

SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

GOVERNMENT RESIDENT'S REPORT ON THE NORTHERN TERRITORY, 1905.

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GOVERNMENT RESIDENT'S REPORT on the NORTHERN TERRITORY for the
YEAR 1905.

Northern Territory of South Australia : Office of the Government Resident,
Palmerston, March 8th, 1906.

Sir—I have the honor to place before you my report on the Northern Territory and its affairs for the year ending December 31st, 1905.

GOVERNMENT RESIDENT.

Having been appointed to the position of Government Resident, I arrived at Port Darwin on April 2nd, 1905. On the following day my commission as Government Resident was read at the Courthouse. On the same occasion I was the gratified recipient of an address of welcome from the chairman and members of the District Council of Palmerston, on behalf of that body particularly, and the inhabitants of the Northern Territory generally ; and of a similar address from the Chinese residents of this Territory. I commenced the duties of my office on the same day.

VISIT OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR.

For the second time in the history of the settlement we have had the honor and pleasure of a visit from a Governor of South Australia. His Excellency Sir George Le Hunte arrived here on May 4th, 1905, accompanied by the Hon. Victor Nelson Hood. A complete account of His Excellency's movements and experiences has already been the subject of His Excellency's report to the Government. To this I feel that I can usefully add nothing. I desire, however, to be permitted, through you, to assure His Excellency that the happy recollections he retains of his visit, and referred to in the report, are shared by the whole community who, for a time, had the honor of acting as his hosts.

POPULATION.

No apology is needed for placing this subject in the forefront of my report, and dealing with it at some length, for it will be conceded that what the Northern Territory has lacked in the past, and lacks in even greater degree to-day, is population.

In addition to that fact, it is necessary when reading official reports upon this territory, and when considering its industries, its products, its revenue, its past history, and its great possibilities, to bear in mind the very limited number and the mixed nationalities of the people who have brought about the results commented upon, in order that those results may be appreciated and a proper sense of proportion brought to bear upon the consideration of the means by which those results have been attained. If those results are considered in connection with the necessary limitations of the small and mixed population which has produced them, then some reasonable estimate may be framed of the country's possibilities when blessed with a population more in accord with its deserts.

The population for the past 25 years is given in the table contained in Appendix I. Except for the years in which a census was taken the figures are estimated and approximate only, but are obtained from the most authentic source, having been courteously supplied by Mr. Stretton, the Sub-Collector of Customs at Port Darwin, at my request. It will be seen, by reference to Appendix I., that for the past 24 years the total population has only been once (in 1884) below that of last year.

The European adult male population has been about stationary for the past 14 years : the European adult female population, however, is showing a steady increase in number. This latter fact is, to my mind, a cheering sign—small though the increase may be—inasmuch as it points to more settled and permanent population, as opposed to a floating one. A like matter for congratulation—and for the same reason—is the comparatively great increase in the number of European children among the population during the last five years as compared with any former year.

During

The occurrence is a sad and sharp object lesson to Europeans and others to be always on their guard in dealing with strange natives. The first account received concerning the massacre contained a statement that two of the men engaged on the Government diamond drill at Port Keats were also victims. This statement happily proved to be incorrect. Full accounts of the occurrence, so far as known, have been published.

During the last 25 years the northern coast natives have not earned a good reputation. Within that period they have, as a result of ten separate attacks made by them, been responsible for the murder of no less than 30 men, and have made four murderous attacks unaccompanied by actual loss of life.

During the last four years, viz., since January, 1902, no less than 16 men have been murdered on the north coast by natives in four attacks. Four murderous attacks without loss of life have been made in the same period. Setting aside the case of the murder of the late Mr. Bradshaw and his companions, the murders of the remaining 12 men (comprised in three separate sets of murders) have remained unavenged. In one case no attempt worthy the name, and in the other two cases no attempt at all, has been made to bring the offenders to justice. This is by no means owing to any fault in the past local administration nor of the police. It is also fair to say that there was in one case at least a doubt whether the murderers could be identified; but whether the men can be identified or not, I think it wise that police should, without any delay, be dispatched to the scene of any murder, accompanied by the best means for identification of the offenders. The natives would soon learn to understand the reason for these visits, which would be of beneficial effect, even though no arrest followed. There should be prompt action taken immediately after these occurrences. As it is the natives see they can murder with impunity, especially as no notice, apparent to them, is taken. This is not as it should be, and not only encourages the natives in evil-doing but invites reprisals. The inaction of the police in the recent past has been altogether due to the lack of proper means of communication with places along the coast. The Government possess no vessel of any kind. The only steamer on the coast is the mail contract steamer, which has been either not available when needed or available at a cost which I presume has not been considered reasonable, or her services would have been secured. This steamer has to fulfil her many contract services and can, therefore, only be chartered occasionally and for short periods. Police work in arresting offenders on the coast is a work of time, more especially in the absence of co-operation of a land party. No proper policing and patrol, and consequent insurance in some degree for security to life, is practicable along the coastline in the absence of a small Government-owned steamer. The uses to which such a vessel could be put by the Government are manifold, and include, besides police, those of harbor boat service, buoys and beacons, communication with and freight to and from Daly River Smelter, the like services with coal-boring party, besides incidental services of a varied nature. That the work of the settlement would be more efficiently carried out by this means I have no doubt. I am equally without doubt that the provision of such a vessel would be an economy under existing circumstances.

I submit, with great respect, that it is quite unreasonable to expect efficiency in the services above alluded to, and particularly in the work of policing the coast shown of late years to be so necessary, unless the Government have at their disposal the services of a small steamer of their own.

ABORIGINES.

This question has already been the subject of a lengthy report from me, made at the request of the Hon. the Minister, to which I have little to add.

The passage of prohibitive opium laws since that report was written has removed one of the worst dangers threatening the aborigines. The habitual smokers among the Chinese themselves have been suffering from want of the drug, and therefore can have none to spare for the natives. It is to be hoped that intoxicants will not take the place of opium with the aborigines; should it do so the aborigines will, I think, give infinitely more trouble than formerly, and crime among them will tend to increase.

During 1905 supplies for aborigines were sent to Daly Waters and Powell's Creek, *via* Pine Creek, as, from reports from these stations, it was feared distress might occur among the natives. As no further report was received I apprehend the supplies were sufficient. There has been no distress in this locality, and when any rations have been given it has been in return for work done. With a few notable exceptions the services of the aborigines in and about Palmerston are difficult to obtain. They, in common with aborigines of other parts, work better when away from their own immediate country. It is this fact which leads to the desire among Europeans to recruit native assistance from parts foreign to where that assistance is to be given, and the willing recruit is subsequently transformed in some cases to an enforced servant. This is one of the evils to remedy which legislation is necessary. It has frequently been pointed out that we have no legislation worthy the name regarding aborigines. Broadly speaking, I think that the main provisions of the Queensland Acts relating to aborigines, modified as indicated in my previous report on the subject, might with great advantage be enacted and made to apply to this Territory.

EDUCATION.

The maximum number in hospital: Europeans, 12; others, 7. Minimum number in hospital: Europeans, 4; others, 0. Daily average in hospital: Europeans, $7\frac{3}{5}$; others, $1\frac{3}{5}$.

The faulty condition of the roof still exists, although it has been complained of for years, and the money spent on constant repairs would go far to the purchase of a new covering. The institution was favored on the 5th of May by a visit from His Excellency the Governor, who recommended a long-felt want, viz., the erection of a windmill over the well, with the object of economising labor, and giving the hospital a more liberal supply of water, which is much needed. Great difficulty has been experienced in obtaining the services of aboriginals for performing the more menial duties in and around the building, and this source of annoyance will be perpetuated unless they are the recipients of a small weekly wage. Several changes have been made in the position of wardsman.

GAOL.

The health of the officials has been excellent, while 54 of the prisoners were treated during the year, made up as follows:—Diseases of the eye, 3; respiratory system, 4; skin, 6; teeth, 5; nervous system, 12; alimentary canal, 7; genito-urinary, 1; joints, 5; lymphatics, 1; dengue, 2; injuries, 5; surgical, 1; opium habit, 1; senility, 1. One death is recorded, and was due to judicial hanging.

The wells are in good order, and the underground tanks well-filled with good rainwater, which is used for drinking and cooking. These tanks were all cleaned before the approach of the present wet season. The prisoners' cells and all the buildings within the gaol are scrupulously clean, and reflects great credit on the keeper and his staff. The open drain at the back of the kitchen should be done away with, and be replaced by earthenware pipes laid underground.

DESTITUTE.

A number of these cases have sought medical relief during the last year, and this is particularly noticeable among the Europeans.

ABORIGINALS.

I am pleased to report that there has been a very decided decrease with regard to smoking and eating opium among these people, due perhaps to the efforts that are being made to restrict or prevent its introduction, also to the Chinese here themselves, who are the chief vendors of the drug, and who have themselves made pledges not to eat and smoke it.

LEPER STATION.

I report that this station had to be made use of, but the detention of the patient was only temporary, as he was allowed to join his tribe.

I have, &c.,

KENSINGTON FULTON, G.M.O. and Protector of Aborigines.

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

GAOL AND LABOR PRISON.

Palmerston Gaol and Labor Prison, Fannie Bay, January 19th, 1906.

Sir—I have the honor to submit my report for the year ending December 31st, 1905.

A return showing the number of prisoners brought to gaol and discharged, also a return showing the amount of the prisoners' earnings, attached herewith.

Forty-six prisoners were brought to gaol, and 56 were discharged; the average number per day being 23 and a fraction. Thirty-five was the largest number imprisoned, and 17 was the smallest number imprisoned at one time during the year. The health of the prisoners has been good, and their conduct has been exemplary—only a few trivial charges were dealt with by the visiting justices. No deaths have occurred during the year. One aboriginal prisoner, who was under sentence of death, escaped from prison, but within 54 hours of his escape gave himself up to the police at Palmerston, and was afterward conveyed to prison. On his return a temporary guard was appointed to look after him. This prisoner was executed within the gaol yard on the 21st December, death being instantaneous. At the same criminal sessions another aboriginal prisoner was sentenced to death, with recommendation to mercy; on the 13th October his sentence was commuted to three years' imprisonment with hard labor. During the year 10 aboriginal prisoners, two of them females, were brought to prison for aiding and abetting to procure opium: these prisoners when admitted to prison were in an emaciated condition, suffering from the effects of the drug—their sentences ranged from 14 days to three months, with hard labor. When discharged they had all greatly improved in appearance, this being mainly due to the regularity of prison life: generally they are unable to work for some considerable time after admittance, and have to be under the care of the medical officer. This also applies to Chinese opium smokers. There are two guards permanently employed: temporary guards are employed when necessary. During the year one guard resigned, and two, including a temporary guard, were dismissed for drunkenness. The prison building is in very fair condition, having undergone the usual painting and whitewashing during the year. New guttering has been added to the west gable of the building, and two sets of downpipes to carry the water to the underground tanks, one set on each side of the building. This was greatly needed, as a large overflow of water ran to waste, and the gaol walls were getting damaged. The two underground tanks, which I mentioned in my last annual report as being in a leaking condition, have now been satisfactorily repaired, and at much less expense than was at first anticipated. During the year a good deal of labor and expense has been incurred in putting the guards' quarters into a habitable condition. These quarters had for some considerable time previously been occupied by single men, who had kept the quarters in an extremely dirty condition. Two married men having been appointed