

No. 63.

ST. HELENA.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1891.

(For Report for 1890, see Colonial Report [Annual] No. 26.)

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



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1893.

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1891.

[For Report for 1890, see Colonial Report (Annual) No. 26.]

Governor GREY WILSON to LORD KNUTSFORD.

The Castle, St. Helena,

August 8, 1892.

MY LORD,

I HAVE the honour to transmit the Blue Book of this Island for the year 1891.

The gloomy forebodings to which I gave expression in my report upon the Blue Book for 1890, were, I very much regret to state, more than justified by the year under review.

The revenue was 6,874*l.* (1,854*l.* less than in 1890), and the expenditure 8,287*l.* (745*l.* less than in 1890), so that we exceeded our revenue by the comparatively very large sum of 1,413*l.*

The chief falling off in the revenue occurred under the heads of "Customs" and "Land Revenue," and was, in a great measure, the result of the reduction of the garrison. I had anticipated a deficit of 802*l.*, and, by very stringent and, in some cases, almost detrimental economies, a saving of 365*l.* upon the authorised expenditure was effected. But no efforts could have averted the result which the collapse of the revenue entailed.

The condition of the island in August was such as to excite very grave anxiety; work was almost unobtainable; with the shipping nothing was doing; the potato crop was indifferent; and starvation faced many. Under these circumstances, I started relief work for women and children only, so as to leave the men ready for anything that might turn up. In St. Helena, a few hours may suffice to dispel despair. The arrival of a ship needing coal, or of a man-of-war, or of a ship in distress to land cargo, may at any moment offer work to those in urgent need of it. It so happened that, within three weeks of the commencement of the relief work, a man-of-war came in, and before the close of the year several had arrived in rapid succession. I was thus relieved of all immediate cause for anxiety.

Taxation.

No alteration whatever took place in taxation during the year, and nothing was outstanding under this head at the close of the year.

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Although in 1890 I removed about one half of the tax upon boats, boatmen found it very difficult to earn sufficient even to meet the reduced rates, owing to the scarcity of ships.

Local Bodies.

I regret being unable to record any evidence of the birth of an adequate interest being taken in the matter of sanitation. Until the town community boldly face and attack this subject, they must labour under a grave responsibility.

The general revenue may reasonably be expected to contribute, on account of Government town property, toward the cost of any drainage works that are undertaken; but the greater part of the outlay must be borne by the householders, who would directly benefit by the reformation, and who at present are the chief sufferers from the defects in our sanitary system.

Public Debt.

During the year the last large instalment (1,000*l.*) of the loan of 19,500*l.* raised during the years 1868 to 1872, was paid off, and there only remained, on the 31st of December, the sum of 250*l.* outstanding. This loan, which bears interest at 7 per cent. per annum, was raised by Sir Charles Elliot, and was expended upon the restoration of the Government buildings in town which had been devastated by the white ant.

Viewed from the standpoint of the present financial position of the Colony, it is not open to question that a very much smaller amount should have been made to meet all its needs; but, although this is evident in retrospect, it was doubtless little anticipated at the time.

This debt has been a millstone around the neck of the Colony, and its early, though too late, extinction is a subject for justifiable satisfaction.

In addition to the foregoing 250*l.*, there remained a sum of 5,158*l.* lent to the Colony, without interest, by the Imperial Government in 1872. It has not been possible for the Colony to repay any portion of this loan, and the prospect of its repayment appears more remote to-day than it did six years ago, when I first reached the Island.

Assets and Liabilities.

On the 31st of December the assets of the Colony were 12,580*l.*, and the current liabilities 13,366*l.* The latter therefore exceeded the assets by 786*l.*

In view of the fact that in the previous year the assets exceeded the liabilities by 813*l.*, this cannot be regarded as less than very unsatisfactory.

Military.

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The garrison was maintained at the reduced strength of the previous year, namely, one company of the York and Lancaster Regiment, and 17 gunner caretakers in charge of a master gunner.

Some progress was made with the consideration of the question of raising a Militia force, and Lieut.-Colonel Maclean, late R.A., after visiting England for consultations, continued his investigations and reports upon the scheme, which is still engaging the attention of Her Majesty's Government.

Considerable opposition was given to some of the provisions of the draft of a new Militia Ordinance which was published in the island; and it is hoped that the Imperial Government will be prepared to eliminate such of the features, to which objection was taken, as are not material to its efficiency.

Public Works.

The expenditure upon public works was 1,087*l.* This sum, in so far as it slightly exceeded the estimate, was more than counterbalanced by increased reimbursements in aid. The Government executed, and supplied materials for, considerable private sanitary and water service work, an arrangement which so far works advantageously for both parties, and ensures the use of good material.

A considerable sum of money was expended upon the town roads, and upon the thorough repair of the boys' school in town, which has been almost gutted by the White Ant; but beyond this no work of any magnitude was undertaken, the current works fully absorbing the remainder of the vote.

The price paid for transport in this mountainous place enhances considerably the cost of most works.

Legislation.

Three ordinances were passed during the year.

Nos. 1 and 3 are Supply and Supplementary Supply ordinances.

No. 2—"To simplify Conveyancing and Titles to Land"—moved in the direction of a very much needed reform, but the law itself is defective in many points, and will be re-enacted at the earliest possible date.

In addition to the foregoing, Her Majesty's Order in Council of 1st May 1890, instituting a Court for Divorce and Matrimonial Causes in St. Helena, was brought into operation by a Proclamation of the 14th of July 1891, and upon the same date, the Rules and Regulations in Divorce and Matrimonial Causes were made.

New Rules of Procedure in the Supreme Court of the Colony were made on the 21st March 1891, vastly simplifying and cheapening legal process.

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Council.

Major A. A. Boggs, of the East Yorkshire Regiment, commanding the troops, was a member of Council until April, when he left the island, and Captain R. C. A. Howe, of the York and Lancaster Regiment, replaced him upon the Council. Mr. Saul Solomon was absent from the island during the greater part of the year.

Civil Establishment.

Mr. G. C. Bruce, the Harbour Master, went on leave on the 18th April, and in August was appointed Harbour Master in St. Lucia. Mr. J. Boyd acted as Harbour Master during the year, but the office is still vacant.

The Reverend F. H. Baker was appointed auditor on the 1st of April *vice* Major H. W. B. Bruno, A.S.C.

The Reverend S. J. Ellis, Chaplain to the Civil Hospital and Gaol, and Inspector of the town schools, resigned his appointments on leaving the island in May. He was immediately succeeded by the Reverend Joseph Young as Inspector of schools, and by the Reverend Edwin Hughes, as Chaplain in December.

One constable resigned during the year.

Pensions.

Two pensioners, Owen Buckely, who retired in 1874, and Miss E. Welch, who retired in 1886, died during the year.

The amount for which the Colony was liable for pensions at the close of the year, was 1,848*l.*, or considerably more than one quarter of our total revenue for the year.

The subsidence in our pension roll entirely fails to maintain a pace proportionate to the shrinkage in the general revenue, and all the sacrifices that have been made in the Civil Establishment have failed to enable us to balance our annual account. To illustrate this most forcibly, I would mention that on account of the various offices which I hold, there was paid to pensioned former holders, of some of them only, the sum of 1,156*l.* a year in 1886, and in 1891, 940*l.*

Population.

A census of the population was taken on the night of the 5th of April, the date adopted almost universally throughout the British Empire.

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The proportion of males to females has been steadily decreasing since 1861, and by this census there were only 84.4 males to every 100 females.

The birth-rate during the year was 28.6, and the death-rate 13.4 per 1,000.

The American vessels engaged in whale fishery in the South Atlantic absorb a somewhat large proportion of our able-bodied men, and, after satisfying their demands, there only remain 377 men between the ages 17 and 40 available for the local militia.

The census disclosed some lamentable over-crowding; 219 families were housed in as many rooms, and of these, two families numbered no less than 13 each; 4 others numbered 10 each; while considerably more than half the population had only two rooms to each family.

The live stock return shows a slight decline during the decade.

As the census of the island has formed the subject of a special report, which I transmitted to your Lordship with my despatch, No. 70, of the 10th December last, it is perhaps not desirable that I should now deal with the subject at greater length.

Education.

The number of scholars on the rolls shows a slight increase as compared with the previous year (819 to 837), and the average attendance was well maintained.

The cause of education sustained a serious loss by the departure of the town inspector, the Reverend S. J. Ellis, who for four years had devoted much of his time and energy to the voluntary labour which he admirably discharged. The Government were so fortunate as to secure as a successor to Mr. Ellis, the Reverend Joseph Young of the Baptist Mission, a very able and zealous worker, who, like his predecessor, gives his services to the Government gratuitously.

The results of the examinations were, on the whole, hardly up to those of the previous year, but in some of the schools many of the senior pupils had gone out into the world, leaving the upper standards in a somewhat skeleton condition.

The percentage of those receiving elementary education is 21.5 of the civil population of the island.

Imports and Exports.

The value of the imports was 27,382*l.*, a decline of 4,576*l.* as compared with 1890. The exports were of the value of 3,126*l.*, including 2,195*l.* in specie. In addition to the imports and

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exports, whale oil and bone to the value of 17,428*l.*, was transhipped by the American fleet in Jamestown Harbour.

It is not a little curious that whaling operations, in these seas, are conducted by vessels flying the American flag only.

It has been alleged that the British Mercantile Marine Acts are too stringent in their requirements to leave any margin of profit to the owner of a whaler, and that this accounts for the British flag not being represented; but, in view of the successful oiling fleets fitted out in Scotland, this can hardly be accepted as a satisfactory explanation.

I am disposed to attribute a great part of the cause of this apparent anomaly to the far simpler and more elastic and enterprising mode of doing business adopted by Americans. An American schooner calls here twice a year, bringing such flour and other stores as the masters of the whalers have indicated they will probably require; and any surplus stores which the schooner may have are readily sold locally.

The whaling fleet meets this schooner here twice a year, and orders from the masters are given verbally to the master of the schooner, whose owners execute all requirements without the intervention of any middle man. The transaction is closed by an order on the owners in America in payment of the stores supplied; no bills of lading, invoices, or other technicalities being required. The schooner also supplies the cash, which she receives here for stores sold, to the whaling fleet in exchange for orders on America.

The remarkable increase in the quantity of sugar manufactured in America which was imported during the year must be specially mentioned as an interesting fact in connection with the recent fiscal alterations of the United States.

Shipping.

463 vessels communicated with the island, of which, 211 called, and 252 were boarded by licensed traders. These figures are 56 above those of the previous year.

The number of vessels which called was exactly the same as in 1890, so that the increase is entirely in the trade with passing ships.

Criminal Statistics.

107 cases were reported to the police, of which 80 resulted in summary conviction. Only two cases of larceny were tried in the Supreme Court, and both resulted in convictions.

The health of the gaol was most satisfactory throughout the year.

Meteorology.

The rainfall for the year was 29½ inches, half an inch below the average; but, although the rainfall was light, the number of

rainy days (231) was unusually large. These statistics refer only to the country, as in Jamestown and the other valleys the rainfall is very small indeed.

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Hospital.

The health of the island was good during the year, and the mortality (13·4 per 1,000) below the average, but the work entailed upon the hospital bears but a slight relation to the island's health, as it is in a great measure due to the needs of the mercantile marine of the world. Sailors of all nationalities, but chiefly British, are sent to our hospital by passing ships. The cases are frequently very bad ones, as a master does not call to land a seaman unless he deems it urgently necessary.

This work of humanity has been discharged by the island for very many years, and is, without doubt, a work of such urgent necessity that nothing should be allowed to interrupt it. The financial depression of the island, however, forces me to invite attention to this, as one of the strongest grounds upon which Imperial financial aid may be hoped for.

Savings Bank.

2,429*l.* was deposited, and 2,913*l.*, including interest, was withdrawn during the year; the total deposits falling from 10,393*l.* to 10,125*l.* The number of investors (112) was the same as the previous year, and the invested capital a trifle less.

The net profit upon the year's transactions, after paying all expenses, was 48*l.*, a very satisfactory amount in view of the very small return consols yield the Government.

As I have stated in previous reports, the savings bank return does not indicate general prosperity, but is due to the deposits of a few well-to-do persons.

Post Office.

The year's revenue was 83*l.* less (870*l.* to 787*l.*), and the expenditure was rather more than that in 1890, as there was, at the close of the year, a debt of 99*l.* due to the Cape Government for the carriage of mails which is not included in the year's accounts.

The maintenance of the 6*d.* rate per half ounce on letters from St. Helena to the United Kingdom and South Africa, and the still higher rates to other parts of the world, such as 1*s.* 2*d.* per half ounce to Mauritius, has been most unpopular, and weighs very heavily upon our poorer inhabitants. To the Cape Government we, at present, pay 1*s.* for each letter of half an ounce or less to Mauritius; but, now that the Cape has joined the Postal Union, it is hoped that more reasonable terms may be obtained.

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St. Helena largely fulfils the functions of an Imperial ocean post office, and receives and forwards at the cost of the Colony a number of unstamped letters from passing ships. These letters are taxed at 1s. per half ounce, that amount being collected on delivery and retained by the Imperial Post Office. This Post Office also, on behalf of the Imperial Government, lands, carts, stores, and re-ships all the outward mails for the Island of Ascension, free of charge; and it is hoped that these services may weigh with the Imperial Post Office in considering our earnest desire to introduce the popular postal rates which have now been extended to all other parts of the Empire.

Conclusion.

The great fall of rocks upon the 17th of April 1890 was commemorated during the year by the unveiling of a large canopied fountain in the centre of the main street in Jamestown. From the subscriptions raised by Mr. Antrobus at the time of the catastrophe, there remained a small surplus after satisfying the more pressing of the claims of the surviving sufferers. This surplus, which was partly composed of donations given for the express purpose of a memorial, would have been wholly inadequate to meet the requirements of the committee, had not the makers of the fountain supplied it at a nominal cost, and the shipping company brought it out free.

The fountain, which was opened on the 12th of September, is a great improvement to the main street of the town.

On the 16th of March, Captain McKechnie, R.N., of H.M.S. "Orontes," took 75 emigrants from the island to the Cape. This kind indulgence, conferred by the Admiralty, was of the greatest advantage to the island, and was thoroughly appreciated by those who were selected from among the many applicants. To Captain McKechnie's great courtesy and consideration, in dealing with the many little points and questions incidental to so novel an undertaking, it is due that no difficulty or friction whatever occurred, either during the embarkation or upon the voyage.

I cannot close my report without referring to some of the experiments conducted during the year by the Reverend J. H. Daine, the Roman Catholic Chaplain. The principal of these were the cultivation of an acre of cotton and the breeding and rearing of silkworms. The cotton has not yet been harvested, but I am not sanguine that a sufficient area of suitable land can be found in St. Helena to develop a paying industry.

It is Mr. Daine's opinion that many of the cottagers could carry on the cultivation of cotton upon land not suitable for other cultivation, and in supplement only of such other work as they may be able to secure from time to time, as at present.

As a very considerable number of islanders only obtain occasional work, his argument may perhaps hold good. It can in

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any case be tried without any loss to the island; and for this and other spirited experiments which Mr. Daine is conducting, he deserves the profound gratitude of the community.

With regard to silk, I am somewhat more hopeful that a profitable industry might be established, if it be entirely supported by the labour of women and children. The results so far obtained have been very encouraging; but, until the many thousand mulberry trees which have been planted reach a leaf yielding age, it will not be possible to determine satisfactorily the result of the venture.

I transmit Mr. Daine's report upon the initial stage of the experiment, which is rapidly expanding. Too much weight may have been given to the fact that under the East India Company sericulture was abortive; but, while on the one hand it is not easy to dissociate the disastrous collapse of that experiment, which was conducted, as was every venture of that powerful company, in a most lavish style, from either grave incapacity or something even worse in the conduct of the managers, yet upon the other hand it is somewhat difficult to explain how it came about that a venture, upon which so much had been expended by the East India Company, should have failed to secure the support of some private individuals, if the concern, which could have been purchased in a going condition for a mere song, contained the germs of probable success.

It is, however, possible that the gigantic retrenchment which followed the transfer of the island to the Crown in 1834, the Imperial grant-in-aid falling from 99,000*l.* in that year to 18,000*l.* in 1837, in which year the sericulture establishment was broken up, and the highly-paid services of the curators were dispensed with, may—when added to the undoubtedly very great and general depression which followed Emancipation (1826) in this Island—have so far demoralized the community and shaken the credit of the island, as to render everyone unwilling even to look at a venture entailing any investment of capital in St. Helena.

It is difficult for us at this far-removed date to grasp, in any adequate measure, the prostration which resulted when the annual public expenditure of 100,000*l.* and upwards, drawn from the East India Company in money or stores, and which alone upheld the community, was withdrawn. This artificial condition had rendered it possible for the public servants to maintain so far a semblance of solvency. Nearly all of them engaged in farming and other private speculative ventures, which in too many instances terminated in serious embarrassments, from which the change rendered them hopeless of extricating themselves, and certainly rendered them incapable of entering upon any fresh undertaking.

The facts which I have here indicated were, without doubt, fairly well known to everyone in England who knew anything of the island, and this may sufficiently account for no serious attempt having apparently been made to carry on the silk establishments when it was abandoned by the Government.

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I could write very much upon the history of sericulture in St. Helena; for, although the accounts of its progress are spread over the unindexed record books of many years, they are, when brought to light, so full of minutiae as to render a full, accurate, and perfect account of the whole matter capable of being drawn from them. I will, however, now content myself by giving a bird's-eye view of the period between January 1827 and December 1834. For although the undertaking was in an embryo state for about a year previous to January 1827 and in an expiring condition for nearly three years after 1834, yet the period I have selected comprises practically the life of the venture in connection with Government.

The total expenditure upon lands was about 10,000*l.* Of this sum, 900*l.* was paid for two properties at the Briars, which were subsequently sold together by Government for 400*l.*, and the remainder was expended upon mulberry land near Longwood. A further sum of not less than 10,000*l.* was expended upon buildings, machinery, and salaries, while the immediate annual saving by the abolition of the establishment was 841*l.*

The entire quantity of silk manufactured was 336 $\frac{3}{4}$ lbs., which sold in England for about 300*l.*

It is recorded that "the worms have always been healthy and thrifty, and the climate is so perfectly congenial to them, that immense numbers may be raised without fear of losing any from disease."

How so lavish an expenditure could have produced so miserable a return I cannot say; but that incompetence and carelessness contributed to it in no small measure, I have no doubt.

The year 1891 has probably been the most gloomy and dispiriting during the century, and its financial and social aspect are alike so very depressing in every way that I hasten to conclude my review of it, while the belief in brighter days in store for the island in 1892 is strong upon me.

I have, &c.

(Signed) W. GREY WILSON.

Rev. J. H. DAINE to the GOVERNOR.

REPORT ON SERICULTURE.

Maldivia, St. Helena,
December 31, 1891.

SIR,

IN August 1891 I received from Bishop Leonard at the Cape my first essay in sericulture.

His Lordship sent me about $\frac{1}{12}$ th of an ounce (value, 1*s.* 6*d.*; costs to St. Helena, 10*s.*) of eggs as an experiment, without reference to distinction of race, there being a few of all kinds of

Bombyx Mori, mulberry *annual silkworms*. These all hatched out in September, made cocoons, without a single death from disease, and had reproduced themselves in eggs by the 1st of November. Weight of green cocoons, 3 lbs. 2 ozs., value 12*s.* 6*d.*, 4*s.* 2*d.* per lb.; as waste cocoons 3*s.* 9*d.*, 1*s.* 3*d.* per lb.

Weight of seed reproduced 5 ounces, commercial value 10*s.* an ounce.

In October of 1891 I received from France 3 ounces of eggs, Adrianople white, a distinct race. These, unfortunately, had no guaranteed freedom from disease; an exceptionally wet season, leaves somewhat heated (fermented) through carriage from distant places, all conduced to disease. Overcrowding, want of space, and scarcity of food developed the hereditary germs of flacherie, for this seed came from a district once decimated in 1841.

The whole of this education was stamped out, frames burnt or disinfected, and the moths not permitted to reproduce.

In December eggs imported from a guaranteed source, hatched again from seed reproduced in the autumn of the same year.

The advance of sericulture since the Honourable East India Company's time and up to the discoveries of M. Pasteur, has greatly changed the system. The simple fact of the passage over the Equator of a parcel of eggs, kept on ice during three weeks' passage to St. Helena, constitutes a sufficient hibernation for the eggs; as far as Australia this must now be known, it really constitutes two crops of annual, one of St. Helena seed in August, a second in *September* or October from eggs imported from Europe, thus giving St. Helena *two* crops where all other seasons and countries, except India, have one crop and one season only.

The breeds of (eggs) silkworms are improved. The yield per ounce of cocoons by judicious breeding has doubled, 90 to 100 lbs. of cocoons being the usual yield per oz. of Swiss and Baghdad rearings; so that I am very much encouraged in my experiment for the year 1892.

I beg, &c.

(Signed) JOHN H. DAINE.

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