

SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

GOVERNMENT RESIDENT'S REPORT ON NORTHERN TERRITORY FOR THE YEAR 1888.

South Australia, Northern Territory: Office of the Government Resident,
Palmerston, January 1st, 1889.

Sir—I have the honor to place before you my report upon the affairs of the Northern Territory for the year 1888.

PASTORAL.

I am glad to state, notwithstanding a very hostile influence, to which I shall refer at length, the figures connected with the pastoral interest, show a very satisfactory result. The area held under lease on December 31st, 1887, was 251,680 square miles. The area declared stocked was 200,864 square miles. The pastoral rents received during 1888 amounted to £26,371. The rents received for 1887 were £16,664. There is only an increase of 47 miles in the area declared stocked over the area of 1887. The difference of rents received, however, amounts to £9,707. This increased rental is due to the fact that a considerable area of land having been held under lease for more than seven years, the annual rent has increased from sixpence to half a crown a square mile.

Gratifying, however, as these figures are, it cannot be said that the year has fulfilled the expectations of pastoral development which were formed at its commencement. This is to be attributed chiefly to the persistent fatal disease, locally called "Red water." During the past few years this disease has attacked over-landing mobs of cattle, and in some cases has swept off a very large number. The effect produced upon the pastoral lessees and stockbreeders is one of alarm, and they will not run the risk of the ruinous loss which may attend the attempt to stock new country until some safer route is found than the one by the Roper, the Elsey, and the King. As this disease, whatever it may be, has assumed such serious proportions as to imperil the continued stocking of country, which so far as I can ascertain is thoroughly good from the herbage, water, and climatic points of view, I am reluctantly compelled to give it the prominence it demands.

I do not profess to bring any skilled knowledge to bear upon the subject. I place before you such explanations and theories as are current among those who, by reason of their deep financial interest in pastoral affairs, may be accepted as bringing an interested intelligence to bear on the subject. To get a fair start it may be well to give the account of *Hæmo-albuminuria* or *muir-ill* (redwater, blackwater), found in "*Diseases of the Ox*," by J. H. Steel, M.R.C.V.S.:—

Causes.—It is very prevalent on certain pastures, and not on others even in the immediate neighborhood. It has been associated with certain special soils, and particularly with movement of stock from land of one kind to another. Overdriving is considered a cause, as also certain special states of the air and great alternations of temperature. Cases have been traced to the drinking of stagnant water, while Harrison attributes its prevalence in some cases to a hot and dry condition of pastures and to excess of drainage. It has been found very prevalent in woody districts. Numerous theories on the nature of this disorder have been advanced:—(1) It has been attributed to the presence of certain ranunculi in pastures, but it arises under circumstances where animals could not obtain such poisons. (2) Youatt considers the acute form is inflammation of the kidneys, and "probably may be traced to the quality of the general produce of the soil rather than to the presence of certain plants of known acrimonious or poisonous properties." The chronic form he attributes to an acrimonious condition of the bile, which is absorbed into the blood and irritates the kidneys. (3) Professor Williams says:—"I am induced to conclude that the disease originates in an impoverished condition of the blood, arising from want of proper food; that the albumen of the blood is thus degraded in quality, and as such is unfit to be appropriated for the nourishment of the tissues, and is consequently excreted by the kidneys and expelled from the body."

In order to ascertain the history of its appearance and development in the Northern Territory, I addressed a letter to Mr. H. W. H. Stevens, who has now had a lengthened experience with stock in the Northern Territory. In that letter I asked him if he could give me information upon the following points:—

- (1) "How many mobs were brought overland without red water shewing itself, and between what dates?"
- (2) "Which was the first mob revealing it? How many in mob? How many deaths?"
- (3) "Where did red water first show itself, in the Northern Territory?"
- (4) "Can you give me any information or opinions as to whether the infection or originating cause is either (a) herbage, (b) water, (c) climate—temperature?"
- (5) "Are there any tolerably uniform appearances on *post mortem* examination?—If so, what organs are affected and how?"

arrived for twenty-one days, owners to have the alternative of sailing without landing passengers. The *Guthrie* and *Changsha* elected to go on, and take their passengers with them. I direct particular attention to the date of the Premier's telegram, February 11th, because it conclusively proves that what may be known in the future as the "Romance of the Ruby Fields, or the proposed invasion of Central Australia by 500 Chinese," had no more to do with the first extension of the period of quarantine in the Northern Territory than Tenterden steeple has to do with the Goodwin Sands. The twenty-one days' quarantine on board the steamers in which passengers arrived was insisted upon in the cases of the *Guthrie* and the *Changsha* before there was any hint of Chinese going to the Ruby fields.

There is widespread error entertained and very inaccurate statements have been made upon this subject; and, as I in particular have been somewhat severely handled for my action, I ask leave here to place the actual facts upon record. Apart, however, from the mere personal aspect of the case, as it marks a new epoch in Australian history in connection with Chinese immigration, it is important that the circumstances should be accurately stated for future reference.

In the early part of February a rumour became current throughout Queensland that there was a probability of 500 Chinese going overland from the Northern Territory to that colony. The Premier wired me stating that Sir S. W. Griffith, K.C.M.G., Premier of Queensland, wished to know whether any information was to be obtained here as to any projected exodus from Port Darwin to cross the border. I replied that there was nothing known here of any such project. On or about February 15th I had an interview with Mr. Henry Roberts, the well-known prospector, Mr. Foelsche being present. Mr. Roberts stated that he had just come down from up country; that there were a large number of Chinese unemployed; that the Chinese storekeepers were anxious about their food supply, and as there were so many confident reports just then about the value of the discoveries of rubies in Central Australia they were intending to see if they could not send a party to Alice Springs.

I attached no particular importance to the rumour, though I communicated it, as a rumour only, to the Government the same day. During the next few days I heard passing reference to the subject, but I took no further action.

On Friday, February 17th, I was informed that, in the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* of the next day, an advertisement would be inserted calling for tenders for guides, &c., to convey 500 Chinese to the ruby fields. Having satisfied myself that the appearance of the advertisement was certain, I sent a "memo." to the Government informing them of the insertion of the advertisement, and giving my opinions on the situation and the then aspects of the Chinese question. I understood, also, the intelligence would be telegraphed to the Adelaide daily papers. The next day the advertisement appeared over the name of "The Port Darwin Mercantile and Agency Company," one of the leading business firms in Palmerston.

My memorandum was handed to the press in South Australia. It was a matter in which I felt it to be my duty to inform the Government, and my opinions were founded on the best information I could obtain.

A rather ignoble fate overtook the only small overlanding party of Chinese of which I heard, who were making for the Macarthur river. On nearing the Roper the blacks, who have a rooted aversion to, and a boundless contempt for, the Chinese, stuck them up, severely speared one, if not more, and turned them back. From which it is very evident if Chinese go overlanding they must have guides and protectors.

The present number of Chinese in the Territory is estimated at 6,750. Several hundreds voluntarily left the railway works to try their luck at alluvial surfacing, but the unprecedented dry season has rendered washing impossible, and many have returned to the railway. The opening out of the several mining properties has provided employment for some hundreds.

As the earthworks will be finished in a few months of course the number employed will be considerably lessened, and I fear the Government will be embarrassed with surplus labor, and, as in former times, may have to start relief works.

As it has now been decided to enforce the working provisions of gold and mineral leases, this will furnish labor for a large number if the lessees work their ground. This will, of course, be in addition to those who will return to alluvial mining.

There are 2,113 acres under gold lease. This, with the two *bonâ fide* miners to every ten acres required by the regulations, gives employment to 422 cooks, teamsters, and others, say, two more makes a total of 844.

There are 18,142 acres under mineral leases; the number of blocks is seventy-six. The regulations require that three men at least shall be employed upon every block in mining for six months in the year. This will give employment to about 300, allowing one extra hand to each block.

I am now in communication with the leading Chinese merchant here as to the probability of their taking up cultivation, rice in particular. On this subject I will communicate when I have ascertained their views.

On the whole subject of the Chinese, I remark:—

1. There are undoubtedly more than enough for the legitimate work available.
2. Three hundred Chinese and 150 Cingalese and Indians have been introduced by Messrs. C. & E. Millar without responsibility as to their return.
3. It is highly expedient that a portion of the large amount deducted from the Chinese and other laborers in the railway should be devoted to provide a destitute and return passage fund. The Chinese merchants inform me that twopence per day per man is deducted; this is £8 6s. 8d. per day for every 1,000. Nearly 3,000 were employed last June, not counting Europeans, from whom the same amount is deducted. Three thousand twopences per day is £25 per day.

The total amount paid to the Government by the contractor's medical officer since the commencement of the contract for hospital accommodation has been only £590. After handsomely remunerating the medical officer there should be sufficient available to relieve the Government of any difficulty in dealing with sick, weak, and destitute Asiatics, and to ship them back to their own country when necessary.

THE ABORIGINES.

There have been no incidents of note in connection with the native tribes in the settled country of which Palmerston is the centre. There have been no serious tribal quarrels, and no attacks upon Europeans. The Larrakeeyahs still hang about the town and, judging from appearances, obtain sufficient food without hunting or toil. Apparently also they are invincible as ever against christianizing influences. On the Daly river the mission is said to present more promising features.

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The condition and claims of the numerous native tribes can scarcely be said to be fairly considered by the vote of £350 per annum, which is all the Parliament allots for them. As pastoral settlement progresses the natives will be pressed away from their favorite haunts. I still think it would be humane to proclaim a reserve in each tribe's country, and to frame an Act which should specially define aboriginal rights and protect the aborigines. Some effort should be made to preserve the black population of Australia. The great difficulty is their antipathy to regular work. They are careless children of the sun and wilds, content with the food for to-day. They have none of the tastes or aptitudes which make a Papuan a villager and a cultivator. Work has never been a recognised institution with them or their "old men" before them.

The report of the Rev. Father McKillop, S.J., on the work of the Jesuit Mission will be found in the Appendix.

THE LIGHTING OF PORT DARWIN.

During the year this subject has received additional attention in consequence of the *Myrmidon* being employed on the north of Australia surveying the Western Australian coast. Captain the Hon. F. P. Vereker took a lively interest in this question, and after obtaining the leave of the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Fairfax, he made a careful examination of Charles Point and the other positions which had been under consideration for some years past. The following is his letter addressed to the Admiral:—

H.M.S. *Myrmidon*, September 2nd, 1888, Port Darwin.

Sir—I have the honor to make the following report in reply to your telegram of July 26th last:—

The sites proposed are Cape Don, Cape Fourcroy, Charles Point, and a leading harbor light on Point Emery.

In addition to locality, the questions of water, and the attitude of the natives, have to be considered.

At Cape Don the proposed site would be healthy, water is easily obtainable, and the natives are not actively hostile, but from its low altitude (only 130 feet) it would be difficult to obtain the range necessary to make it a thoroughly useful coast light.

At Cape Fourcroy, or in any locality on Melville Island, besides the difficulty of obtaining a sure supply of water, the natives are intensely hostile, and a lighthouse staff would be virtually in a constant state of siege. The vicinity has not been sufficiently surveyed to warrant close approach, but it is clear that off-lying dangers extend off the coast, rendering it inadvisable to make the land in that neighborhood from the westward. If a light was to be erected on Cape Fourcroy vessels would, in my opinion, be tempted to an injudicious closing of the land of Melville Island to "make the light," and find themselves very probably in a position of danger, of which the lead would give but little warning.

Charles Point is very low; a few hundred yards to the north-westward of the present beacon is a very suitable place for the light. Water is easily procurable by digging, and the natives are friendly, the lead would give ample warning of the proximity of the land, and safe anchorage could be obtained, if by reason of thick weather it was considered injudicious to continue under weigh.

I would suggest:

1. That a lighthouse about 90ft. high, which would be visible twenty miles, be erected on Cape Don, giving the navigator a guide either through Dundas Strait or along the north shore of Melville Island.

2. That a lighthouse, about 90ft. high, be erected close to the existing beacon near Charles Point. It would be visible eighteen miles and could be seen over the land off Charles Point by a vessel making for Bynoe Harbor.

3. A small light, about 15ft. high, which would be visible eight miles, be erected on Emery Point having either danger rays or obscured sectors over the "middle ground" banks, and the shoal north of West Point.

These three lights would, I consider, meet all the necessities of local navigation for a considerable time to come.

I have, &c.,

FOLEY C. P. VEREKER, Commander.

Rear Admiral Henry Fairfax, C.B., &c., Commander-in-Chief, Sydney.

It is gratifying to know that the necessary amount for at least one lighthouse has been authorised by loan, and that instructions have been given for the preparation of specifications by the Engineer-in-Chief.

PORT DARWIN AS AN IMPERIAL COALING STATION AND ARSENAL, AND FEDERAL QUARANTINE STATION.

The claims of Port Darwin for Imperial recognition have been fairly discussed in some English newspapers. Lord Brassey has more than once referred to the importance to the Imperial Government of having a recognised and safe station on the north coast of Australia, and has strongly stated that Port Darwin has the premier claim, because of its great natural advantages. This is not a question, however, that will be hastily dealt with, and Sir George Tryon, who has pronounced so vehemently in favor of Thursday Island and written so disparagingly of Port Darwin, is now one of the Lords of the Admiralty.

The proclamation of China and nearly all the far east, as subject to quarantine, and the one Chinese only to every 500 tons provision, has, so far as Port Darwin is concerned, stopped Chinese immigration. This has, of course, greatly lessened the risk of smallpox being introduced. There exists still, however, the necessity for having a Federal Quarantine Station for the great lines of communication on the south and north coast of Australia.

Port Darwin will retain its position as the first port of call from the east. The sooner the colonies make provision for dealing with infectious and contagious diseases, the safer will it be for voyagers and for the whole Australian population, to say nothing of the saving of time and money which will be effected.

THE PALMERSTON AND PINE CREEK RAILWAY.

The unusually late and light wet season has enabled the contractors to push ahead with the platelaying as well as with the earthworks. The same causes gave them command of any number of Chinese, as the country has been so dry that alluvial washing has been impossible.

The following notes have been furnished by Mr. J. W. James, C.E., Superintending Engineer, on both the railway and on the survey from Pine creek to the Katherine.

During the year 1888, the railway works of every description have made steady progress.

The permanent way has been laid up to the 127th mile from Palmerston, and sidings laid at all the stations up to and including Burrundie.

The earthworks has been completed up to the 137th mile, with the exception of the Palmerston station, where the ground is now being prepared for the erection of a bonded store.

Concrete work in bridges, culverts, and flood openings is complete to the Lady Alice creek, mile 135, and is in progress up to the 138th mile.

Reservoirs

Minute on Annual Report, Palmerston Gaol.

Palmerston, Northern Territory, January 17th, 1889.

Respectfully forwarded to the Government-Resident.—The present gaol is rather inconveniently situated, being four (4) miles distant from Palmerston. The following recommendations are, therefore, most respectfully made:—

Firstly.—That a new stone gaol should be commenced on site of the old Government garden on park lands near intersection of Daly-street and Greene-terrace, Palmerston.

Secondly.—That the work of quarrying and dressing stone for building the proposed new gaol should be done by prison labor spread over a number of years.

Thirdly.—That the Government Architect, Adelaide, should be instructed to prepare plans for a stone gaol to accommodate say eighty (80) prisoners—plans to provide for infirmary, female cells, solitary imprisonment cells, debtors' cells, kitchen, laundry, bathhouse, and latrines; also office and quarters for gaoler, quarters for guards, stone wall, with iron gates, round gaol.

Fourthly.—That a sum of say two hundred pounds (£200) should be placed on next Northern Territory Estimates for any urgent repairs and additions required at gaoler's and guards' quarters at the existing gaol.

J. A. G. LITTLE, Deputy Sheriff for Northern Territory.

ABORIGINES.

Palmerston, March 8th, 1889.

Sir—I have the honor to send you my annual report on this subject:—

No aboriginal has been tried for his life, but one pleaded guilty to the charge of manslaughter, and was sentenced to ten years.

There have also been rather fewer convictions against aboriginals for minor offences, such as drunkenness and theft, though an aboriginal woman was sent to gaol for a month or two on the former charge.

Owing to railway and steam accommodation large numbers of aboriginals are being brought into communication with the Europeans, and I purpose, with your consent, to be more liberal in the supply of blankets—especially to the natives living on the rivers, as in case of any accident, if they recognise that we are friends, they may be very useful or the reverse. I purpose, with permission of the police, to send the stores to them, so that the aboriginals should especially recognise them as Government friends; and I have every reason to believe that the coasting boats will take parcels for aboriginals free.

Flour, pipes, tobacco, &c., can be obtained here, and I propose (again providing that you do not disagree) to order blankets from the Government contractor here, so that I may be certain of obtaining the requisite number.

Last year several deaths occurred among them, as malarial fever was very severe. There was also a kind of whooping cough on the Daly River, extending as far as Spring Vale station. This has, I am informed, been very fatal amongst them, and very contagious, white children also contracting it. I have not seen a case, so can give no definite information on the subject.

Several of the local aboriginals have gone to Western Australia, either pearl fishing or as station hands, and I hear at times very good reports of their conduct.

Some have also gone to the Coojee Aquarium, Sydney, for six months.

There are two subjects which I should like to draw your attention to—

(1) Cannot the lubras who work in the towns be given some form of gown, simply but strongly made, and if they have been given it, they should not be allowed in the streets unless decently dressed. I would suggest that no lubra gets one unless I know that she is a good worker, and that I obtain that information from her mistress.

I also think that the time has come when the men ought not to be allowed into the town unless decently dressed.

(2) *The Dog Question.*—According to law each adult aboriginal is allowed two dogs, presumably for hunting purposes, but I know of no law that enables any one to destroy their half-starved mangy curs. They are becoming numerous up here, but not in excess of their legal number, and being hungry they are reported to rob hen roosts, &c., so that people lay poison for them, and this is occasionally found by valuable dogs, which causes their owners much annoyance. I would suggest that the police have some local power to destroy all these starving miserable creatures if the owners allow them to come into the town.

The question of aboriginal reserves has been fairly fully reported upon. It is a very important question, but I have not heard that anything has been done in the matter. It ought to be settled as soon as possible.

I also myself think that some small Act should be passed relating to the trial and punishment of aboriginals; our Acts appear to me to be far too cumbrous and extensive, and frequently do not meet the requirements of the case.

I have, &c.,

PERCY MOORE WOOD, Protector of Aborigines, Palmerston.

The Hon. J. Langdon Parsons, Government Resident.

Mission Station, Rapid Creek, near Palmerston, March 9th, 1889.

Sir—I have the honor to submit the following report of the Catholic Mission Stations for the year 1888:—

Rapid Creek.—In August last we made a departure, which now promises more than we dared hope for. We had noticed with others that natives away from their own country are far more tractable than when under the traditional influences of their tribe, and as, for reasons given in last year's report, we had hardly any hopes of doing anything with the blacks of this district, we prevailed upon a small Daly River tribe to send their young men to Rapid Creek. We hope in this way to make this station a training place for the Daly River and other tribes. The young men give every satisfaction. They are happy and contented, and well understand the benefits that would come to the native tribes with civilization and Christianity. I might enlarge upon their cheerful obedience and many good qualities, but there are so very few who would believe me that I must simply say we are more than satisfied with these young men. Their number will be added to by Daly River, &c., men and lubras, who speak the same or a kindred language.

This language is a very perfect one. To take but one of the many peculiarities, which have their origin in a deeper philosophy than is commonly allowed to our so-called niggers, it may be interesting to many to know that these tribes have in their language four genders. They distinguish between animal and vegetable life. Everything which grows is of the fourth gender. Adjectives, when capable of inflexion, must agree with their nouns, and the third person singular of every verb has all the four forms.

Of course we shall not refuse to receive any of the neighboring blacks who may come to us, led by a nobler motive than the love of flour and tobacco; and we have reason to believe that we shall soon have back, if not all, at least most of our baptized children.

Daly River.—The hopes held out in last year's report have not been disappointed. We have near the river a flourishing school, and a small village slowly forming around us. The first Christian marriage will shortly be celebrated. This station last season scored a small success in tobacco-growing. We expect great results in the same line this year. Rice also, hill and swamp, has been put in, the seed imported from China, and by latest accounts it was doing well. Also a small (for want of seed) quantity of African corn. Maize we have not tried this season. Tobacco, rice, and African corn can certainly be grown with profit.

To the increase of our members of one priest and four lay brothers, all tradesmen who came with me from Europe, three others will shortly be added from the south—two priests and one lay brother. As soon as possible after their arrival the Serpentine Station will be started. For this station a first instalment of twenty young cows and a bull is to be delivered at the Schackle in April or May. Our goats are beginning to supply meat as well as milk. With those on the Daly we have at present over two hundred.

All things considered the Daly River promises well. The land, our share of it at least, is very poor, but game abounds. The uninviting character of the soil may prevent the only thing we fear—the occupation of the country by our white brethren. However loyal to what is held to be the good of Australia, in the interest of the natives whom Australia dispossesses, and to whom out of her abundance she cannot afford even one small native territory, we do fear this.

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Of course there are miles of excellent land, but with the exception of small patches of river bank they are useless for agriculture. During the wet season they lie often 16ft. under water. They cannot be drained, and as for irrigation in the dry season, their gaping fissures would drink up thousands of pounds.

May I ask again, sir, that in justice to the many men who so freely give their lives to the hard work before them, a document be given us naming the boundaries, as kindly changed by you the year before last, of the Daly River grant to the natives under our care.

The missionaries again comply with the pleasant duty to gratefully acknowledge the assistance they received from the Government in the course of this year. We received, out of the £500 voted by the South Australian Parliament for the aborigines of Northern Territory, £50 and twenty blankets.

I have, &c.,

ANTHONY STRELE, S.J., Superior of the Mission.

The Hon. J. C. F. Johnson, Minister of Education, Adelaide.

METEOROLOGICAL.

Meteorological Observations recorded at Telegraph Station at Port Darwin, Northern Territory, for the year ended December 31st, 1888.

Month.	Mean Maximum Temperature in Shade.	Mean Minimum Temperature in Shade.	Mean Maximum Temperature in Sun.	Rain During Month.
1888.				
January	89·0	76·5	116·4	Inches. 18·555
February	90·7	76·0	120·0	22·650
March	94·7	75·9	124·0	4·160
April	94·9	75·9	125·4	0·680
May	93·4	73·5	121·9	0·050
June	90·2	70·7	120·2	0·350
July	89·6	66·7	116·2	nil
August	90·6	70·1	118·1	0·080
September	93·1	73·0	121·0	0·100
October	95·6	75·5	124·0	0·660
November	95·5	78·2	123·3	4·510
December	93·0	78·0	122·9	9·380
Total	1110·3	890·0	1453·4	61·175
Mean for one year	92·5	74·2	121·1	—

J. A. G. LITTLE, Senior and Inspecting Officer.

Post and Telegraph Department, Port Darwin, February 18th, 1889.