascension, where messages are accepted for all parts of the world.

There is no internal post or telegraph service.

A telephone system is maintained by private subscribers, the rate per instrument being £5 per annum.

The number of instruments is 33; there are 41 miles of wire. The revenue during 1928 was £178 against an expenditure of £139.

## VI.—JUSTICE, POLICE, AND PRISONS.

There was one case before the Supreme Court, a case of wounding which resulted in a conviction and a sentence of nine months' imprisonment.

The number of cases reported to the Police was 152. In 86 cases action was taken in the Court, resulting in 38 convictions and one committal to the Supreme Court.

Of these convictions, thirteen were for offences against Ordinances relating to the social economy of the island, nine for offences against the person, six were for larceny, and the others were for minor offences.

During the year, there were four whippings in the case of boys convicted for stealing.

There were fourteen cases in the Small Debts Court.

### *Gaol.*

The number of persons committed to prison during the year was ten, and one was placed on remand. The number in custody on 31st December, 1928, was three.

## VII.—PUBLIC WORKS.

The Public Works Department embarked during the year on an extensive programme of repairs to Government buildings, estimated to cost £8,600. The programme comprises the re-construction of Plantation (Government House), and extensive repairs to the Castle and the Hospital. The programme will be carried out with local labour, and for the woodwork American cypress has been imported, as it has a local reputation for being ant-resistant.

A start has been made with Plantation which, owing to the depredations of white ants, had become too ruinous and dangerous for further occupation. It was handed over to the Department at the end of March when the Governor went on leave. Until its restoration is carried through the Governor will reside at Prince's Lodge, a bungalow in the neighbourhood.

*Current Repairs, etc.*—Unanticipated expenditure to the amount of £150 became necessary in the course of the year; £90 for the

construction of a buttress wall in Rupert's Valley to protect buildings there from the dangers of erosion, and £60 for the completion of the repairs to the Nurses' and Probationers' Quarters.

*Roads.*—A motor-roller and a stone-crusher arrived at the end of the year, and when they are in full commission it is hoped that there will be considerable improvement in the condition of the roads and considerable saving in the cost of maintenance.

*Water.*—Special attention was given to the Longwood and Hospital supplies, and the demands of shipping were met without serious difficulty.

*Transport.*—The drought made it necessary to purchase additional supplies of forage for the animals. In a short time it is proposed to introduce mechanical transport.

At the end of the year an Assistant Superintendent of Works arrived who is a trained motor mechanic.

### *Horticulture.*

The agricultural and horticultural duties hitherto assigned to the Superintendent of Works were taken over by the Horticultural Officer who arrived in November.

The "Scotland" estate of about ten acres was purchased for Botanical Gardens.

Before the year closed, a start was made with the restoration of the Town Gardens, which for years have been left derelict.

## VIII.—PUBLIC HEALTH.

### *Vital Statistics.*

The estimated civil population of St. Helena on the 31st December, 1928, was 3,797, as against 3,754 on the same date in the previous year.

The deaths in St. Helena during the year numbered 69, as against 63 in 1927, the death-rate being 18.17 per 1,000 as against 16.78 in 1927. The death-rate for the past ten years has averaged 11.42 per 1,000.

The deaths in 1928 according to age were—

|                    |     |     |     |     |     |       |    |
|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|----|
| Under 1 year       | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ...   | 19 |
| Between 1—10 years | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ...   | 5  |
| „ 10—30            | „   | ... | ... | ... | ... | ...   | 7  |
| „ 30—60            | „   | ... | ... | ... | ... | ...   | 6  |
| „ 70—80            | „   | ... | ... | ... | ... | ..... | 12 |
| Over 80            | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ...   | 15 |

There were 123 births, as against 99 in 1927, giving a birth-rate of 32.39 per thousand against 26.55 in 1927.

There were 31 marriages, as compared with 36 in 1927.

In Ascension the population was 213, of whom 137 are St. Helenians. There were no deaths and there was one birth.

#### Health.

During the year there was a mild epidemic of whooping cough and a few cases of chicken pox.

Cases of water-borne disease, ascaris, have been found at Level Wood, one of the country districts. While the water supply of Jamestown is satisfactory, there are certain country districts where improvement is desirable and possible.

The Dentist has visited all the schools. He has made 1,543 extractions of temporary teeth and 579 extractions of permanent teeth. He considers the teeth of the children have suffered from lack of attention and from a soft dietary.

### IX.—EDUCATION.

There are eight primary schools on the island. Three are government schools, three are maintained by the Hussey Charity, one by the Benevolent Society, and one by the Bishop's Diocesan Fund. These schools provide for 680 children.

A Government grant of £100 is given to the Hussey Charity Schools, of £20 to the Benevolent Society School, and of £15 to the Diocesan Fund School.

There is a carpentry class in the Government boys' school; and school gardens, under the supervision of the Horticultural Officer, will shortly be started.

There is no secondary or technical education. As regards the latter, the extensive programme of public works and the establishment of a Horticultural Department will provide some opportunities for training boys. In the case of girls it is proposed if funds are available to open a school for domestic economy under the management of a trained teacher.

*Church Lads' Brigade.*—In the country there is a company of the Church Lads' Brigade consisting of 54, all ranks, and 26 training corps.

*Boy Scouts.*—In Jamestown there is a troop of Boy Scouts consisting of a scoutmaster, two assistant scoutmasters, six patrols of eight boys each, and a small pack of six wolf cubs.

During the year a camp was held, the expenses being met from a concert given by the Scouts.

*Girl Guides.*—There is a Town company consisting of sixty Guides and Brownies, and a Country company of forty-three Guides and Brownies. With officers and Rangers the Guides number about 150.

### X.—LANDS.

Sir Daniel Morris estimated the area of St. Helena to be 28,000 acres, "Of this area probably 20,000 acres or more than two-thirds are composed of barren rocky wastes or clayey slopes totally unfit in their present condition for any agricultural operations." More recent estimates give the area of agricultural and pastoral lands as 10,000 acres.

The multiplicity of records and the diversity of titles introduce some degree of confusion into the tenure of land in the island.

Among the terms in the early days of the East India Company under which land was granted to "the planters, their heirs, and assignees for ever" was the condition "An Englishman to be kept on every ten acres, and to take his turn to appear in arms on guard." Appearance on guard, watch and ward, as it was termed, was commuted as early as 1683 for a payment of 2s. an acre, subsequently reduced to 1s. an acre. As regards the maintenance of an Englishman on every ten acres, the Court of Directors sent instructions in 1717 "not to enforce too rigorously" this condition.

The lands which bore this charge of 1s. an acre became known as "free" lands.

The Company also granted leases. In 1828 the Court conveyed to the Governor their approval of the conversion of leaseholds into permanent tenure, "We are . . . prepared to sanction the grant to such of the parties now holding temporary leases as may by their management of the property and the buildings they have erected have proved themselves worthy of the boon of a permanent title to the lands, with a reservation, however, of our right in each case, when the public service may demand it, to resume possession of the land upon the payment of its valuation, to be assessed by a jury, providing also that a quit rent varying from 3s. per acre to 6d. per acre to be in like manner assessed."

These lands became known locally as "permanent tenure" land.

Lastly, under a Proclamation dated the 7th of August, 1843, the Government gave notice that it would commute the ground rents of the several tenures into rent-free grants at 10 or 12½ years rental according to the nature of the tenure. A considerable number of grantees took advantage of this offer. It does not appear that the right of Government to resume for public purposes was made a condition in this scheme of commutation.

There is still a considerable area of Government land on lease, and during recent years a number of small plots have been granted to smallholders, originally for growing flax. In the past five years a hundred leases have been granted.

The number of properties on the Government rent roll amounts to 427, and the rents yield an annual revenue of £1,284.

It is difficult to arrive at the market value of land owing to the paucity of transactions, but from £7 10s. to £10 an acre would not be an unreasonable price for cultivated land.

The only legislation dealing with land is Ordinance No. 1 of 1893, to simplify conveyancing and titles to land and to provide for registration.

## XI.—LABOUR AND COST OF LIVING.

Wages for skilled or semi-skilled workmen are from 3s. 6d. to 5s. 6d. per day, wages for unskilled labour vary from 2s. to 2s. 6d. a day as compared with 1s. 6d. to 2s. at the end of 1913. Women are paid 1s. to 1s. 3d. a day.

The day for men is from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., and for women from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. A week for men is 60 hours.

The Government pay unskilled labour at the rate of 2s. 6d. a day of eight hours, and the week is 45 hours.

In domestic service wages for housemaids vary from 10s. to £2 per month, for cooks from 30s. to £4 per month, and for male servants from 30s. to £4 15s. per month. Grooms and gardeners receive 2s. 6d. a day.

Insurance against sickness and death and for funeral expenses has been for many years a feature in the social economy of the island. There are four Friendly Societies for men, with a total membership of 1,660. Two of these Societies have been established for nearly one hundred years. There is a Friendly Society for women, with a membership of 230, established in 1878.

The cost of the principal articles of consumption during the year under review was as follows :—

Meat 1s. per lb.  
 Fish cheap and good.  
 Eggs 2s. per dozen.  
 Butter Fresh 2s. 6d., tinned 1s. 8d. and 2s. 6d.  
 Bread 5d. per 1½ lb. loaf.  
 Milk 4d. per bottle.  
 Tea 3s. per lb.  
 Coffee 1s. 6d.—2s. 6d.  
 Sugar 3½d. per lb.  
 Rice 3½d. per lb.  
 Tobacco 11s. per lb.  
 Whiskey 6s. 9d.—8s. 9d. per bottle.  
 Kerosene 15s.—22s. per case.

## XII.—MISCELLANEOUS.

### *Meteorology.*

At Hutt's Gate, 1,900 ft., where the principal observations are taken, the rainfall for the year was 25.28 inches, the lowest recorded for many years. The average yearly rainfall is 40 inches. The heaviest fall was 1.2 on 19th March. In Jamestown at sea-level the rainfall for the year was 7.001, and the heaviest fall was .049 on 26th March.

Upper air observations by means of pilot balloons were taken during the year at Hutt's Gate on behalf of the Air Ministry. Their object was to determine the nature of the winds overlying the Trades.

During the year there was no electrical disturbances visible to the naked eye.

At Ascension the rainfall at Green Mountain, about 1,900 ft., was 35.24 inches, and at Georgetown, sea-level, 3 inches.

### *Legislation.*

Seven Ordinances, two Proclamations, and four Orders in Council were issued during the year.

The principal Ordinances were :—

*No. I.—The Immigration (St. Helena) Ordinance*, controlling immigration into St. Helena and giving powers of deportation.

*No. V.—The Fisheries and Fish Products (Export) Ordinance*, to provide for the taking and curing of fish for export, and the manufacture for export of fish products.

*No. VII.—The Motor Car Ordinance*, for the regulation of the use of motor-cars.

### *Staff.*

It is proposed to amalgamate the four offices of Law Officer, etc., Chief Clerk, Treasurer, and Collector of Customs into two appointments, that of Government Secretary holding a seat on the Council, who will carry out the duties of Law Officer, etc., and Chief Clerk, and that of Treasurer who will perform the functions of Treasurer and Collector of Customs.

To the latter office Mr. Cullen, Collector of Customs, was appointed from 28th September.

The number of Nursing Sisters at the Hospital has been reduced from four to two, and three St. Helena girls are in training as Probationers.

Two new appointments were created during the year. Mr. Bruinslich from Kew Gardens was appointed as Horticultural Officer, and Mr. Withecombe was appointed Assistant Superintendent of Works.

Mr. Bruce retired as Postmaster and was succeeded by Mr. G. Moss, formerly Comptroller of Customs of Northern Rhodesia.

Dr. Cartwright was succeeded as Colonial Surgeon by Dr. Carleton.

Mr. Pink the Treasurer was transferred to St. Lucia. Miss Scott, Nursing Sister, resigned.