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No. 979.

GAMBIA.

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REPORT FOR 1917.

(For Report for 1916 see No. 936.)

Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty.

February, 1919.

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## No. 979.

# GAMBIA.

### REPORT ON THE BLUE BOOK FOR 1917.\*

#### I.—FINANCIAL.

1. *Revenue*.—The total revenue collected during this year was £117,977—an increase of £14,902 over that of the preceding year and only £7,018 less than the revenue collected in 1913, which is the highest yet recorded.

The heads of revenue and the amounts collected under each during the year were as follows :—

	£
(1) Customs Duties .. .. .	84,758
(2) Port Dues .. .. .	1,183
(3) Licences, &c. .. .. .	1,538
(4) Fees of Court, &c. .. .. .	5,079
(5) Post Office .. .. .	902
(6) Rent of Government property (not including Protectorate land rents) .. .. .	1,286
(7) Interest .. .. .	5,284
(8) Protectorate .. .. .	17,029
(9) Miscellaneous .. .. .	903
(10) Land Sales .. .. .	15
	£117,977

Customs duties provided, as usual, over 70 per cent. of the revenue, and showed an increase of £9,341, as compared with 1916, the receipts from *ad valorem* duties (£29,313) being the largest ever recorded. This is due not so much to larger importations as to increasing value of articles on which an *ad valorem* duty is paid. Import duty on kola nuts and export duty on ground-nuts continue to be appreciable items of Customs revenue.

Port dues showed a small increase of £87, as compared with 1916.

Fees of Court, &c., increased by £960, owing chiefly to the increased rateable value of properties in Bathurst, where trade expansion and the consequent demand for building sites have sent up the value of land considerably. Survey fees, freight, and passages by Government vessels and passport fees also contributed to the increase.

There was an increase of £709 under Rent of Government property due to the greater revenue derived from market dues and to a new sub-head—Rent of Crown lands in Bathurst. These lands lie between Wellington Street and the river and were formerly utilized, without payment of any rent, by the various trading firms holding property

\* A Sketch Map will be found in the Report for 1914, No. 861: [Cd. 7622-52.]

on the opposite side of the street. They are now leased to the merchants on a year to year tenancy at a uniform rate of £2 10s. per 1,000 square feet.

Under Interest there is an increase of £1,691--the result of increased investments and a larger cash balance on deposit at interest. The value of the Colony's investments at the end of the year was £116,137 (market value, £89,373) and the cash balance was £43,574.

The revenue under the head Protectorate exceeded by £4,850 that collected in 1916. This was chiefly due to there being a larger number of immigrant farmers than in the preceding year with a consequent increase in the collections of Hut Tax and Farm Rents, which are the chief sources of Protectorate revenue.

Only three heads showed a decrease as compared with 1916, viz. :-- Licences, Post Office, and Miscellaneous, which were respectively £558, £147 and £1,990 less than in the previous year. A considerable falling-off in the importation of spirits resulted in fewer spirit licences being issued ; and the postal revenue continues to suffer owing to the continued decrease in the value of stamps purchased by European dealers.

2. *Expenditure.*—The Expenditure for the year followed the usual heads and amounted to £94,519, being greater by £11,302 than that of the year 1916. It included a gift of £10,000 to the Imperial Government for the purchase of aeroplanes and one of £1,000 to the British Red Cross.

3. *Financial position.*—The following is a comparative statement of the total Revenue and Expenditure for the last five years :—

				Revenue.	Expenditure.
				£	£
1913	..	..	..	124,990	95,209
1914	..	..	..	86,071	120,921
1915	..	..	..	92,253	89,028
1916	..	..	..	103,075	83,217
1917	..	..	..	117,977	94,519

The excess of Assets over Liabilities on the 31st December, 1916, was £125,816, and at the end of 1917, £149,274, the difference of £23,458 being the excess of Revenue over Expenditure for the year. There is no public debt.

4. *Currency.*—The currency of the Colony consists of British coins, West African silver coins (2/-, 1/-, 6d., 3d.), and the French five-franc piece, but the circulation of the last named has considerably decreased recently owing to the French Government having prohibited its exportation from France. British silver currency is now being gradually replaced by the West African silver coins. The five-franc pieces are known locally as "dollars" and are accepted by the Government and the banks at 3s. 10½d. (the legal value) but are worth 4s. for trade purposes.

There are two Banks established in the Colony, the Bank of British West Africa, Limited, and the Colonial Bank, the latter having opened a branch at Bathurst in December, 1917.

## II.—TRADE AND AGRICULTURE.

1. *Volume of Trade.*—The total value of the Colony's trade inwards and outwards (exclusive of specie) for the year 1917, was £1,649,958—

an increase of £628,311, as compared with 1916. Although the continued inflation of prices accounts in part for this large increase, the volume of trade was also greater.

The following table gives the total value of imports and exports for the last five years, exclusive of specie :—

				Imports.	Exports.
1913	..	..	..	£619,294	£662,406
1914	..	..	..	388,339	693,658
1915	..	..	..	302,495	430,620
1916	..	..	..	478,805	542,843
1917	..	..	..	697,052	952,906

2. *Imports.*—The total value of the imports (exclusive of specie) was greater by £218,247 than in 1916. The principal articles which showed increases, as compared with the previous year, were cotton piece-goods, other cotton goods, rice, empty bags, and hardware.

The total quantity of cotton piece-goods imported was 9,868,789 yards, valued at £229,752, or an increase in quantity of 2,654,885 yards, and in value of £93,153, as compared with 1916. The United Kingdom supplied 94.45 per cent. of this article.

Other cotton goods were valued at £32,248—an increase of £16,347.

The quantity of rice imported was greater than in any year since 1914, the importation amounting to 46,150 cwts., valued at £60,741, as compared with 21,310 cwts. valued at £19,740 in 1916.

The United States of America appears for the first time on the list of countries supplying rice to the Colony.

The good prices paid for groundnuts in 1916 no doubt induced the natives to pay more attention to the cultivation of this product and less to the growing of foodstuffs than in recent years. They, however, fully realize the folly of depending on imported foodstuffs, which are not only scarce, but expensive, and large quantities of cereals are now regularly grown in the Protectorate.

Empty bags, which are used in the groundnut trade, exhibited an increase of 168,729 in number and £8,954 in value, as compared with 1916.

The value of hardware imported was £14,597—an increase of £2,219 over 1916.

Kola nuts, weighing 1,303,454 lbs., and valued at £112,872, were imported from the neighbouring Colony of Sierra Leone. The value constitutes a record, being greater by £36,988 than the value of the importation of this article in the previous year, but the quantity imported in 1916 exceeded that in 1917 by 135,180 lbs.

4,946 cwt of. wheaten flour, valued at £8,300, was imported, whereas in 1916 the quantity was 8,834 cwt., and the value £7,995.

The value of provisions imported was £9,207, a decrease of £2,809, as compared with 1916.

Tobacco, weighing 145,253 lbs., and worth £8,064, was imported—a decrease of 218,748 lbs. in weight and £5,212 in value, when compared with the previous year.

The quantity of spirits imported was little more than half of that imported in 1916, but the value was only £966 less (see Appendix I).

The decline in the importation of spirits is due to the difficulty of obtaining trade gin from Holland, owing to the lack of means of communication with that country.

The importation of sugar also declined slightly. It was obtainable in very small quantities from Europe and the supplies came chiefly from the United States of America. Before the War most of the sugar came from France. The quantity imported in 1917 was 3,976 cwt., valued at £9,570. In 1916 the figures were 4,608 cwts., valued at £9,763.

The United Kingdom continued to be the chief source of supply, accounting for 58 per cent. of the imports, excluding specie. France dropped from 21 per cent. in 1916 to 12 per cent., yielding second place to the British Colonies, which rose from 18 per cent. to 19 per cent. : the United States of America supplied 7 per cent. of the imports and ceased to be classed under "Other Countries." The proportions in 1914 were :—United Kingdom, 41 per cent. ; British Colonies, 20 per cent. ; France, and its possessions, 22 per cent. ; Germany, 12 per cent. ; Other Countries, 5 per cent.

3. *Exports.*—The total value of the exports, exclusive of specie, exceeded the value in 1916 by £410,063.

The principal articles of export were, as usual, groundnuts, hides, and palm kernels.

The groundnut crop of 1916-17 was above the average, and 74,300 tons, valued at £869,790, were shipped in 1917, as compared with 46,366 tons, valued at £506,098, in 1916. This is by far the most valuable groundnut crop exported, but the quantity was exceeded by that of 1914-15.

The increase in the crop was the result of the good prices obtained by native planters in 1915-16, which encouraged them to increase the acreage planted in groundnuts, while at the same time not neglecting their food crops. The increase in this crop is also intimately connected with the increase in the number of immigrant farmers, who numbered 20,727, as compared with 9,315 in the previous planting season. These strangers are naturally attracted by high prices, and there is little doubt that the prices paid in any given year have a direct effect on the number of immigrant farmers in the following planting season, and consequently on the size of the following crop. It is well to note in this connection, that these men devote their whole attention to groundnuts and are not concerned with the cultivation of food crops. In fact, districts where food is scarce are avoided by the strangers.

Of the total crop, 56,839 tons went to the United Kingdom and 15,892 tons to France.

The export of hides constituted a record, 101,120 valued at £58,951, having been exported, as compared with 26,946, valued at £10,019 in 1916. Of these the United Kingdom took 97.89 per cent. This sudden increase is undoubtedly due to the large mortality among cattle.

The export of palm kernels decreased from 669 tons, valued at £14,671 in 1916, to 532 tons, valued at £7,994 in 1917. A considerable quantity of the kernels is produced in French territory and the reduction in the export is probably due to recruiting in French Cassamance. With the exception of 4 tons shipped to France, all the kernels went to the United Kingdom.

An increasing trade in calabashes (gourds) is done with Sierra Leone, but exports of wax, ivory, and rubber are now negligible.

It is of interest to note that piassava reappeared on the list of exports in 1917, after an interval of 14 years, 15 tons valued at £550, having been exported. This fibrous plant is found in abundance along the river banks in one district and a Company was formed in 1915 for the purpose of reviving the industry.

Of the total exports, 79 per cent. went to the United Kingdom and 18 per cent. to France. In 1916, the figures were 53 per cent. and 35 per cent., respectively. Since the outbreak of war, the percentage of the groundnut crop shipped to England has increased steadily. Before the War nearly the whole crop went to France.

4. *Shipping.*—The total number of vessels entered and cleared during the year was 457, with an aggregate tonnage of 398,524—an increase over 1916 of 15 vessels and 26,848 tons. This increase is due to the necessity for increased tonnage to carry the larger groundnut crop.

The number of steam vessels and sailing vessels entered, was respectively 137 and 90, and of those cleared 138 were steam vessels and 92 sailing vessels. Of the steam vessels entered and cleared, 125 out of 275, or less than half, were British, but the tonnage of British ships exceeded that of foreign ships by 188,347 tons. Of the sailing vessels entered and cleared, 40 with a tonnage of 781 were British, and 142, with a tonnage of 7,076, were foreign.

5. *Land Grants.*—Grants of land in the Colony and Protectorate are regulated by the terms of the Public Lands (Grants and Dispositions) Ordinance, No. 5, of 1902. As a rule, no Crown Grants are made, either in the Colony or the Protectorate, for a longer period than 21 years.

The filling in of the Half-Die area of Bathurst is gradually rendering habitable the swamp at the back of the town. This land is the property of the Crown, and the demand for it is keen.

The general value of land in Bathurst, especially those lots with access to the river front, in the business quarter of the town, has increased appreciably in recent years.

Grants of land at trading centres in the Protectorate are made for periods of 21 years, at rates varying from £1 to £4 per 1,000 square yards, according to the situation and the facilities existing for shipment of produce in ocean-going steamers, which cannot travel further than MacCarthy Island. With the growth of trade the number of these grants has increased considerably.

6. *Agriculture.*—Groundnuts continue to be the staple product of the Gambia and the only export of any importance. Most of the seed is supplied by the Government through the merchants, as the natives never keep sufficient for their requirements, and planting takes place in June and July when the rains have begun. The rains cease in October, and the crop is reaped in November.

In normal times it is all exported by the following April, but, owing to the present scarcity of shipping, exportation goes on practically all the year round and merchants have been obliged to erect large buildings for storing the nuts.

The natives of the Protectorate continue to devote considerable attention to the growing of food crops. Several varieties of corn are grown, also rice in suitable areas.

### III.—LEGISLATION.

Seventeen Ordinances were passed during the year. None of them appears to call for special comment.

Volume I of the revised edition of the Ordinances of the Colony, containing the Ordinances in force on the 30th September, 1916, was brought into force on the 5th April, 1917, by Proclamation. Volume II contains certain Ordinances, passed after the 30th September, 1916, which were in force on 31st October, 1917, and the subsidiary legislation in force on the latter date.

A large number of consolidating statutory rules was passed during the year in preparation for the publication of Volume II.

### IV.—EDUCATION.

There are eight elementary schools in the Colony, six in Bathurst, and two at MacCarthy Island. Of these, one is owned and managed by the Anglican Mission, three by the Roman Catholic Mission, three by the Wesleyan Mission, and one by the Mohammedan community in Bathurst. There are no Government schools.

One of the Roman Catholic Schools, the Convent School, is for girls only, and another school for boys only. The other schools are attended by boys and girls together. Attendance is voluntary.

All these elementary schools, with the exception of the Mohammedan school, are affiliated under the Education Ordinance, No. 14 of 1903, and receive aid from the funds of the Colony, in accordance with the Education Rules, 1917, made under that Ordinance. This aid takes the form of contributions towards the salaries of European superintendents, grants based on the average attendance, and on the results of an annual examination conducted by the Inspector of Schools, prizes for success in this examination, and bonuses to teachers.

An examination of native teachers is also held by the inspector, in accordance with the rules above mentioned, and certificates are given, as well as small monetary awards.

The curriculum of the schools is prescribed by the owners, but, as a considerable part of their income is derived from grants based on the results of the annual Government examination, the subjects taught are in fact chiefly determined by the rules above mentioned, under which this examination is held.

In addition to Government grants, the income of the schools is derived from school fees, which may not exceed 6*d.* per week for each pupil, and from contributions by the owners.

The number of pupils on the registers of the elementary schools of the Colony during 1917, was 1,375, or 143 less than in the previous year. The number was made up as follows:—Anglican School, 211; 3 Roman Catholic Schools, 532; 3 Wesleyan Schools, 497; Mohammedan School, 135.

The total expenditure of the elementary schools in 1917 was £2,187, of which £1,027 was contributed by the Government.

The Mohammedan School was attended in 1917 by 135 pupils, an increase of 11 over 1916, and the highest during the 14 years of the school's existence. This school presents candidates for the same annual examination as the other elementary schools, but the financial aid which it receives from the Government is not determined by the

results of the examination. The salaries of the teachers are paid by the Government, prizes are given, and a sum is provided annually in the Estimates for the upkeep of the buildings and furniture of the school.

In 1917, the vote for the payment of salaries and prizes was £240, and for the upkeep of buildings and furniture £25. The Mohammedan community contributes annually a sum of £20 towards the upkeep of the school. School fees in 1917 amounted to £3 3s. 9d.

A sum of £68 was spent during the year on the buildings and furniture. The school buildings are now in excellent condition.

In addition to the English subjects offered by candidates from this school at the annual general examination, pupils are instructed in Arabic and in the Koran, and are examined annually by the Cadi of the Mohammedan Court.

A Technical and Industrial School<sup>1</sup> is maintained by the Wesleyan Mission, and instruction is given by a European instructor in such subjects as carpentry, masonry, joinery and blacksmith's work. There were 18 pupils on the register in 1917, the average attendance being 11. The school receives a Government Grant-in aid of £350 towards the salary of the European instructor. The Government also gives prizes based on the results of an annual examination, held by an examiner appointed by the Governor. The school derives a considerable revenue from payment for work done for members of the public. In 1917, this sum amounted to £417. The expenditure of the school was £844.

The Wesleyan Mission also maintains the only Secondary school in the Colony, which is managed by the Mission independently of Government aid or control, and derives its revenue entirely from contributions from members of the Wesleyan community and from school fees. In 1917 there were 24 pupils on the roll, with an average attendance of 17. The expenditure of the school was £141.

#### V.—GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS.

1. *Hospitals and Medical Institutions.*—The total number of persons admitted to the Victoria Hospital, Bathurst, during 1917, was 482. The daily average number of patients was 12. There were 45 deaths. Out-patients were attended to 6,600 times, and 25 operations were performed. A new mortuary was erected, with an apartment for post-mortem examination, and the operating theatre was improved by the provision of additional ventilation and by replacing the wooden floor with glazed tiles.

The number of medical officers and European nursing sisters available for hospital duty continued to be much under peace strength.

The only hospital in the Protectorate is at Georgetown, MacCarthy Island. No medical officer was available to take charge of this hospital, but the Senior Medical Officer makes periodical visits, and a certificated native dispenser is resident. There were 19 persons admitted in 1917, and 3 deaths. There were 1,223 cases in the out-patients department.

At the Infectious Diseases Hospital, situated about 2 miles out of Bathurst, 3 cases of chicken-pox were treated during the year, and there were no deaths.

At the Home for destitute persons in Bathurst, 9 persons remained at the end of 1916. There were 10 admissions during 1917, and 3

persons were discharged, and 7 died, leaving 9 remaining at the end of the year.

The total cost of all medical services during 1917 was £6,607.

2. *Government Savings Bank*.—There is a Government Savings Bank at the Treasury, Bathurst, and a branch at the Sub-Treasury, Georgetown, MacCarthy Island. There were 710 depositors, with £6,867 to their credit at the end of the year. The amount of invested funds is £5,000. Interest is paid at the rate of 2½ per cent., and there are no expenses of management. The popularity of this institution tends to increase from year to year.

3. *MacCarthy Square Board*.—A Board consisting of four ex-officio members and four unofficial members, appointed yearly by the Governor, was created by the MacCarthy Square Ordinance of 1905, for the control of the public recreation ground, known as the Victoria Recreation Ground, MacCarthy Square. Funds were provided in the annual Estimates of the Colony. In 1917, an Ordinance was passed, divesting the Board of Management of MacCarthy Square of the ownership and control of the Victoria Recreation Ground, vesting the ownership of the land in the Crown, and the control thereof in the Board of Health.

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## VI.—JUDICIAL AND CRIMINAL STATISTICS.

### 1. SUPREME COURT.

There were 22 persons prosecuted in the Supreme Court, 21 of whom were convicted. There were 4 charges of murder, arising out of the death of 3 persons. Two of the accused were natives of the least civilised tribe in the Protectorate, and were convicted of the murder of another native, in a remote part of Foni, for purposes of robbery. The death sentence was carried out in each case as near as possible to the scene of the crime. Homicide arising from such motives is extremely rare in this Colony. Of the other two persons charged, one was a native of Bathurst, and was convicted of the murder of another native in that town, apparently from motives of jealousy, and was hanged. The other accused was convicted of manslaughter in respect of the homicide of another native at Cape St. Mary, while in a state of extreme intoxication, and was sentenced to four years' imprisonment.

Six persons were convicted of other offences against the person, 3 of larceny, 7 of other offences against property, and 1 of an offence classed as miscellaneous, namely, desertion from the Police Force. The 3 persons charged with larceny were all native officials of the Government employed in the Postal Department.

When it is considered that the population of the Colony and Protectorate is about 185,000, the very small number of cases brought before the Supreme Court affords striking evidence of the rarity of serious crimes.

### 2. BATHURST POLICE COURT.

Though this Court has, in theory, jurisdiction over the whole of the Colony and Protectorate, it deals in practice only with cases arising in the Island of St. Mary and its immediate neighbourhood, and the harbour. The population of this area is about 8,000.

During the year, 564 cases were brought before the Court, as compared with 526 in 1916. Of these, 16 were discharged, either for want of prosecution, or on the merits of the case, 22 were committed for trial by the Supreme Court, and 526 were summarily convicted. This total includes 230 prosecutions for offences against those sections of the Public Health Ordinance, 1912, which aim at the extermination of mosquitoes. There were 40 cases of larceny, 40 cases of persons in possession of firearms without licence, 18 cases of drunkenness, 32 for the placing of obstructions in the streets, and 20 under the French Colonial Conscripts Deportation Ordinance, 1916. The remaining 146 summary convictions contained no large groups, but consisted of petty offences of common kinds and showed no unusual characteristics.

The total number of summary convictions was 16 more than in 1916. The increase is entirely to be found in the number of prosecutions for offences against the Public Health Ordinance. Convictions for drunkenness declined from 22 to 18, and those for larceny remained at the normal figure. This last fact is perhaps remarkable in view of the great increase in the cost of living, and in particular of those foodstuffs on which the poorer portion of the population entirely subsist. The increase in the number of convictions under the Public Health Ordinance is probably due rather to keener vigilance on the part of sanitary inspectors than to growing laxity on the part of the native population.

The large number of prosecutions for the possession of firearms without licence was not the consequence of any widespread attempt by unauthorised persons to obtain arms, but it is accounted for by the lapsing of old licences under the Firearms, Ammunition, and Gunpowder (Consolidation) Ordinance, 1916, and the failure of persons holding old licences to get them renewed within the time allowed after the Ordinance quoted came into force.

### 3. PROTECTORATE COURTS (NATIVE TRIBUNALS).

The five Provinces of the Protectorate have a native Tribunal for each of the thirty-eight districts into which they are divided, twelve in Kombo and Foni, eight in the South Bank, and six in each of the other provinces, the North Bank, MacCarthy Island, and the Upper River.

The constitution and powers of these native Tribunals are defined by the Protectorate Ordinance, 1913. Their criminal jurisdiction is, broadly, the same as that of the Bathurst Police Court, and they deal also with a special class of offences, defined by the Ordinance quoted above, arising out of the conditions of native life in the Protectorate and its government.

In the year under review, 471 cases were brought before the native Tribunals, as compared with 451 in 1916. In 462 cases the accused persons were convicted.

The largest class of cases, 242 out of the total of 471, consisted of prosecutions for special offences under the Protectorate Ordinance, including offences against the authority of head chiefs, and seductions.

The absence of any case too serious to be disposed of by the native Tribunals, and the very large proportion of those which were deemed to be sufficiently punished by fine without imprisonment, namely,

430, as compared with 32 out of the total number of punishments awarded, affords remarkable testimony of the quiet temper and law-abiding nature of the population of the Protectorate.

#### 4. PRISONS.

The number of persons remaining in the *gaol* at the end of 1916 was 50, and 102 were admitted during the year. At the end of 1917, 36 remained. The number of admissions was less by 78 than in 1916; the daily average was 45.57, as compared with 46.23 in the previous year.

The health of the prisoners was good. The scale of diet was reduced in October, after close medical scrutiny, and has proved satisfactory, as, while a considerable saving has been effected, the health of the prisoners has remained good. The previous diet scale was unduly extravagant.

Prison labour, of an estimated value of £465, was employed in public works and on works within the prison. The total gross cost of the prison was £1,684. The continued rise in the price of food and clothing is reflected in the increasing cost of this institution.

An unusual feature was the carrying out of 3 death sentences. Only one of them, however, was actually carried out in the prison, the other two culprits suffering the penalty, as already mentioned, in the Protectorate, as near as practicable to the scene of the crime.

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## VII.- VITAL STATISTICS, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND CLIMATE.

### 1. VITAL STATISTICS.

In the census of 1911, the population of Bathurst was given as 7,700, and that of the Protectorate as 138,401. It is probable that the population of Bathurst has increased very little in the last 6 or 7 years; on the other hand, the latest estimate of the population of the Protectorate is 176,500.

No reliable information is obtainable in regard to births and deaths in the Protectorate.

The total number of Europeans resident was 130, of whom 116 were males and 14 females. There were no deaths among Europeans, and no births. Four were invalided, of whom 1 was an official, and 3 were non-officials.

The native population of Bathurst was estimated to be 7,700, or about 230 above the native population in 1911. The number of births was 337, and the number of deaths 264. The birth-rate was 43.77 per thousand, and the death-rate 34.29. It is satisfactory to note that there was a distinct drop in infantile mortality, as compared with previous years.

Twenty-four Christian marriages were solemnised in Bathurst and at MacCarthy Island.

### 2. PUBLIC HEALTH.

Malarial fever was, as usual, the most prevalent disease: 148 out of 482 cases treated in the hospital at Bathurst were cases of this disease, and, out of 6,600 occasions in which out-patients were attended, malarial fever was treated 1,061 times. These figures are somewhat