

SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

 QUARTERLY REPORT ON NORTHERN TERRITORY,
 MARCH 31st, 1885.

[Estimated cost of printing (870), £18 19s. 0d.]

Government Resident's Office, Palmerston, April 1st, 1885.

Sir—I have the honor to lay before you my report on the affairs of the Northern Territory for the quarter ending March 31st, 1885.

PASTORAL OCCUPATION.

The past three months of the wet season have brought with them more than the average of rainfall, and there have been periods of exceptionally heavy downpours. The creeks have been running "bankers," and the rivers have spread themselves out over the level plains into vast sheets of water. Mails have been frequently delayed, and two or three painful cases of drowning, caused by attempts to cross the torrent streams, have occurred. The severity and trying effect of excessive rainfall is chiefly felt in the Delta, with the Katherine at the apex, and extending to the Mary to the eastward and to the Daly to the westward. With an average of nearly five inches of rain per week for nine successive weeks, there are elements of risk which are likely to occasion some degree of concern to those who have been accustomed to connect successful stockbreeding with the dry uplands and downs of Queensland or the savannahs of Riverina.

It is gratifying, therefore, to learn that the reports from Messrs. Fisher & Lyons's stations, which cover a large portion of this *Mesopotamia*, continue to be satisfactory. The condition of the cattle has kept up well, which clearly indicates that the stock have become adapted to the vegetation and the climate, and that the rises and ridges grow a sufficient quantity of herbage when the plains are wet. I have now had an opportunity of conversing and comparing notes with all the managers of these stations—all of them men of experience—and they assure me the cattle are doing better season by season; and that, when the naturally somewhat rank grasses are thoroughly fed down, the carrying capacity of this section of country will be immensely increased.

A good deal is often heard from pastoralists, whose operations have been carried on in the eastern colonies, about the north *coast country* of Australia, and opinions are freely expressed that with such indigent rank vegetation cattle cannot thrive. But theories must give place to the results of experience. The Glencoe, Marrakai, and Daly River runs are at present able to supply marketable beasts to the butchers in excess of the local demand. It is out of this excess of supply the necessity has arisen to seek for new markets.

It will be encouraging to all who are interested in, and all who wish well to, the Northern Territory to learn that I am informed by Mr. Stevens, Messrs. Fisher & Lyons's general manager, that the shipments made to Batavia, Singapore, and Hongkong have been fairly successful in themselves, although only made on trial and without the expectation that the ventures would pay their expenses. Everyone who knows what the Chinese "squeezed" means, and who understands that these cattle had to be forced into the market to the disturbance of existing arrangements, which mean liberal "squeeze" to the Chinese butchers, who have the meat supply in their hands in each of the three places, will understand to some extent what difficulties had to be overcome to sell at all. But not only were the cattle sold, but the prospects are so good that Mr. Stevens proposes proceeding to Java and the East to arrange for regular shipments. The cattle sent to Batavia and Singapore, I am informed by Mr. Sachse, who took charge of them, arrived in fine order. In fact the one objection made by the butchers was that they "too fat." The butchers told him that the Dutch had been so long accustomed to the leathery meat bred on the neighboring island of Madura that it would take time to get over their somewhat absurd prejudice against the meat being "too fat" which came from Australia. Probably if we had not by the unalterable laws of our latitudes an annual rainfall, and instead had withering droughts, the existing national taste could be supplied. The prospects at Singapore are equally good, and without the drawback of present complaint of a superabundance of fat.

It gives me pleasure also to report that, encouraged by the success of their cattle enterprises, Messrs. Fisher & Lyons have determined to place sheep on their Victoria River country. They have ordered a launch to be built in Hongkong for the use of their stations on this river. Mr. Stevens intends to test the accuracy of the reports about the rival claims of the Victoria River and Cambridge Gulf, so as to be certain that the most suitable landing-place is fixed upon from the outset. He has little doubt that the Victoria is the true inlet and outlet to the magnificent area of country lying to the southward of both; but he looks upon the matter from a purely commercial point of view, and intends to satisfy himself. The first trial of sheep on the north coast of the Northern Territory will, of course, be watched with much interest by pastoralists. But after the reports of such skilled experts as Messrs. Buchanan, O'Donnell, Stockdale, and others, confirming the historic testimony of A. C. and F. T. Gregory, there appears to be little doubt that the country as they do, the historic testimony of A. C. and F. T. Gregory, there appears to be little doubt that the country is admirably suited for successful sheep-farming. At the same time the pluck and enterprise, with the concomitant risks, are deserving of appreciative mention and of good wishes for financial success.

Rainfall at Port Darwin for Wet Season 1884-5, up to March 31st, 1885.

| Month. | Inches. |
|---|---------|
| 1884. | |
| September | 0·160 |
| October | 1·840 |
| November | 4·050 |
| December | 6·700 |
| 1885. | |
| January | 19·705 |
| February | 15·090 |
| March | 18·865 |
| Total for wet season up to March 31st, 1885 | 66·410 |

Meteorological Observations recorded at Telegraph Station, Port Darwin, Northern Territory, for Quarter ended March 31st, 1885.

| Month. | Mean Maximum Temperature in Shade. | Mean Minimum Temperature in Shade. | Mean Maximum Temperature in Sun. | Rain during Month. |
|----------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1885. | | | | |
| January | 91 | 77·5 | 120·9 | Inches. 19·705 |
| February | 90 | 75·9 | 120·8 | 15·090 |
| March | 90·6 | 76·4 | 120·9 | 18·865 |

Return of Rainfall in Northern Territory for Quarter ending March 31st, 1885.

| Name of Place. | Rainfall for January. | Rainfall for February. | Rainfall for March. | Remarks. |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | Inches. | Inches. | Inches. | |
| Port Darwin | 19·705 | 15·090 | 18·865 | — |
| Fannie Bay | 16·590 | 18·650 | 17·050 | — |
| DeLissaville | 20·330 | 16·800 | — | — |
| Southport | 24·115 | 14·425 | 10·675 | — |
| Poett's Plantation | 18·080 | 9·840 | — | — |
| Beatrice Hills, River Adelaide | 10·530 | 13·430 | — | — |
| Yam Creek | 12·660 | 17·500 | 9·200 | — |
| Pine Creek | 10·635 | 19·105 | — | — |
| River Katherine | 9·240 | 10·600 | 5·810 | — |
| Spring Vale Cattle Station | 8·700 | 8·616 | — | — |
| Delamere Downs Station | — | — | — | No returns to hand. |
| Elsey Creek | 15·080 | 10·790 | 13·260 | — |
| Daly Waters | 2·970 | 8·150 | 4·730 | — |
| Powell's Creek | 2·810 | 4·560 | 4·610 | — |
| Tennant's Creek | 6·100 | 4·710 | — | — |
| Barrow's Creek | 7·795 | 1·750 | 2·350 | — |
| Alice Springs | 4·785 | 5·350 | 1·380 | — |
| Charlotte Waters | 0·645 | 1·185 | 4·910 | — |

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

Post Office and Telegraph Department, Port Darwin, Northern Territory, April 2nd, 1885.

In that part of Palmerston which is occupied by the Europeans, the dwellings are so far apart that at present the sanitary conditions are satisfactory. But when the Chinese quarter is taken into consideration, there is room for grave apprehension. The very high value placed upon town allotments, and the consequent high rent, causes much overcrowding. The Chinese are never a cleanly race under the most favorable surroundings. They also delight in pigs and poultry. The result is, so far as Palmerston is concerned, that the Chinese quarter is very dirty. Shortly, when the jetty and railway works are in full swing, we may expect a large increase in the population, and I think then it will be prudent to bring Palmerston under the Public Health Act. The police, except when informations are laid, have very slight powers, and are liable to litigation by interfering; and if such towns as Gawler, Kapunda, and Mount Gambier require the provisions of the Health Act for public safety, much more does Palmerston require it, with its mixed, alien, and dirty races.

THE ABORIGINES.

In the instructions issued by the Hon. W. Everard, then Commissioner of Crown Lands, to Mr. G. B. Scott, Government Resident, in 1873, it was, among other things, provided that the Protector of Aborigines should carry out duties which are defined in clause 11:—

“ You will, of course, lose no time in endeavoring to make yourself acquainted, as far as possible, with the general condition and the manners and customs of the various tribes; and you will report quarterly, through the Government Resident, to this office, in order that the Government may be in a position to consider your suggestions, and send you more detailed instructions for the future.”

I am unable to ascertain whether the late Dr. Milner carried out the instructions of the Commissioner or not, but I am certain the late Protector of Aborigines, Dr. Morice, during the three years I was in office, did not cause to be forwarded to me any report on the important subject of the aboriginal inhabitants of the Northern Territory.

I venture respectfully to suggest that the entire series of instructions to the Government Resident and other officers, contained in the Parliamentary Paper dated October 6th, 1873, should be revised and re-issued. It will then probably be considered that an annual report from the Protector of Aborigines will be sufficient, but some report ought certainly to be placed before the Government and the Parliament.

I

I have, therefore, obtained from the present occupant of the office, Dr. Wood, a report on the present condition of the native tribes. In the immediate neighborhood of the settled districts there have been no disturbances and no menaces reported. In the outlying regions, however, where stocking and settlement are being carried on with necessarily few station hands, the attitude of the blacks is decidedly and almost universally hostile, treacherous, and dangerous. Mr. O'Donnell refers in his report to his being compelled to use firearms, and the most prudent and considerate managers of pastoral properties advise me that they require to be wary always, and under certain circumstances must make the blacks feel that the white man's property and life will be protected.

It is very easy for newspaper correspondents to propound theories, to scatter cruel accusations against honorable men—who are the pioneers of settlement—and to blame the administration of public affairs; but the antagonism between the races is so deep seated, and the causes of quarrel are so numerous and imminent, that conflict and outrage may be periodically expected. I do not believe that every white man is a lustful, brutal oppressor of the black men and women, though there are no doubt some who are ready to outrage all decency and humanity; nor do I look upon either the male or female aborigines as models of virtue and honesty. In fact Dr. Wood's report is rather a sad commentary upon native habits and manners. Virtue I fear is a fiction, and honesty only considered proper when the certainty of punishment of theft is sure and swift.

I hope the best from the efforts which are being made by the Rapid Creek Mission, but I fear little can be considered as actually achieved.

THE PALMERSTON.

The *Palmerston* has been occupied in conveying the survey party and the Customs officer, and Messrs. Hay & Armstrong's stores, to the Roper and the McArthur rivers. The value of the work done has been great. The settlers on the Roper have the chance of replenishing their stores; the two townships on the Roper can now be offered; the new township on the McArthur can also be placed in the market; and the illicit trade, which was beginning to assume formidable proportions, has been effectually stopped. After the experience of Mr. J. W. Reid, smuggling will not be regarded as a promising venture in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

As the *Palmerston* has been knocking about for more than a year, it has been found necessary to send her south to be docked and to have her engines overhauled. As the Marine Board Act requires that all passenger steamers shall be inspected every six months, it is not well, probably, to allow a Government steamer, which is thereby exempt from the provisions of the Act, to run for more than a year without being examined and overhauled.

The trip, however, will really be a remunerative one. At the present time we have to pay £2 10s. per ton for coals at the hulk's side. The *Palmerston* will be able to bring up 450 tons, which can be purchased alongside the wharf at Newcastle at about 10s. per ton. She will also, I hope, bring up, and land alongside the plantation, Mr. Brandt's sugar mill, which will be a good earning for the steamer and a great convenience to Mr Brandt.

THE COLONIAL AND INDIAN EXHIBITION IN 1886.

In accordance with instructions received, I have forwarded to Adelaide about twenty tons of native woods for the manufacture of furniture for the Northern Territory part of the South Australian court. The varieties sent have a fine grain, take a handsome polish, and will make up most effectively. In addition, I have given orders that specimen logs of timber polished shall be prepared, and have already a number ready for shipment in my office. I have also prepared a circular, which I propose sending to all the known people in the Northern Territory, asking them to procure and forward for exhibition any mineral specimens they are willing to lend; also natural curiosities, rare aboriginal weapons and articles of attire, specimen sheaves of native grasses, fodder plants and bushes of a nutritious character, and wool from the inland table country.

Mr. Holtze is busily engaged in preparing arrowroot, ground nut oil, Chinese grass cloth fibre, indigo, and a great variety of other products, so that I hope we shall be able to make a good show of tropical agriculture, minerals, wool, woods, and curios.

THE JETTY AND RAILWAY.

Mr. Wishart and the first contingent of his workmen arrived by the *Airlie*, and they are now awaiting the arrival of the vessel from Western Australia with the timber for the jetty. In the meantime they are erecting their houses on the reserve recently occupied by the Chinese. It is expected that the driving of the first pile will be made an occasion for some ceremony, as it will really be the beginning of the great trans-continental railway. It is also believed that the tenders for the railway will be called for early in the present month, and though some months will probably elapse before a tender is definitely accepted, yet the fact of the work being advertised will be a strength to public confidence. For the mineral development of the country, and also for the pastoral settlement of the interior, the railway is the one thing really required. It is hoped here that the period for completing the work to Pine Creek will not be much beyond two years, and that before this place is reached another section will be surveyed and let for construction.

REVENUE, &c.

I have had returns prepared so as to give the fullest information as to trade, revenue, immigration, and emigration. As I pointed out in my last report, so I feel it my duty now, to call attention to the growing direct trade with South Australia. At the same time, I must repeat how important it is that the Northern Territory should be credited with the duties paid in South Australia. I may mention that the shipment of goods brought by Mr. Wishart for the supply of his men, all being duty paid in South Australia, were of a dutiable value of over £90, without reckoning the duty on articles being the manufactured produce of South Australia.