

SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

GOVERNMENT RESIDENT'S REPORT ON THE NORTHERN
TERRITORY, 1909.

[Estimated cost of printing (), £ s. d.]

GOVERNMENT RESIDENT'S REPORT on the NORTHERN TERRITORY for the
YEAR 1909.Northern Territory of South Australia : Office of the Government Resident,
Palmerston, January 17th, 1910.

Sir—I have the honor to furnish you herewith with my report upon the affairs of the Northern Territory for the year 1909.

POPULATION.

From figures courteously supplied by the Sub-collector of Customs it will be seen that the population, given last year at 2,963, has been increased by 41 during the year, making a total of 3,004. There has been a decrease of 152 in Asiatics, but a welcome increase of 193 Europeans.

It is, perhaps, not surprising that this country should have made no advance in population during the past few years in the face of the uncertainty, not only in land tenures, but of the ultimate destiny of the Territory under the transfer proposals. I know of no other part of Australia where granting of tenures authorised by the land laws of the country have been almost absolutely and entirely suspended, as has been the case of late years in this Territory; and, though for that suspension some justification may be advanced, it has nevertheless engendered feelings of impatience and irritation in some minds, and of doubt and uncertainty in others. Instead of the land laws generally being an attraction for population, their suspension has been a factor in the other direction.

In the transition days of the first territory of the Commonwealth, before British New Guinea became the territory of Papua, the suspension of portion of the land laws was blamed (and in part rightly so) for blocking developments; but at least there was never a time when leases could not be obtained.

When this difficulty has been removed and classification of country commenced, there should be no obstacle in presenting sufficient inducement to obtain settlers and (notwithstanding opinions to the contrary which I have read) retain them in the country. To do so tenures of such a large area and at rentals so low should be offered as will be impossible to obtain in, and therefore successfully vie with, other parts of Australia less, shall I say, blessed with empty lands. If, as I think, in closer pastoral settlement, combined with and reinforced by agriculture, lies the future successful permanent settlement of this country, such larger areas will be necessary. The land is here, and available at rentals which can be fixed so low as not to press unduly on the tenant, and yet so high as to yield a considerably greater revenue than similar country to-day commands. With such holdings, with the benefit of assistance under the Advances to Settlers Act (which I note with pleasure has been extended in the direction I recommended in the last annual report), and with the provision of means of outlets for produce, which are hereafter referred to, I have little doubt that the Territory will both attract and hold sufficient settlers to form a strong nucleus to a permanent and successful population.

The steady decrease in the population for the past three quinquennial periods is shown in the following table. It is, however, with considerable gratification that one is enabled, in spite of this decrease, to point to considerable increases in the various items of production in the principal industries of the country, which the table clearly shows.

The

but a provision made for nearly double their quantity. Although the manager failed to secure continued supplies in September, tentative satisfactory arrangements were made immediately by this office to that end; but notwithstanding this fact, having in view the unsatisfactory progress made in smelting, there was no alternative but to advise the Minister to approve of shutting down the smelter and shipping all products, ore, and material, to this port for realisation.

It is only right to the manager to state that he explains the difference between the estimated and actual consumption of firewood as due to the continued closing down of the smelter, causing a waste of wood in reheating the furnace when resuming smelting operations, and to the refractory nature of the ore treated.

PEARLSHELL AND TREPANG.

The licensed pearling fleet consisted of 39 luggers, one steamer, and six canoes. Of these boats only 26 were actually engaged. The area worked over was old ground, and the necessity for prospecting for new beds, referred to by the harbormaster, is apparent.

The results for the year were 58.5 tons of pearlshell, valued at £10,085, as against 58.35 tons, valued at £7,558, for 1908. The take was therefore practically the same, but the price realised was about 25 per cent. better for the year under review. No pearls were reported.

There was a small increase in the export of trepang—an industry now entirely in the hands of the local Europeans.

The value of export was £1,906 for 38 tons, as compared with £1,272 for 23.60 tons in 1908.

The trepang industry, though yet small, has been slowly and steadily increasing since 1905, when the coast was closed to the Macassar fishermen.

CUSTOMS RETURNS.

I am obliged to the Sub-collector of Customs for a copy of the Customs returns for the year, which are included in appendices (pages 33 to 39), and disclose that the gross value of imports was £57,994, or a decrease of £10,911, and the gross value of exports £225,781, or a decrease of £20,686. To these exports, however, must be added the exports ascertained since the compilation of these returns, and particularly referred to by the Sub-collector in his advice to me of the 20th instant. These further exports include 9,509 cattle at £42,289, and 610 horses valued at £10,200; making the total known exports for the year £278,270. This total is, next to the year 1907, the largest on record.

There has been a further fall in Customs revenue, amounting to £1,917 15s. 7d., the total net revenue for 1909 being £18,552 5s. 7d. This decrease is consistent with the decrease in the value of imports.

The obvious and only comment to be made upon this matter is that the revenue will continue to fall while population continues to decrease.

ABORIGINES.

There is nothing that is new to say regarding the condition of the aborigines. In October last a Bill to make provision for better protection and control of the aboriginal inhabitants of the State was laid before Parliament, but I cannot find that it was further proceeded with.

I earnestly advocate the inclusion in the Bill of provisions for control over the engagement and employment of aborigines, and for checking cohabitation with female aboriginals by men of other races. The absence of these provisions is a serious omission from the Bill as now framed, and their necessity has been dwelt on in despatches. A direct prohibition of cohabitation would perhaps prove unworkable as a check upon immorality, but a provision regulating employment of the nature previously recommended by me, together with a provision against harboring aborigines contrary to the Act and regulations would, I think, be effective.

There is matter for serious reflection in the statement which I now make, on the authority of the Government Medical Officer, that in his first year of office, of over 100 female aboriginals around settled districts examined by him, only one was found to be free from traces of venereal trouble. The application of this fact to existing conditions is the more significant when it is remembered that in this community the European male adult population exceeds the female by four to one.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

The annual report of the Government Medical Officer is given in appendices (page 46).

Dr. Strangman was absent in England from March 15th to December 7th, undergoing a course of post-graduate study at the London Tropical School of Medicine, his duties being carried out in the meantime by Dr. Innes-Stephen.

Immediately

I consider the success of this experiment to be most important for the Northern Territory, owing to the fact that in the wet season there is a tremendous growth of the native grass, but hay cannot be made of it owing to the wet weather. After the rains are finished the grass is too coarse for making into hay. By making ensilage an inexpensive standby is secured for the dry season. On the coast country the native grasses during that period are quite dried up and uneatable, or have been burnt off. In the latter case new growth takes place near the edges of water, or on the low-lying portions, but these are of small extent as compared with the rest of the country, and therefore a reserve of food becomes necessary if stock are to remain in condition and prosper.

I have, &c.,

NICHOLAS HOTLZE, Curator.

His Honor Mr. Justice Herbert, Government Resident, Palmerston.

CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS.

Port Darwin, January 10th, 1910.

Sir—I have the honor to submit to you the annual report for 1909 on the departments under my charge.

HOSPITAL.

Number of patients in hospital January, 1909, 29. Admitted for year ending December 31st, 1909, 176: Europeans, 119; Chinese, 26; Aborigines, 17; Malays, 11; Japanese, 2; Kanaka, 1. Average number in hospital, 23; greatest number in hospital, 29; least number in hospital, 15.

Diseases Treated.—Acute synovitis, periostitis, asthma, iritis, amblyopia, alcoholism, ascites, beri beri, chorea, conjunctivitis, chronic cystitis, malignant tumors, benign tumors, dysentery, inguinal adenitis, fistula ani, fractures of clavicle, humerus, ribs, cranium, and tibia, ulcerating granuloma, hæmorrhoids, endometritis, hernias, lumbar abscess, malaria, morphinism, laryngeal phthisis, necrosis, neuritis, rheumatism, heart disease, corneal ulcers, spear wounds, sciatica, tubercular adenitis, varicose veins.

Operations Performed.—Major, 21; minor, 23.

Results.—Discharged cured, 91; improved, 32; relieved, 3; *in statu quo*, 2; died, 17; remaining in hospital December 31st, 1909, 26.

GAOL.

Twenty-one cases of illness occurred during the year, particulars of which are given in the keeper's report.

There were two deaths. A Malay prisoner was committed to gaol suffering from acute pleurisy, and died of the disease; and a consumptive Chinaman died suddenly from lung hæmorrhage whilst at work.

GENERAL.

Through the courtesy of the Hon. the Minister Controlling the Territory, nine months leave of absence for post graduate study was granted to me. During this time I had not only the opportunity of getting advanced professional instruction, but of attending the full courses and passing the examination of the London School of Tropical Medicine.

I have, &c.,

CECIL L. STRANGMAN, Government Medical Officer.

Mr. Justice Herbert, Government Resident.

ABORIGINES.

Office of the Protector of Aborigines, Port Darwin, January 21st, 1910.

Sir—I have the honor to forward my report on the Aborigines of the Northern Territory for the year 1909.

A great improvement with regard to the sanitary condition of the native camps has been made during the year. I have frequently visited the camps and made it quite clear to the natives that cleanliness must be strictly observed. A lot more can be done in this respect, but so far the improvement is very noticeable.

A most disgusting source of evil exists in the number of illfed mangy dogs in each native camp. I do not consider it judicious to make enemies of the natives by indiscriminate destruction of their dogs, but I do think the loathsome, illfed brutes one finds yelping in the camps should be put out of their misery and a better chance given to the few good animals remaining to keep in better condition.

I have seen several newspaper accounts relative to the criminal intercourse with young native girls. That there are cases of this kind the police records will show; but to say that such cases are common or numerous is untrue.

That men of all nationalities have free use of native women of maturity is undeniable. That men of all nationalities lure these women from legitimate employment is true, and must continue unless some provision is made to protect the person employing the native. It is only too true that the native women, who are so much better treated by the white or colored man, makes no difficulty in leaving either her husband or employer.

I have received a great many complaints from young native men respecting their women going away with white and colored men, and on investigation found that the women have done so willingly, and in some instances with the consent, for the time being, of their husbands.

We

We are now face to face with a grave responsibility, that is the ever-increasing number of half-castes, which I have shown in the following comparative statement :—

Extraction.	1908.		1909.		Increase.	Decrease.
	M.	F.	M.	F.		
Europeans	36	40	40	44	8	—
Chinese	5	7	7	8	3	—
Malays	2	2	2	3	1	—
Cingalese	2	1	2	1	—	—
Philippinos.....	2	1	2	2	1	—
French Creole	1	—	1	—	—	—
	48	51	54	58	13	—

This increase of 13 only represents about two-thirds of the number born in the Northern Territory during the year ; then, of course, there are the deaths, which are few in comparison with the births. They are a hardy race.

The total number of half-castes now in the Northern Territory I estimate at close on to 200. About 33 per cent. of the females are of child-bearing age. A few have married colored men, to whom some few children have been born.

These unfortunate girls, too good for the full-blooded native and not good enough for the white man, are driven to seek shelter and food in the blacks' camps, are only too willing to live with white or colored men, and submit to any degradation to attain that end.

It is for these I would again appeal for protection and a home, such as I have suggested in a previous letter on the subject.

I have no reason to alter my estimate of the native population of the Northern Territory as shown in my report of 1908, which is as follows:—

Coast tribes	5,600
Upper river tribes	4,600
Inland tribes	3,000
Melville Island tribes.....	400
	<u>13,600</u>

The natives are fairly numerous on the Rivers Victoria, Fitzmaurice, Daly, Adelaide, Alligator, Goyder, Roper, Limmen, McArthur, and Robinson. I think we may fairly say that there are few natives now who have not come in contact with white people.

The natives whose long intercourse with the Malay trepang fishers from Macassar rendered them extremely hostile, still remain treacherous ; but this in the course of time will wear off, particularly now the Malays have been warned off our northern seaboard.

The extinction of the rapidly decreasing aboriginal is perhaps not yet within measurable distance ; but in my opinion civilisation will ultimately draw it to a close. In the meantime a race more difficult to manage will have sprung up, and every endeavor should be made to ameliorate the condition of this coming race.

I have, &c.,

W. G. STRETTON, Protector of Aborigines for the Northern Territory.

His Honor Mr. Justice Herbert, Government Resident, &c., Port Darwin.

GAOL AND LABOR PRISON.

Palmerston Gaol and Labor Prison, Fannie Bay, January 10th, 1910.

Sir—I have the honor to submit my report for the year ended December 31st, 1909.

Returns showing the number of prisoners brought to prison and discharged, the amount of prisoners' earnings, and the different diseases prisoners were suffering from while in prison, also the number in each case treated by the Medical Officer (attached herewith).

Sixty prisoners were brought to prison, and 62 were discharged, the average number per day being 31.9 ; 40 was the maximum and 26 the minimum imprisoned at one time during the year.

The health of the prisoners has been good. Two deaths occurred during the year—one died from pleurisy, and the other died from hæmorrhage of the lungs ; both prisoners were suffering with those diseases when brought to prison. One prisoner while undergoing sentence became insane, and was removed to Parkside Lunatic Asylum.

The conduct of the prisoners has not been satisfactory during the year ; 10 offences were committed ; one offence rather serious (attempt to abscond), which was dealt with by two Justices, under clause 36 of the Prison Act, the prisoner being sentenced to six months hard labor. The other cases were dealt with by the Deputy Sheriff and visiting Justices, and sentences were passed on each prisoner as provided by the clause of the Prison Act.