

COLONIAL REPORTS.—ANNUAL.

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No. 143.

G A M B I A.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1894.

(For Report for 1893, see Colonial Report [Annual] No. 106.)

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.
15 August 1895.



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Administrator LLEWELYN to the MARQUESS OF RIPON.

Government House, Bathurst,

May 20, 1895.

MY LORD,

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship in duplicate Blue Book of the Colony of the Gambia for the year 1894, with my report thereon.

I have, &c.

R. B. LLEWELYN,
Administrator.

BLUE BOOK REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1894.

An abnormal fall of rain, far heavier in the Upper river than at Bathurst, at the end of December 1893, ushered in an unfortunate year for the Colony of the Gambia, and that phenomenal occurrence affected not only the whole trade and prosperity of the people for the year 1894, but has mainly contributed to the present general depression in business.

2. The climate of the Gambia has often been described, so that perhaps the following comparative rainfall and other meteorological returns may not be considered of any general public interest, but that little fall of rain in December 1893, by damaging the staple product of the Colony, just after it had been pulled and before it was stored, has impeded progress in civilization and been felt in every hut throughout the Colony and Protectorate by reducing the revenue to 23,797*l.*, against an estimate of 31,000*l.*

COMPARATIVE RAINFALL, COLONY OF THE GAMBIA.

—	1890.	1891.	1892.	1893	1894.
January - - -	—	·01	—	·02	—
February - - -	—	·16	—	—	—
March - - -	—	—	—	—	—
April - - -	—	—	·01	·10	·07
May - - -	·04	·53	1·38	2·16	—
June - - -	2·40	4·67	3·05	—	5·33
July - - -	16·42	7·42	14·89	20·57	16·54
August - - -	19·90	18·84	22·65	30·57	18·64
September - -	16·58	19·81	4·76	13·00	13·35
October - - -	1·97	1·97	4·39	7·54	1·29
November - - -	—	—	—	·15	·64
December - - -	—	—	—	·40	—
	60·31	53·41	51·13	77·89	55·86

Average, 59·72.

GILBERT ELLIOTT, Acting Colonial Surgeon.

METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS, 1894.

1894. Months.	Average for month at 7 a.m.			Maximum in shade at 3 p.m.			Minimum in shade at 7 a.m.			Rainfall in inches.		
	Dry Bulb.	Wet Bulb.	Dew point.	Highest.	Lowest.	Average.	Highest.	Lowest.	Average.	Total.	Maximum.	Date.
January	66.2	58.8	51.5	90.5	73.	84.1	67.	56.	61.8	—	—	—
February	65.7	58.8	51.8	91.	70.5	80.6	66.	63.	62.	—	—	—
March	67.7	63.6	60.3	95.	73.	78.	70.	63.	65.3	—	—	—
April	71.	65.3	60.9	101.	74.5	85.1	70.5	58.5	65.7	0.07	.07	23-4-94
May	74.9	70.6	67.5	95.	76.5	84.7	73.	66.	69.9	—	—	—
June	77.6	73.8	71.1	93.	80.	85.9	75.5	67.	72.5	5.33	3.09	6-6-94
July	77.7	74.8	72.9	89.5	80.5	85.4	76.	67.	72.5	16.54	4.30	19-7-94
August	76.9	74.5	72.8	86.	79.	83.7	76.	69.	72.	18.64	3.25	19-8-94
September	77.5	75.4	73.9	87.5	79.	84.9	77.	68.	62.6	13.35	2.17	4-9-94
October	78.	75.4	73.60	91.5	82.	85.	78.	71.	74.	1.29	.76	4-10-94
November	74.7	69.3	65.4	90.	73.	84.1	77.	64.	70.7	0.64	.28	22-11-94
December	65.2	59.7	47.6	90.	59.	72.0	70.	55.	63.5	—	—	—

Total rainfall for 1894—55.86 inches.

GILBERT ELLIOTT.—Acting Colonial Surgeon.

In a good regular season rain should fall steadily between the middle of June and the middle of October, and during the rest of the year (eight months) there should not be even a shower.

3. To explain further the present depression in the trade and revenue; it now appears that the ground-nuts which were damaged and discoloured by the rain in December 1893 were not purchased by the traders in 1894, but unfortunately, the native planters risked sowing these nuts left on their hands, as they could not purchase better, and the result was that only about half germinated, causing the crop for shipment in the year 1895 to be one of the smallest on record.

4. The Public Revenue must always be a source of anxiety to the Government when there is only a single staple industry, and to remedy if possible this unsound condition of affairs here a Botanical Station was started in April at Kotu, near the coast in Combo, about ten miles from Bathurst.

It is too early to say yet whether any good will result from the scheme, but the Curator, selected from Kew Gardens, has enclosed within a wire fence about 28 acres of land and cleared a small portion, on which he has experimented with cotton, indigo, and other seeds.

5. The cultivation of Cotton and Indigo, the weaving of the narrow strips of cloth which are dyed with the indigo and roughly sewn together making the cloths known as "pagus" with which the natives clothe themselves, have always formed part of the industries of the country, and as far as I have observed the same primitive methods are still adopted by the natives in weaving and dyeing, and indeed I may say in all their habits, as the first European travellers found here, and have described in their books written 200 years ago.

6. It is perhaps rather discouraging to find in the present day, within a few miles of the capital town of this old-established Colony, the natives living in the same style of huts, wearing the same style of clothes, tilling the ground with the same sort of rough tools, pounding their corn, spinning their cotton, and in fact living in every way as they have done for centuries before they ever saw a European.

7. I have often talked on this subject with intelligent natives, but they are the most ultra-conservative race of people I have ever met, without apparently any ambition, their answer generally being that "They met it so," and "Their fathers and grandfathers did it before." "It might be good for White man but not suit Mandingo." And the young children will tell you, "Their fathers and mothers talk Mandingo; why should they learn English?" And I wonder when, if ever, a change will take place in the manners and customs of this part of Africa?

8. The slow progress in civilization is probably due, to some extent, to the want of example and contact with Europeans, for

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very few Natives a short distance up the river have ever visited Bathurst. They do not care about travelling on the water and no doubt the accommodation they get in a small cutter is not inviting.

With this condition of affairs in view I recommended that a steamer should be built for regular mail and passenger service up and down the river as far as McCarthy Island (153 miles) every week. The "Mansah Kilah" or "Queen's Messenger," a paddle steamer, 90 feet long and drawing only 5½ feet of water, arrived out from England in February and is now running up and down the river regularly every week. Her cost, delivered out here, was 3,500*l.* She steams about 8 knots an hour, and burns about 4 tons of coal in running to and from McCarthy Island (306 miles). So far she has done very well but it was never calculated that she would earn enough to pay for her working expenses, nearly 2,000*l.* per annum, but she was started as a civilizing peaceful messenger from the Governor in Bathurst to the Mandingoes up the river, and they apparently appreciate it, several having been to Bathurst already who had never ventured so far before.

9. It must I fear be admitted that mission work and education have not been pushed as they ought to have been, from the base at Bathurst, where we have had a footing for nearly a century. The schools in Bathurst do fairly good work, but the average daily attendance of 600 children, out of a population of at least 6,000, is not satisfactory and would seem to indicate that the managers of these Christian schools have not in the past succeeded in establishing branches up in the country or combating successfully with Mahomedanism, or Paganism, even in Bathurst. Perhaps one of the great obstacles has been the want of teachers with a knowledge of the Mandingo language; without which qualification it is almost hopeless to attempt any such work. I have just succeeded in getting an elderly person as schoolmistress at Busumballa, in Combo Protectorate, and am endeavouring to get other teachers who can talk Mandingo, and there are signs that the missions are moving in the matter.

10. The inhabitants of Bathurst are descended from the settlers who came from Senegal in 1816 and are mostly of Joloff extraction, so that the better educated natives in the town either speak Joloff or English, but the language of the Gambia Protectorate and far beyond it is Mandingo. It seems therefore to be a growing necessity that all the Native officials should speak Mandingo, and I have recently in a circular impressed this upon them. Unfortunately the European officers have to be changed so often that before they have time to acquire any language they are transferred to another Colony, where, even on the West Coast, the language spoken will be entirely different.

11. In looking back at what I have written on the present condition of the Colony, or rather perhaps trading Port, of Bathurst, I try to seek for a cause why the River Gambia, undoubtedly

the best waterway in this part of Africa, should not have been turned to more advantage in the past.

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12. The termination of the exportation of slaves by Europeans did not end slave-hunting and dealing by the Natives, and they found the waterways of the Gambia advantageous to them for transferring their slaves from place to place; hence it has never been possible in the past for natives living on the banks of the river to quietly follow agricultural pursuits, for the country has been devastated and depopulated nearly up to the very doors of Bathurst by slave-hunters and marauders who were attracted by the waterway.

13. The obligation of the Brussels Conference Act, and the delimitation of the boundary of the Gambia Protectorate, forced the Government to take some active measures or else to practically abandon the old Colony and rights on the Gambia to slave hunters and marauders like Fodi Kabba and Fodi Silah, for there could be no trade or peace as long as they had any power on the River.

14. The punitive expedition against the last named occurred during the year under review, and although all regret the loss of life that occurred in the first attack, yet I am convinced that nothing but force would ever have stopped Fodi Silah from slave-hunting and marauding, which he carried on regularly within ten miles of Bathurst.

15. For years past he has been a pest to the Gambia, and a cruel tyrant in his country, where he kept a band of mercenaries recruited from interior tribes (Karbunkas) ready to commit any outrage for plunder. In 1887 he nearly forced on a quarrel with the late Sir Samuel Rowe at a friendly palaver he went to at Brikama.

In 1891 he stopped the officers of the Anglo French Boundary Commission and then insulted them as far as he could. Latterly, he apparently saw that between the two civilized powers of England and France his career as a slave-hunter was doomed, but he recklessly and fanatically held out, declining all friendly overtures made to him, and at last forced on the Government the punitive expedition sent against him in February.

16. As soon as he and his mercenaries had been defeated and fled, the real native inhabitants settled down peaceably and were thankful to be placed under English rule instead of Fodi Silah.

I recently walked all through this part of the Protectorate without any escort or weapons of defence and consider that life and property is now as safe in Combo as in any Colony I know of.

17. The conquest of "Foreign" Combo, as Fodi Silah's country was called, and its forming part of the Protectorate leads me on to report what has been done towards civilizing and governing the Gambia Protectorate in general since the limits were defined by

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the Anglo-French Boundary Commission. In January 1893 two travelling commissioners were appointed, one for each bank of the river, to travel through the country and ascertain what there was, either in the shape of towns, or people or anything else, within the boundary, for there was absolutely no data of any sort to work upon, with the object of establishing some form of civilized Government and to put a stop if possible to slave-dealing within the Protectorate.

18. Since then much information has been obtained, geographically and otherwise, about the country and the people and their sentiments, and on the 27th of December last, two ordinances were passed by the Legislative Council with the above objects and they are now being put in operation.

19. The Protectorate is patrolled regularly for eight months in the year by Commissioners for about 100 miles (rather more on the north bank) up the river as well as in Combo and Fogni. It has been divided into 17 districts, each placed under the management of a Head Chief, appointed by the Administrator, from whom he takes orders and to whom he is responsible for the peace and maintenance of good order in his district.

Native Courts in each district, presided over by the Head Chief, associated with four headmen from other towns in the district, will be held shortly for the trial of minor offences and offences against native customs.

The travelling Commissioners have already commenced to hold regular magistrates' courts in the Protectorate, and the Native Chiefs themselves have on more than one occasion voluntarily sent to Bathurst, for trial in the Supreme Court, persons who have committed serious crimes; and thus has been commenced a form of Government in what was three years ago a wild country, where an European was rarely seen.

20. The ordinance for the abolition of slave-dealing will gradually, but quickly, lead up to the complete extinction of domestic slavery, and indeed I may now say that since the Travelling Commissioners have been visiting the Protectorate the natives have understood that the English would not allow slavery in any form to continue, and they have wisely accepted the situation to an extent that I could not have deemed possible or even hoped for three years ago. The Registrar in Bathurst in his Report for the year 1894 writes as follows:—

“ 57 natives of Africa, 44 males and 53 females, were liberated from slavery during the year through the intervention of the Travelling Commissioners and the police. A large number of these have settled in Bathurst and in the dependencies of the Colony under the protection of the British flag and a few have returned to their native homes. It was a pleasure to hear, as the writer has often done, these poor people's fervent outpourings of gratitude for their liberation from slavery.”

In this report on the Blue Book for the year 1894 it is only possible to refer to the passing of the Protectorate Ordinances in December, but at the time of my writing it (May 1895) the executive action is nearly completed to put them in full operation.

21. There is now, I hope, some prospect of advancement here. Up till last year the old system of trade exclusively by barter was carried on through numerous middlemen who went up the river every dry season. I have no doubt they had hard times with marauders such as Saide Matte, Fodi Kabba, and Fodi Silah, &c., but with these rascals cleared off, and the establishment of a civilized government, the merchants begin to realize that they can now with safety start stores in the Protectorate and send cash as well as goods up the river.

22. It is time, too, now that the inhabitants of Bathurst should begin to understand that the wealth of the country is in the soil, and money is to be made in other ways than merely by bartering or selling goods.

There are, I am glad to report, applications now before me from persons in Bathurst who wish to get land to cultivate in Combo, for I hope all see now, both natives in Bathurst and the Mandingoes in the Protectorate, that the planter will reap what he sows and not be robbed of it by marauders.

23. Following the peaceable settlement of Combo the rubber trade has increased considerably and there is plenty of it in Fogni. Wax, too, which has from time immemorial been an export of the Gambia, has taken a little start. It is still collected in the same old pattern of hives hung up on the trees and prepared in the same rough fashion by the natives just as they did in the days of the Royal African Company 200 years ago.

The rice grown on the banks of the Gambia is pronounced to be equal to the best in the world, but it is only cultivated here by the women for their own "pin money" and large quantities are imported every year for consumption.

With Chinese or Coolie labourers there is ample room here for practically an unlimited cultivation of rice and perhaps, with security to life and property, this enterprise may be taken up by some capitalist.

Piassava—vegetable-ivory, fibres and grasses of many sorts abound, which I believe can be turned to account, and I hope the Protectorate will at no very distant date become a peaceable settlement for agriculturists, instead of a hunting ground for slaves.

24. A fine new pier on iron piles with a T-head, 210 feet long, was completed during the year 1894 at Bathurst, at a cost of 7,000*l.* and ought to be an advantage to steamers when time is an object, as they can lie alongside the pier and discharge cargo from both hatches at the same time. As the mail steamers are

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generally behind time it will perhaps assist them a little to being more punctual; but quick passenger and mail boats, with first-class accommodation, are still wanting on the West Coast of Africa under the English flag. The Messageries steamers run with the regularity of clock-work from Dakar to Bordeaux, calling at Lisbon, in eight days, but the English mail boats take 14 days from the same port to Liverpool, calling at Teneriffe and Madeira, and there is no regularity in the time of the homeward voyage, as each mail boat waits and searches for cargo all the way up the coast. With more comfortable first-class steamers, tourists and business men might be induced to visit the Gambia in the dry season and go up the river for sport or with the object of seeing life in West Africa before the inhabitants become civilized.

Within 3,000 miles of England it is still possible to shoot big game, and live by your gun, on the banks of the Gambia, and to see real wild African life and scenery, but it is difficult to persuade Europeans who are independent to face the climate, which I must allow is trying, but not quite the certain death it is generally considered to be.

May 20, 1895.

R. B. LLEWELYN.