

101
STRAITS SETTLEMENTS.

P A P E R S

RELATING TO THE

COCOS-KEELING AND CHRISTMAS
ISLANDS.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.
March 1897.



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STRAITS SETTLEMENTS.

P A P E R S

RELATING TO THE

COCOS-KEELING AND CHRISTMAS ISLANDS.

No. 1.

ACTING GOVERNOR SMITH to COLONEL STANLEY.
(Received 21st October 1885.)

Government House, Singapore,
16 September 1885.

SIR,

WITH reference to previous correspondence I have the honour to report that having received information from the Naval Commander-in-Chief that H.M.S. "Espoir" was at my disposal for the purpose of proceeding to the Cocos-Keeling Islands, I arranged with the Senior Naval Officer here that she should leave on the 10th ultimo, and I deputed Mr. E. W. Birch, Second Assistant Colonial Secretary, to act for me in making the fullest possible inquiries regarding the occupation of these islands, and the character of the administration by the Ross family. I enclose a copy of the written instructions* which I gave to Mr. Birch.

2. The "Espoir" returned on the 9th instant, and I now transmit copies of Mr. Birch's Report, and also copies of the Report which Lieutenant and Commander Adams, R.N., has made to the Senior Naval Officer.

Sept. 15, 1885.

Sept. 4, 1885.

3. The result of the visit is almost in every respect satisfactory. The natives are well treated. They are increasing in numbers, and lead happy and contented lives. The members of the Ross family are intelligent and capable men, of good education and disposition. They are quite fit to be trusted with the exercise of magisterial powers. The British flag is alone hoisted on the islands.

4. Mr. Birch's Report is very full and interesting, so little being known of this out-of-the-way piece of British territory. I trust that you will concur in thinking that he has performed the duty with which he was entrusted with ability and discretion.

I have, &c.

CECIL C. SMITH.

Enclosure 1 in No. 1.

The REPORT of Mr. E. W. BIRCH, deputed by the Officer Administering the Government of the Straits Settlements (Mr. CECIL C. SMITH, C.M.G.) to visit the Cocos-Keeling Islands. 1885.

IN obedience to the instructions of His Excellency, I embarked on board H. M. S. "Espoir," Lieutenant and Commander Horace R. Adams, R.N., on Monday morning, the 10th of August. We called at Batavia to coal, and, after a stay of two days there, left early on Sunday morning, the 16th. Having the South-east Trade with us we proceeded under steam and sail until noon on the 18th, when the breeze freshened up sufficiently to enable us to stop steaming and go on under sail alone. The weather was fine until daylight on the 20th, when we experienced sharp showers of rain. The wind

*Voyage to
the Cocos
Islands.*

* Not printed,
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95100. Wt. 18770.

fell with the rain, and so, getting up steam again, we pushed on and reached the Cocos Islands at 10.30 a.m.

Cocos Harbour.

2. We entered by the channel between Horsburgh Island (on the right) and Direction Island (on the left), and, after steaming slowly for about a quarter of a mile into the lagoon, anchored in smooth water of between five and six fathoms. Ships drawing not more than 20 feet of water can easily enter and occupy this anchorage, which has a coral and sandy bottom and affords good holding ground.

Description of the Islands.

3. The islands present a much larger appearance than a cursory glance at the chart or the perusal of Forbes's book ("A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago") leads one to expect. I cannot better describe their general appearance than by borrowing from the language of the Rev. E. C. Spicer, a naturalist, whose researches Captain Adams was able to further by giving him a passage from Batavia to the islands. "The group of coral islands called the Cocos form a roughly broken circle nearly approaching the horse-shoe shape common to coral atolls. The islands are of varying size, some being from one to seven miles in length and others a few hundred yards, while the smallest are simply mounds of coral sand crowned by a few coco-nut palms. They are connected under very shallow water by the hard cement rock on which they rest, and which is formed by the disintegration, through the blows of the heavy surf, of an enormous quantity of corals and marine shells. Outside the islands, and nearly all round the group, a natural barrier protects the lagoon, and seawards of this bar there is a sudden slope into very deep water. The appearance of the exterior and of the interior of the islands is strikingly different. Towards the ocean the heavy surf breaks over the jagged rocks and washes large pieces ashore. The interior shores are quietly washed by a clear green shallow sea, and the smooth sandy beach forms a pleasant contrast to the green vegetation above it. The circle of the islands bounds a lagoon for the most part of very shallow water with pits of varying depth. The land is evidently rising, and, at some distant time, will form a circular island surrounded by a crater-like edge. The resemblance of the whole to a giant crater is very striking."

4. The islands are over 20 in number; they are, for the most part, very narrow, and, without any exception, are thickly planted with coco-nut palms. The beach is covered with pumice stone which was washed ashore some five months or so after the Krakatoa eruption in August 1883. The sand is the whitest and finest I have ever seen, and, under the microscope, shows the most minute shelly particles. The clearness and buoyancy of the water in the lagoon makes sea-bathing very pleasant, and, though sharks are said to abound, no accident has ever occurred.

Visit of Mr. Ross.

5. Immediately after the "Espoir" was brought to anchor Mr. Charles Ross, who, in the absence of his elder brother Mr. George Ross, is in charge of the islands, called on us. He was accompanied by a cousin, Mr. William Ross. I briefly explained the object of our visit, and Mr. Charles Ross repeatedly assured me that he and the other members of the family would be happy to render every assistance towards my inquiries. From the earnestness of his manner it was clear to me that our visit was a source of unmixed pleasure to him. He and some of the family at first thought that war had broken out and that therefore a man-of-war visited them, but when I told them that the head of the family had applied at home for a grant, Mr. Charles Ross at once explained that the laying of a telegraph cable from Batavia was their dream, and that they wished for definite relations with the British Government for the purposes of the cable. He corroborated his brother's statement that some old title-deeds were lost in a great fire that occurred in the island many years back, but I was never able to obtain from them any description of what the old deeds, referred to, consisted.

The Ross family.

6. The following is a list of the Ross family. I will preface it by saying that the family name is Clunies-Ross, every member of the family being so christened:—

- (1.) George Clunies-Ross, the present proprietor of the islands, is 44 years old. He was educated at Elizabeth College, Guernsey. Is married, and has nine children. He is at home now, and about to return by way of America. His wife and two of his children (a little girl and baby boy) are in the Cocos. Mrs. Ross is Cocos-born and talks no English, though she understands it. She was most civil and hospitable to us. I was her guest during the whole of the visit. The rest of this family, three daughters and four sons, are being educated at home.

- (2.) Isabella Baynton, 42, is the second of the family. She lives in London, is a widow, and has no children. She married a Captain Baynton, of the Royal Navy.
- (3.) Charles Clunies-Ross, 40, now in charge of the islands, was educated at the Madras College, St. Andrew's, and afterwards at St. Andrew's University. He is a strong, active man, and, like his brothers Edwin and Alfred, was a great foot-ball player, boxer and fencer in his younger days. He was brought up to engineering. He is married, and has a son and four daughters. His wife and three girls are in the islands. One daughter is at school in London, and the son had gone to Batavia in one of the provision schooners. He is a hard-working and astute man.
- (4.) Edwin Clunies-Ross, 38, was educated at the same places as his brother Charles. He was brought up to mercantile business, and was for a time in the Chartered Mercantile Bank at Batavia. He is married, and has three sons and three daughters, who are all in the islands. He is a handsome and very pleasant fellow.
- (5.) Eliza Clunies-Ross, 36, is a spinster and lives in London.
- (6.) Alfred Clunies-Ross, 34, was educated at Edinburgh University. He was a medical student but did not graduate. He lives at the Cocos and is the doctor of the place. He is a bachelor, an exceedingly well-informed man, talks well on most subjects, and is very popular with the natives. He is an excellent carpenter.
- (7.) Alexander Clunies-Ross, 32, was educated at the Madras College, St. Andrew's. He was brought up as a sailor. He is married and has two little girls. They all live at the Cocos. He is in charge of the boats, sails, &c.
- (8.) Andrew Ferguson Clunies-Ross, 27, was educated at the Edinburgh Institution. He commands the family schooner "J. G. C. Ross" now at Batavia. He married a short time ago.
- (9.) John Duncan Clunies-Ross, 25, is a bachelor. He is a farmer in Wellington, New Zealand. He was also educated at the Edinburgh Institution.

The above facts show that the Ross family is one that shows no signs of being likely to die out. They are a remarkably healthy-looking lot, and the brothers are fine muscular men of more than ordinary physique. The hard out-of-door life they lead is in itself healthy. They have been well educated, and are quick and intelligent. They can turn their hands to any kind of work, and take much trouble in teaching the people every description of handicraft. Their manners are extremely courteous, and what they call their "rough hospitality" is unbounded and thoroughly cordial.

7. The history of the islands, as I gathered it chiefly from Neh Basir, the oldest inhabitant, now in his eightieth year, is as follows :—

The Raja of Bandjer made a present of the old man's mother (together with a number of other people, about 200 in all), to Alexander Hare. Neh Basir's father was left behind in Bandjer, but his mother accompanied Hare to Malacca, and there Neh Basir was born. After a stay of a few years in Malacca, Hare left with all his people, wandered over Borneo and Java, going finally to Bencoolen. In 1820, when Sir Stamford Raffles was Governor of Bencoolen, Hare made up his mind to go to the Cape and, as it was necessary that he should take his followers there as freemen, he procured for all of them certificates of emancipation from slavery. Those of Neh Basir and of a girl Daphne, who afterwards became his wife, I have seen and I attach a facsimile of his certificate.* After a stay of nearly seven years at the Cape, Hare and his followers came over to the Cocos Islands in 1827, and found them quite uninhabited. In the meantime, *i.e.*, in 1825, the original Ross, the grandfather of the present proprietor, had come to these same islands and finding them unoccupied, had returned home to Scotland to induce people to come out and colonise them. When he returned in 1827, he found that Hare was there. Curiously enough, Hare had been brought there in a ship commanded by Ross's own brother, *viz.*, the "Melpomene," in which vessel Hare had a large share. The two factions lived on bad terms with each other, and though many of Ross's colonists left the place owing to its being already occupied, the Ross influence exceeded that of the Hare. Hare, an idle man of most eccentric habits, was gradually deserted by his followers who, headed by Neh Basir, went over to Ross. Finally Hare left the islands, and, it is said, came to Singapore to die.

* Not printed.

Annexation
of the Cocos.

8. In 1854 Ross died, and was succeeded by his son J. G. Clunies-Ross. The islands, which had been from time to time called at by ships of various nationalities, received a formal visit early in 1857 from H.M.S. "Juno." Captain Fremantle then took possession of the group in the name of the British Government, and appointed Mr. J. G. C. Ross to be Superintendent. The "Juno" remained some three months, and the incidents of her visit are strongly imprinted on the memories of some of the islanders. Before she left, a Russian man-of-war called in and saluted the English flag. I was so fortunate as to come across certain documents, of which I attach copies,* which clearly show what was done at the time. In 1862 a terrible cyclone devastated the islands. In 1864 H.M.S. "Serpent," a surveying ship, called there. In 1871, Mr. J. G. C. Ross died, and his eldest son, the present Superintendent, succeeded him. In 1875 another cyclone occurred. It was terrible in its fury. It killed the coco-nut trees on most of the islands, and destroyed the houses of the people and many of the brick buildings and factories of the Ross family. Three aneroids went past the lowest mark and stuck, the mercurials being dashed against the wall and broken.

Later history.

The British
flag.

9. It is admitted that before 1857 the Dutch flag was flown on Cocos vessels trading with Batavia, and in one of his letters Mr. J. G. C. Ross states that he was a naturalised subject of the Netherlands, but no one will admit that the flag of Holland has ever been hoisted on the islands themselves. The Ross family distinctly assured me that no other flag than that of England had ever been flown by them since 1857. This is corroborated by the older inhabitants. The inclinations of the family are decidedly British, and there is no reason to suppose that their assurances in this respect are open to the suspicion of a doubt.

Population.

10. The population of the islands is divided into two classes :—(a) Cocos-born Malays ; and (b) imported coolies from Bantam (Java).

The Census Statistics of past years were taken to Europe by Mr. George Ross, but the following figures for 1874, 1880, and 1885 will show that the population is on the increase. It is the policy of the Ross family to reduce gradually the number of imported coolies, but they encourage the permanent settlement of these coolies in the islands.

	Cocos-born.	Bantamese.	Total.
1874 - - - - -	292	198	490
1880 - - - - -	310	125	435
1885 - - - - -	377	139	516

In former years the coolies were convicts sent over for work in the Cocos by the Dutch authorities, but they were a turbulent set of men, and the last of them were sent away in 1875. This accounts for the falling off in the Bantamese population shown in the returns for 1880.

Census, 1885. The present population may be summarised as follows :—

	Male.	Female.
Cocos-born :		
Married - - - - -	63	63
Widowed - - - - -	8	11
Unmarried - - - - -	20	4
Children - - - - -	104	104
	195	182
Bantamese :		
Married - - - - -	30	30
Widowed - - - - -	2	5
Unmarried - - - - -	15	1
Children - - - - -	20	27
	76	63

* Not printed.

11. The registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages is compulsory. All births and deaths must be notified to the head of the Ross family within 24 hours, and any failure to do so is punishable with a fine. In the case of marriages it is obligatory on the married couple to go, immediately after the celebration of the marriage in the mosque, to the office of the Rosses. They are accompanied by their parents, by the elders of the village and by the chief priest, and the entry having been made in the register is attested by the priest and by a member of the Ross family. Divorces are also taken note of, an endorsement being made opposite to the marriage entry. Registration of Births, &c.

There have been 158 births since January 1, 1880. Of these, 85 were the births of boys and 73 of girls. Births.

In the same period there have been 57 deaths, 33 being males and 24 females. It is worthy of note that of the number of deaths no less than 35 resulted from beri-beri. An epidemic in 1883-84 carried off 24 people. Deaths.

There have been 91 marriages since 1855, of which number 23 have taken place since January 1, 1880. Marriages are celebrated in accordance with Mahomedan law. Amongst Malays in our parts of the Peninsula it is customary for the parents to arrange the marriages of their children, but at the Cocos the European custom is imitated, each man being at liberty to make his own choice. If the woman gives him any ground to hope that his attentions are not displeasing to her, it is customary for him to make some little ornament or article for use with his own hands and present it to her. The usual present made is a little comb made of tortoise-shell and worn in the back hair. One pretty little girl was in possession of eight combs so presented to her. She presented us with two of them which had been given to her by lovers who had since proved faithless. No man is allowed more than one wife. Marriages.

Divorces are by mutual consent and are obtainable in the forms prescribed by Mahomedan law. Only two have taken place since 1855. Divorces.

12. The exports of the place are copra, coco-nuts, coco-nut oil, bêche-de-mer, and mēngkudu (a bark used for dyeing purposes). The Cocos copra is said to command the highest price of any placed on the market, and the people attribute this fact to their patience in waiting till the nut falls from the palm instead of plucking it. From October, 1882, to the end of 1884, 1,527 tons were exported at an average price of 19*l.* per ton. The actual quantity of nuts used to make up this quantity was close upon 11 millions. Exports.

Coco-nuts are also exported to Batavia and elsewhere at the rate of nearly 1*l.* 18*s.* per thousand. During 1883 and 1884 half a million were so exported.

Coco-nut oil is manufactured in three qualities:—(a) hand-made cold-drawn; (b) hand-made cooked; and (c) machine-made oil; the first quality (a) commands a price varying from 31*l.* to 31*l.* 10*s.* per ton; the second quality fetches from 30*l.* 15*s.* to 31*l.* per ton; and the inferior quality (c) from 29*l.* to 30*l.* a ton. In all, of all three qualities, about 2,500 piculs are exported annually. Eighteen piculs (Dutch) equal one ton.

Bêche-de-mer has not been shipped for some years, but the seas abound in it and, on the return of Mr. George Ross, it is expected that the trade in this respect will be re-opened. The average price in former years was about 1*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* per picul.

The price of mēngkudu is said to vary very much. The last shipment fetched about 2*l.* per picul. About 60 tons are exported annually.

All produce for the European market is called for once a year by a chartered vessel. Produce for Batavia is sent up in the family schooners. Coco-nuts are sent to Batavia, coco-nut oil to London and Batavia, copra generally to Hamburg, once to Liverpool, and once to Lisbon.

13. All provisions are obtained from Batavia, one of the Cocos schooners making a trip for this purpose once a month. The imports include rice, sugar, flour, tea, coffee, tobacco, sago, pepper, gambier, gum benjamin, green peas, clothes, and turmeric. These stores are all kept by the Ross family and are sold to the natives on any day of the week that the people ask for them, except on Saturdays and Sundays. Anything special that the people ask for is ordered and sold to them. This year, for the first time, the Ross family tried the experiment of getting out a shipment of stores, &c., for the islands from London. They did so to the extent of 5,000*l.* worth. The invoices had not yet arrived, and the goods were not yet unpacked, but the shipment contains clothing, house and cooking utensils, crockery, cutlery, glass, mechanic's tools, guns, fishing rods and tackle, and all manner of articles of use. Imports.

14. The principal imported article of consumption is, of course, rice. This is served out to the people every Monday. It is calculated that each individual consumes 1 lb. per diem, and each family is allowed to buy to that extent. Sometimes the schooner may

be delayed by stress of weather or other causes and then the supply of rice may fall short. Whenever this happens (which it is said very rarely to do, but which was unfortunately the case when I was at the Cocos) the rice is served out sparingly, and each person can only buy half the allowance, but then he is only compelled to work three days a week, all extra work at such times earning extra pay. The measures used for meting out the rice are made out of and called "bamboos." One bamboo may be taken to be the equivalent of 1 lb.

5 bamboos of rice are worth R $\frac{1}{2}$ in copper.

7 bamboos a week is the quantity allotted to Bantamese coolies according to their contracts.

10 bamboos (the largest measure) = R1 in copper.

A rupee in copper, *i.e.*, Cocos currency, is taken to be equal to two-thirds of a silver rupee.

Fish. 15. The surrounding seas literally teem with fish and the natives are most expert boatmen and fishermen. They use the large and small nets known to Malays in the Straits, namely, the *jaring* and *jala*, but their chief skill lies in harpooning. It is very rare to see a man miss a shot with the harpoon, the accuracy with which they throw being little short of marvellous. On one occasion two or three of us were wading through coral shoals on our way out to a boat anchored in deeper water when a largish fish suddenly darted past us and, quick as thought, a Cocos man who was walking by me went after it. The chase was exciting. We could see the flashes of the fish as it darted backwards and forwards and as it turned, baulked by the man, who kept on cutting it off at angles. Finally, it went through a mass of sea-weed and we had made up our minds that it had escaped, when the man hurled his harpoon and returned with his prize—a fat "beard-fish," so called from the fact of its having two barbs hanging from its lower jaw. Green fishing is exciting work, some of the large green fish making great play. A member of our party caught one of these fish which weighed exactly 30 lbs. The parrot fish of a very beautiful greenish-blue colour abounds, and there are fine varieties of the red and grey mullet.

No fishing stakes or weirs are allowed—a useful regulation which gives the poor man an equal chance with his richer neighbour.

Coco-nuts. 16. As I have said before, all the islands are thickly planted with coco-nuts. In the Settlement and West Islands the space between the trees is kept clear and the appearance is more that of a plantation, but in the other islands all the nuts, leaves, and rubbish are allowed to accumulate. Two or three times a year a working party goes over, picks up and husks all the nuts and then leaves the refuse, sometimes burning it. The rotting away of all this rubbish, which is assisted by the working of small ants, forms a good manure for the trees. In some of the islands a regular undergrowth grows up, and in some, such as Direction Island, the wild and very sweet papaw grows luxuriantly.

The coco-nut trees are not stepped (monkey-laddered) here as they are everywhere else. The fruit has a very thick husk, the nut itself being small and in some cases quite diminutive. The kernel is very thick, and though the nut does not give much water it can produce more copra and oil than much larger nuts. The nuts assume all sorts of fantastic shapes, the most remarkable being the horned coco-nuts, which have excrescences like ram's horns growing outside the husk. The branching palms on West Island are very remarkable.

Sugar Toddy. The natives draw sugar from the palm, but no toddy is allowed to be made by them for their own use; it used to be, but it led to much drunkenness and Mr. George Ross had to forbid its manufacture.

Soap. Soap is made by placing ashes on a perforated board, and by pouring on water which dissolves the potash, causing it to trickle through. It is then mixed with coco-nut oil, is tested by hand, and boiled till it becomes thick, when it is cooled down in a pan.

Vinegar. Vinegar is also made. It is merely toddy put into a bottle, corked down and left to stand for a fortnight.

Bread. The Cocos process of making bread is very simple. The flour is placed in a large tray, salt is sprinkled over it, and toddy of two kinds (sweet and bitter) is added in small quantities by means of a ladle. All is well mixed and, in a good sticky state, is beaten on a table sprinkled over with flour; it is then raised in both hands high above the head and banged down over and over again on the table and when well beaten is put into moulds. At the end of three hours from the time the process commenced, it is placed in the oven and baked.

17. Since 1874, 18 ships from Australia, have called for water, which is put on board at a charge of 10s. per ton. In 1879 four of these ships came in, but as a rule only one calls in each year. The last ship that called arrived on the 17th of July 1884. The islanders can put about 40 tons of water on board a ship in a day. They used to have a flume 80 yards long, with cast-iron pipes running from Settlement Island into the sea to carry the water, but it was destroyed in the 1875 hurricane and has not been repaired since. Ships calling for water.

18. The Bantamese coolies are engaged by the Rosses' Agent (Messrs. Tidman, Balfour & Co.) in Batavia, and they receive what is called a sea-pass to enable them to proceed to the Cocos:— Imported labour.

(Translation.)

No.

SEA-PASS.

Good for one Year.

Residency, Batavia.

Division Town and Suburbs.

Permission is hereby granted to the natives to travel by sea from here to the Cocos Islands by the Cocos Islands Schooner taking with them baggage.

Under obligation that in case of longer stay than 24 hours at the place of destination, or any intervening place, this pass must be presented for *visé* to the head of the local Government.

Batavia, the

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For the Assistant Resident of Police,
The First Commis.

Their engagements are for such terms as they agree to, generally for 10 years, but in a few cases they have engaged for three years only. They receive an allowance of seven bamboos of rice a week, firewood, coco-nut oil, salt, and medicines, free. They are allowed small plots of land and get the materials to build in the same way as the Cocos-born. They may take coco-nuts for their own use from South Island at any time between noon on Saturday and sunset on Sunday, and they may fish wherever they like. Their pay is Rs. 10 a month for nutting, and they must for this husk four hundred nuts a day. For other work they are paid Rs. 8 a month. Three Bantamese have been registered as naturalised Cocos-men, having expressed their determination never to leave the islands. Four others have been in the islands for over 20 years; 17 more have lived there for more than 15 years. Thus it will be seen that no less than 24 men, out of a total of 47, have overstayed the terms of their engagements. It is not at all uncommon for them, when their agreements have expired, to go back to their country with a free passage and to again return on the same terms. constant in law

There are actually 42 able-bodied coolies at work, and of these 14 have credit balances with the Ross family ranging from 20 to 254 guilders. The above facts establish pretty clearly the conclusion that the Bantamese may be looked upon as likely to become permanent settlers. When once married they generally make up their minds to stay in the islands with their families.

The matrimonial customs of the Bantamese are peculiar. They have to send to Batavia for wives, whom in many cases they have not known before they come to the islands. No Cocos-born will intermarry with the Bantamese or "coolies" as they are called, so when a cooly wants a wife he goes to the Ross family and asks that one may be imported from Batavia. In some cases, where the men have a good credit balance lodged with the Rosses, they take an advance and go and choose their wives. As a general rule, however, the Rosses send to their agents for the women in such number as they are required, and, on the arrival of the schooner with the women, the applicants for wives make their choice, and, after celebrating the marriage, make the necessary entry in the register. Their private life is not so moral as that of the Cocos-born, but there is not much serious crime. Eleven years ago some of them made off with one of the island schooners, but they were re-captured. None of that gang are here now. Fifteen years ago, one of them killed his wife and was sent to Batavia for punishment by the Dutch authorities.

I had a long, quiet talk with their Pënghûlu, Satipan, who first came here in 1868, returned to Batavia in 1880, and came back to the islands after a short absence. He is in every way contented and has no complaint to make either on his own account or that of any of his people.

Currency.

19. The currency of the place is paper money, stamped notes of sheep-skin signed by the head of the Ross family. They are of six values, viz., $\frac{1}{4}$ rupee, $\frac{1}{2}$ rupee, R. 1, Rs. 2, Rs. 3, and Rs. 5.

The following fac-similes will explain the notes;—

COCOS.		COCOS.	
<i>f</i> c. $\frac{1}{4}$.	20/9/79	<i>f</i> c. 3.	5/10/79
Exchange for the Sum of one quarter Rupee Copper.		Exchange for the Sum of three Rupees Copper.	
G. C. ROSS.		G. C. ROSS.	
20/9/79	<i>f</i> c. $\frac{1}{4}$.	/79	<i>f</i> c. 3.

They are convertible into money at the office of the Ross family at the rate of two-thirds of a rupee* in silver.

20. The wages paid for labour are at different rates in guilders, some of which are as follows:—a trained blacksmith, *f*. 12.50 a week; a carpenter, from *f*. 4 to *f*. 7.50; a mason, *f*. 6; coxswains of boats and overseers, *f*. 6; boatmen, *f*. 3.50; nutters, who must collect and deliver the nut husked, *f*. 1 for every 500 coco-nuts. Bantamese contract coolies, able-bodied men working at nutting, *f*. 10 a month; second class or weak coolies, *f*. 8 a month. Washing is done at the rate of *f*. 1 for 12 pieces.

From inquiries made amongst the natives I take these rates of wages to be put at the maximum rate.

21. The records kept of thermometer readings for 1874 give the following result:—

Meteorological Returns.

	Lowest Temperature.	Highest Temperature.
January	77	87
February	75	88
March	77	86
April	74	84
May	76	86
June	75	85
July	74	85
August	74	85
September	72	86
October	76	86
November	76	86
December	74	86

The barometer varied as follows in 1884:—

January	- - - - -	29.89 to 29.98
February	- - - - -	29.79 „ 29.97
March	- - - - -	29.68 „ 29.93
April	- - - - -	29.65 „ 29.90
May	- - - - -	29.70 „ 29.98
June	- - - - -	29.80 „ 29.98
July	- - - - -	29.85 „ 29.98
August	- - - - -	29.85 „ 29.98
September	- - - - -	29.82 „ 30.00
October	- - - - -	29.00 „ 29.99
November	- - - - -	29.00 „ 29.92
December	- - - - -	29.74 „ 29.99

Health.

22. It is easy to believe that the islands are most salubrious, and the statistics prove this. The only diseases feared are beri-beri and dropsy, and the former is much dreaded. The outbreak of 1883-84 was caused, it is supposed, by the clearing of one of the islands, and the only treatment found to be efficacious is to send the sufferers to the North Keeling Island, where they are well cared for, and put under a course of drinking a certain mineral water in which they have great faith. The North Keeling Island is

* [Two-thirds of a rupee seems a mistake; it should apparently read "five-sixths of a guilder" see footnote on page 30, par. 54 on p. 46; and par. 13 on pp. 83, 84]

looked upon as the sanatorium of the place. I attach a copy of the analysis,* made by the Dutch medical authorities, of this mineral water, and I have brought a small cask full of the water with a view to its being analysed by our medical authorities.

23. The South-East monsoon is considered the coolest and healthiest time of the year in the Cocos, the months of June, July, and August being considered the best. They are accompanied by fresh breezes and frequent rains, and, if the weather that we experienced is a criterion of what they get every year at this time, I can only describe it as delightful. September, October, and November are very dry. Winds very variable, and beri-beri and diarrhoea are feared during these months. December, January, and February are looked upon as the cyclone months; they are very stormy and treacherous (especially December), fine days being followed by ugly weather and *vice versa*. Thunder and lightning with violent gusts of wind and heavy showers make the people very anxious about their shipping and boats, and the coco-nuts suffer to an appreciable extent. The weather experienced in March, April, and May is said to be much the same as that of September, October, and November, but sickness is not so much dreaded in the earlier as in the later months. Climate.

24. I visited the Guard House which is just outside Ross's house. It is a sort of Police Station, but there is no proper Police Force in the islands. Every night watchmen are placed over the Settlement. For this purpose the village is divided into three divisions, and there is a bell in each division which is rung to turn out the different watches. These watches begin at 6 p.m. and last till 6 a.m. Each watch lasts for three hours, and the first watch, *i.e.*, that which is on guard from 6 to 9 p.m. also takes the last watch, *i.e.*, that from 3 to 6 a.m. The duties of the watch are to go round from one end of the village to the other, and to check the watches of each division, to examine all boats at anchorage, to inspect all house-fires and put out all fires in kitchens. Lights are allowed in houses, and, in fact, the coolies (Bantamese) never sleep without lights, but no kitchen fires are allowed, except in cases of sickness, which are at once reported by the watchmen to the doctor who goes to see the cases. Administrative Regulations.

In the Guard House public notices are posted. There is one warning people against stealing boat sails or any articles from their neighbours' boats or houses, or from receiving any stolen property. The penalty for offending in this direction is laid down as follows:—for the first offence 25 dollars, for the second offence 50 dollars, for the third offence deportation, to be accompanied by a letter to Batavia, branding the offender as a disreputable character (*tanda yang bangsat*).

There was also a notice laying down certain sanitary regulations rendered necessary by ravages of beri-beri. All houses and gardens are to be kept clean, and everything is to be buried deep, and at some distance away from the sea-beach. An inspector is to go round and examine the premises of the people, and if they are found to be dirty, they are forthwith to be cleaned, and all expenses incurred thereby are recoverable from the occupiers. There is also a further penalty calculated in proportion to the state of dirt in which the premises are found to be.

25. The Cocos-born men are fine specimens of Malays, being muscular and hardy. They are great at boating and fishing, and they are not as indolent as our Straits Malays, being, as they are, compelled to do a certain amount of work. The women are a remarkably nice-looking lot, dressing well, and carrying themselves very upright. The Cocos-born.

In Mrs. Ross's house the servants are all girls, and are called "Baboos." They are six in number. Two are cooks, and four look after the children and wait at table. There are also two sempstresses. They are Cocos-born, and are taken on when quite little children and taught. They move about noiselessly and are most attentive. When they marry they leave the service of their employers. Many of the natives eat with knife, fork, and spoon. They have mattresses and curtained beds spotlessly clean; they spread white table-cloths on their tables, use a brush and comb, have little ornaments for their tables, and decorate the insides of their houses with cuttings from illustrated papers and cartoons from "Vanity Fair." It is left very much to the women to attend to the arrangement of the insides of the houses and to the cooking. The houses are, taken all round, much better built than Malay houses in the Straits. They are built nearer the ground; the foundations are thick coco-nut stems; the sides are made of the mid-ribs of the fronds of coco-nuts and the roofs of the fronds themselves. The whole appearance is one of great compactness and neatness, and the most striking feature is the great tidiness in trimming the insides of the roofs; this presents a most finished appearance

* Not printed.

The language spoken here differs in many words from the Malay of the Straits. The people sometimes failed to grasp a word or two when I spoke to them or *vice versa*, but it was quite simple to make oneself understood, and any word that was strange to them was easily made intelligible by a little explanation. I attach a small glossary* showing the principal differences I came across. I am sorry there was not time to pay more attention to the subject. A curious custom I have not met with elsewhere obtains amongst these islanders. When a man becomes the father of a son, he is no longer called by his own name, but is familiarly known by that of his eldest son with the prefix "Pa" added to it. Thus the chief priest, whose own name is Samā, has a son named Satli, and is now always called Pa-Satli.

Each native of the place is allowed to build a house and get the materials free so far as the coco-nut tree provides these materials. Coco-nut oil and firewood are also given gratis. Each person is allowed a plot of ground 100 by 20 yards, and all coco-nut trees inside the ring-fence they put up are theirs. Each family may take coco-nuts for their own use, free from charge at any time between noon on Saturday and sunset on Sunday from any of the islands except Horsburgh and West Islands and part of South Island. They may fish anywhere they like.

Poultry. 26. Poultry is, of course, plentiful, all the people keeping fowls and ducks. They do not, however, strike one as thriving particularly well, with the exception of those kept by some of the Ross family. These latter are crossed with some Dorking fowls brought out from home and make a good breed.

One noticeable thing is an affection from which most of the fowls suffer. Malays would at once explain it by saying they were "sakit angin" (sick from the air), and no doubt this is the case. Their walk is of the most groggy kind, and I fancy the strong breeze always blowing over the island has a good deal to do with it, exercising, as it must do, a baneful influence over young chickens.

In some of the islands fowls have been turned loose and have become quite wild. In Direction Island, for instance, there are about 200 fowls so turned out; some little thatched huts are built for them to roost in, and coco-nut-leaved baskets are provided for their nests. They are very shy and wild, fly like pheasants, and have regular breeding seasons.

Deer. In Horsburgh Island there are some 30 or 40 deer. They were originally brought from Java and Sumatra, and the Ross family amuse themselves by shooting them now and again. They are stalked, not driven. When hard pressed they will take willingly to the water, and in some cases have been known to swim out to the barrier, which is some considerable distance from this island. They greatly resemble the Sambur deer met with in the Straits.

Sheep. There are about 30 sheep on Settlement Island; they belong to the natives, who are very loth to part with them. We succeeded in buying one for seven rupees.

Turtle and game. Turtle are brought every trip of the schooner which puts in to some islands out of Batavia where the crew are landed to catch them. They are kept in the turtle pond on West Island, being preserved there for the use of the Ross family. In Horsburgh Island there are also a few rabbits, imported by the Ross family; and landrail, a very pretty grey and brown speckled species, abound. They run very fast, fly if pressed, and afford much the same sort of shooting as quail. Jungle fowl are found on most of the larger islands.

Sea-birds. Forbes gives a full account of the sea-birds which are found in great number on the islands. He accurately describes their extraordinary habits. The two most interesting are without doubt the large Frigate-bird and the beautiful little white tern. In North Keeling Island they are knocked down by the islanders (who made regular trips there in fair weather to get sea-birds), with a long pole and a long brass chain at the end of it.

Reptiles. There are no snakes in the islands, and centipedes, scorpions, and tarantulas are but rarely met with.

Vegetables, fruits, and flowers. 27. Little or no vegetable gardening is done either by the Ross family or the natives, and this is, to say the least, surprising as the soil and climate is good and as vegetables would so pleasantly relieve the monotony of food in the Cocos. Pumpkins grow well and grow everywhere. There are not many fruit trees in the islands, and what there are are common to the Straits, such as bananas, papaws, and guavas. There is one specimen of banana which, as the Rosses told me, is peculiar to the Cocos. I have not tasted it elsewhere, and it is a very good plantain of medium size, with a very thick skin.

* Not printed.

There are some fig trees in the gardens of Ross's house. They do well, and their fruit was most enjoyable. Unfortunately for us they are not common to the Straits.

A species of orange tree with a very small red berry, some trees of which in the Malacca Stadt House enclosure are known to many of us, is found in great quantity on Settlement Island. Most of the hedges are made entirely of it, and a capital hedge it makes.

The rose and honeysuckle are much cared for, and the latter grows very luxuriantly. There are not many flowers, but some of the oriental flowers found in every garden in the East, such as the *Hibiscus* and *Four-o'clock* flower, are, of course, met with.

On the way from the village to the Rosses' house there are numerous very fine trees of *casuarina* planted by the grandfather of the present family.

28. The useful woods of the islands are twelve in number. They may be described as follows:—

(1.) Klāpa	-	-	-	-	-	Coco-nut.
(2.) Nibong	-	-	-	-	-	A palm.
(3.) Mengkudu	-	-	-	-	-	Bark used for dyeing purposes.
(4.) Kēmuning.	-	-	-	-	-	
(5.) Jambu	-	-	-	-	-	Rosea jambosa.
(6.) Melati Utan.	-	-	-	-	-	
(7.) Latohi	-	-	-	-	-	Makes good furniture.
(8.) Nyamplong.	-	-	-	-	-	
(9.) Waru	-	-	-	-	-	Rope is made from the bark.
(10.) Grongang	-	-	-	-	-	} A kind of iron-wood, used for boat-building.
(11.) Grongang	-	-	-	-	-	
(12.) Kayu Būrong	-	-	-	-	-	Very heavy, and sinks in water.

29. To give an idea of the extent of some of the smaller islands and some description of those that have not been mentioned in the earlier portions of this report, I will mention two walks I undertook. In the first walk, as Mark Twain would say, I made use of a small Rob Roy canoe, a beautiful little boat built by one of the Rosses' in watertight compartments, and cased in cork; but on the second occasion there was no possibility of using the canoe, as the water was so shallow for a long way out into the lagoon that I had to walk and wade all the way. We landed from the "Espoir" at the nearest end of Direction Island (Pulau Tikus, i.e., Mouse Island), and walked through the island. It is about one-and-a-half miles long, and is over half a mile broad in some parts. The barrier comes close up to the back of the island, and the surf breaks with great force over the bar at the further end, forming a deep and wide pool between it and the lagoon. We paddled over into shallow water and then poled along, keeping quite close to the barrier. The sandy bottom was simply littered with bêche-de-mer of all sizes and colourings. We saw several fish, and one of the two boatmen harpooned one in the most marvellous manner. He must have been a big fellow, for his struggles shook the harpoon about with a fair amount of violence. Finally he shook it off and got away. In a small canoe it is not reassuring to have two men standing up, one poling and the other throwing harpoons at fish, but these men went through these feats without unsteading the boat. We passed alongside of Pulau Pasir (Sand Island), a tiny islet with five coco-nut trees on it, and landed and went over Pulau Bras (Rice Island), marked on the chart "Prison Island." It is quite round, and is covered with white sand evidently silted over some large rocks, as the sand is over 30 feet high in some places. There are some 40 coco-nut trees growing on it. At the back is a large barrier of coral, inside the great bar, and the beach is simply covered with pumice. We next went to Pulau Gangsa (Goose Island) marked on the chart "Alison or Burial Island." There we landed, and my companion made some sketches illustrating the mode of burial customary with these islanders. We then crossed over to Settlement Island (Pulau Nonia, married woman). This ended the first walk, in the course of which we must have covered five miles.

30. The next day we sent our canoe on to South Island, and we walked through the following islands and islets, wading through the intervening patches of sea and coral beds. We started at 8 a.m. and did not complete our journey till 1.30, having gone fully 11 miles. All the islands were covered with coco-nuts, and are, in their order:— (1) Pulau Kechil (small); (2) Pulau Ampang (weir); (3) Pulau Blēkoh (crane); (4) Pulau Keimbang (flower); (5) Pulau Bangka (a man's name); (6) Pulau Pandang (a palm tree); (7) Pulau Gray; (8) Pulau Siput (shell); (9) Pulau Jembātan (bridge); (10) Pulau Labu (pumpkin); (11) Pulau Bundar (round); and (12) Ujong Pulau D'Kat (the nearest extremity), which adjoins South Island. All these islands are gradually becoming connected.

North
Keeling
Island.

31. It was a source of much disappointment to me that we were unable to visit North Keeling Island, which is the largest of the islands, and which is said to contain much that is of interest. It is some 15 miles to the northward. The Rosses would not pilot us over at first, as they said the surf was breaking very heavily at the time, and during the last two or three days of our stay I was laid up and unable to make an attempt.

Administra-
tion of the
Islands.

32. I made it a point to hold conversations with the principal natives upon the subject of the administration of the islands. It was as difficult to find out from them what one wanted to know as it is to find out anything from a Malay. It was only by dint of making repeated guesses, and by finally guessing right, that I elicited anything. From only one native did I hear any serious grumbling, and the impression that I formed of him as being a discontented man was afterwards confirmed by some stories that were told me of his disappointment at not being made the head Pēnghūlu. At the same time his grievances in some respects were not imaginary, and are pretty generally shared in by the other islanders. They include the following points:—

The grievan-
ces of the
Natives.

- (a) The high price charged for all provisions.
- (b) The rate of exchange at which paper money is converted into silver.
- (c) The non-existence of any small shops in the islands.
- (d) The prohibition placed on all correspondence with people outside the islands.
- (e) The want of education.

I was assured that all provisions were charged for at very dear prices, and that purchasers could get nearly twice as much for their money in Batavia. No petty shopkeepers are allowed by the Ross family, but the natives are very anxious to get them. At present the question of money and of buying and selling provisions is an absolute monopoly. The Ross family have the game entirely in their own hands; the money used would not be received in payment or be exchanged by any one except by the Rosses themselves, and no vessels would be allowed to go and sell provisions or stores at the islands; if they did very few would be able to buy of them, and even those to a very small extent, as none other but hard cash would be accepted in payment. Of course I pointed out that the Rosses must make some profit, that it was their schooners, with a well-paid crew, that made the voyages to get provisions, that it was their money laid out in buying the stores, and that they ran all the risks: but at the same time I could not close my eyes to the arguments of the natives that it was hard on them to make a double profit out of them, first by charging high prices, and secondly by depreciating their money. One instance was cited to me more than once, viz., that of a man, who, when he left the islands to settle elsewhere, had saved Rs. 2,000, and, when he exchanged it for silver, only received from Mr. Ross Rs. 1,333, or so.*

The not allowing the natives to correspond with the outside world is not, I think, fair. No doubt it is done to prevent the holding out to the islanders of inducements to leave the Cocos, but it might be done away with. The Ross schooners are the only mail vessels, and so again they are masters of the situation. I was told by one of the family that the natives could write to whomever they liked, but the complaints made to me on the point were so numerous that I am satisfied there is some ground for them.

Education.

Formerly there was a system of education, but when the last schoolmaster left it ceased. It is essential that education should be introduced. There are two hundred and sixty children in the islands, and the Chief Priest finds it difficult to get the people to pay that attention to the observances of the Mahomedan law and religion which is so diligently paid by most Malays. It is clearly the result of their not having been educated. It would be well if the services of a good Malay teacher could be placed at the disposal of the Ross family.

Baptism of
some of the
Rosses.

On the last morning of our stay a very interesting ceremony took place, Mr. Spicer baptising Mrs. George Ross, Mrs. Edwin Ross, and eight children.

Return to
Singapore.

On the 28th, having completed my inquiries, we left the Cocos Islands in H. M. S. "Espoir" to return to Singapore. Before doing so I wrote a letter* to Mr. Charles Ross, and it was signed jointly by Captain Adams and myself, thanking him and the other members of the family for the extreme kindness and courtesy extended to us during the whole of our visit. Nothing was left undone by any of them that could have been done to help to make my inquiries as searching as possible.

* See explanation in paragraph 13, on pp. 83-84.

Captain Adams took some 20 photographic views and groups.

Before concluding I would wish to express to Captain Adams, through the Government, my appreciation of the obligations under which he has laid me by the great kindness shown to me by him during the expedition.

ERNEST WOODFORD BIRCH,
Second Assistant Colonial Secretary, S. S.

Singapore, 15th September 1885.

Enclosure 2 in No. 1.

REPORT by Lieutenant and Commander HORACE R. ADAMS, R.N., of a visit to the Cocos-Keeling Islands.

"Espoir" at Batavia,

September 4, 1885.

SIR,

WITH reference to your Memorandum dated 10th ultimo, I have the honour to submit the following report on my visit to the Cocos-Keeling Islands. I arrived there on Thursday, the 20th August, and made a stay of eight days, leaving on Friday, the 28th of August. Soon after we anchored, Mr. Charles Clunies-Ross, who is at present in charge of the Islands, came off with his cousin, Mr. William Ross, to call on me, and I explained to him the nature of my instructions. It was with regret that I learned that the proprietor of the Islands, Mr. George Clunies-Ross, had not as yet returned from a visit to Europe, but his absence in no way impeded the inquiry, as every possible facility was rendered to me, and to Mr. Birch, by Mr. Charles Clunies-Ross and by the other members of the family.

2. Referring first to the "heads" under which you desire me to report in your Memorandum above-mentioned, I have the honour to state as follows:—

- I It is quite clear to my mind from the earnest assurances of the Ross family, and this was corroborated by the natives in conversation with Mr. Birch, that no other flag but the British has been flown on the Islands, certainly since the visit of H.M.S. "Juno" in 1857. Previous to the taking over of the Islands in that year, it is admitted that the family schooner traded to Batavia under the Dutch flag, but none of the family will admit that the Dutch flag has ever at any date been hoisted on the Islands. On our entering the harbour we found one of the schooners, the "Tweed," at anchor there; she was flying the English ensign, and is registered in Glasgow.
- II. The Islands are covered with cocoa-nuts, but produce little or nothing else. The surrounding seas abound with the most excellent fish. Ducks and fowls can be obtained in fair quantity. There are a few sheep in the Islands, but the natives do not care to part with them. The Ross family also preserve deer and turtle for their private use; the latter are brought in their schooners from some islands off Java. Fruit is very scarce, being principally confined to plantains and papaws. The water is very drinkable and the supply is large, being found on all islands except Direction Island. The Ross family state that if it were made worth their while they would gladly keep up a good supply of vegetables, fruit, and poultry; and there appears to be no reason why they should not do so, as the soil is good, and it only requires a little stimulus to encourage the people to go in for farming and gardening. At present, as the Ross family truly say, the people have only two ideas, *i.e.*, cocoa-nuts and fishing boats.
- III. The population of the Islands must be divided into two classes:—(a) the Cocos-born, and (b) the imported coolies. The former class is steadily increasing, but the latter, except when the coolies desire to permanently settle in the Islands, is being allowed to decrease. These coolies come from the Province of Bantam in Java, and it is the policy of the Ross family to do away, ultimately, with all imported labour. There are at present 376 Cocos-born and 139 Bantamese. In the last four and a-half years the number of births registered in the Islands has exceeded the number of deaths by exactly 100.

B 3

- IV. Coal could be stored on Direction Island, but a floating stage 40 feet long would be required, as, owing to the coral bottom, piles for a pier could not be driven. At a distance of 40 feet from the shore there is six feet of water. Mr. Ross states that it has always been their hope that the Islands would become a coaling station.
- V. Mr. Charles Ross assures me that any amount of labour would be forthcoming in the event of the Islands being made a coaling station. At present there are about 130 adult working hands on the Islands. Lighters would either have to be sent out in pieces, or built on the Islands. (*See paragraph 4.*)
- VI. All labour is paid for. The coolies are imported under agreements for terms varying from three to ten years. They seem happy and contented. The Cocos-born men receive fixed rates of wages, which range from 2 rupees to 12-50 rupees a week. The latter rate is only paid to expert mechanics.
- VII. Cocoa-nuts form the staple produce of the Islands. From them is made copra, cocoa-nut oil, vinegar, sugar, and soap. Everything else has to be imported, and once a month one of the schooners is sent to Batavia with produce and for supplies, the chief of which latter is rice. It, with all other supplies obtained, is stored by the Ross family and served out to the natives at something over the market price.
- VIII. The current coin of the place consists of parchment notes, signed by the head of the Ross family. They range in value from $\frac{1}{4}$ rupee to 5 rupees copper. A specimen is attached. I should explain that a copper rupee is equal to five-sixths of a rupee silver. Mr. Ross objects to the circulation of hard coin in the Islands, giving as his reason that he could not then maintain discipline or control crime, as he is now able to do.
- IX. On an average three vessels in every two years call for water on their way with cargoes of horses from Australia to India. The charge for supply is about ten shillings per ton. It is stated by the Ross family that they can supply a ship with 40 tons of water a day. When these Australian vessels came regularly, a flume with cast iron pipes, 80 yards out into the sea, was constructed; it was broken in the hurricane of 1875 and has not since been repaired. In addition to these vessels a chartered vessel calls once a year to take produce for the European markets.
3. In your sailing orders of August 6th, you direct me to report upon the nature of the occupation of the Islands, the condition of the inhabitants, and the system of administration adopted by the Ross family. I can only say that the impression which must be left on the mind of anyone visiting the Islands is that it is extraordinary how, with no written laws, the Ross family have moulded the people into a well-behaved and law abiding community. The people, who are a well-made set of men, of better physique than the coolies, appear on the whole to be contented, and speak well of their treatment by the Ross family.
4. The Ross family consists of seven brothers and two sisters. The men are hardy, intelligent, and well-informed. They have all received a Scotch education, and have made up their minds to settle down in the Islands and intermarry (as five of them have done) with the natives. Each of them has been brought up to a profession, and they have used their knowledge by teaching different trades to the Cocos-born natives, who are excellent boatmen and boat-builders. It is worthy of record here, and the Ross family are justly proud of the fact, that they built a schooner of 178 tons in the Islands, which, when it was sent home last year, was classed A1 for 18 years by the Board of Trade.
5. Ships drawing not more than 20 feet can enter the lagoon, and when inside can anchor in smooth water in about six fathoms. The lagoon is gradually filling up with coral. The anchorage has a coral and sandy bottom, which affords good holding ground, the "Espoir" riding out some heavy squalls whilst there. The entrance could be easily defended by two lines of submarine mines, the wires being led into Direction Island, the other passage between West and Horsburgh Island being too dangerous for a ship to attempt.
6. The chart, according to the Ross family, cannot be improved upon. I am inclined to agree with them in this respect, but I regret that, owing to the very rainy and squally weather during our stay, it was not possible to verify it.

7. The south-east trade blows from May to October, being generally strongest in August. September to November are considered the driest, and December to February the most stormy months. Hurricanes are much dreaded during these months. The last bad hurricane was in January, 1875, and on that occasion four aneroids went past the lowest mark and remained jammed, the mercurial being dashed against the wail and broken. The Islands may be said to be very healthy, the only disease that causes any serious trouble being heri-beri.

8. The inhabitants keep regular watch at night on the Settlement against fire and over the boats, one of the Rosses taking charge every night. No fishing stakes are permitted, and a certain sized mesh must be used for their nets. Rats, which came out of a wrecked ship, are the curse of the Islands; they climb the trees and spoil large quantities of nuts. The beach of Direction Island is covered with pumice stone from the Krakatoa explosion, which came on shore five months after the great eruption of 1883.

9. I attach copies of some documents found by Mr. Birch, relating to the visit of the "Juno" to the Cocos Islands. They are important as showing the circumstances under which the British flag was hoisted in the Islands, and was saluted by a foreign vessel. They also show that a definite form of administration was proposed, but apparently never carried out.

10. Some copies of photographs which I took whilst at the Cocos Islands are attached.*

11. Mr. Forbes, in his book, "A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago," is substantially correct. We lent it to Mr. Charles Ross to criticise.

12. On account of the rough and squally weather we were unable to visit North Keeling Island, which is said to be the most interesting of them all.

I have, &c.

HORACE R. ADAMS,

Lieutenant and Commander.

Captain C. E. Buckle, R.N.,
Senior Officer,

Straits of Malacca Division.

No. 2.

COLONEL STANLEY to SIR F. A. WELD.

SIR,

Downing-street, January 6, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Smith's Despatch of 16th September last,† and to inform you that I have read with much interest the full and interesting report by Mr. E. W. Birch on the Cocos Islands, and that I agree with Mr. Smith that Mr. Birch performed the duty entrusted to him with ability and discretion.

2. Letters Patent will now be prepared revoking the Letters Patent of 10th September 1878, and appointing the Governor of the Straits Settlements Governor of the Cocos Islands. When the Letters Patent are issued I will address you further as to the nature of the grant that may be made to Mr. Ross confirming him in the occupancy of the islands.

3. I am now in communication with the Admiralty as to the possibility of a man-of-war being spared occasionally to make a visit of inspection to the islands, perhaps once a year.

4. In regard to the last paragraph of Mr. Birch's report, I am clearly of opinion that any restrictions on the natives corresponding with the outer world should be removed.

I have, &c.

F. A. STANLEY.

* Not included.

† No. 1.

No. 3.

SIR F. A. WELD to MR. STANHOPE

(Received November 15, 1886.)

Government House, Singapore,

October 1, 1886.

SIR,

IN accordance with the wishes of your predecessor, I have the honour to report that Mr. A. P. Talbot, Assistant Colonial Secretary, has, under my instructions, paid a visit of inspection to the Cocos Islands in H.M.S. "Zephyr," and I enclose a copy of his report.

Sept. 16, 1886.

2. It is to be regretted that Mr. George Ross, the proprietor of the islands, was again absent on the occasion of this visit, but I do not propose to deal with any questions relating to them until his return, when I shall hope to have an opportunity of discussing matters personally with him.

3. You will observe from the enclosed report that the Letters Patent of the 1st February 1886, appointing the Governor of the Straits Settlements and their Dependencies to be the Governor of the Cocos or Keeling Islands, and authorising the annexation of those islands to the Straits Settlements, were duly proclaimed by Mr. Talbot, in the presence of the inhabitants, and that a grant-in-fee of the islands to Mr. George Ross has been handed to his brother, Mr. Charles Ross, who is now in charge of the islands.

I have, &c.

FRED. A. WELD, Governor.

Enclosure in No. 3.

REPORT of Official Visit of Inspection to the Cocos Islands. August 1886.

1. WE arrived at the Cocos Islands in H.M.S. "Zephyr" on Friday, the 20th August, after a fairly quick passage from Batavia, and anchored at about 8 a.m., when we were visited by Mr. William Ross, a cousin of the present proprietor.

2. I was sorry to find that Mr. George Ross, the proprietor of the islands, had left for England some weeks before our arrival. I had heard this already in Batavia, and had also been informed there that one of the principal reasons for his leaving the islands again so soon was that he wished to lay before the authorities at home his own views and explanations on some points in last year's report which he did not consider fair to himself. This, however, I afterwards ascertained was not quite the case, as his brother informed me that he was obliged to visit England in order to have an operation performed, although he also said there were some statements in the report as to which he did wish to make some representations.

3. Soon after our arrival Captain Hope and I went on shore in Settlement Island and visited Mr. Charles Ross, who is now in charge of the islands. He expressed his regret at the absence of his brother, as he would not be able himself to give the full information and explanation on some points which he knew his brother would wish to be laid before the Governor.

4. I found that nothing whatever was known at the Cocos as to any action which had been taken by the Colonial Office since Mr. Birch's visit last year. Mr. Ross had not heard of the Letters Patent of the 1st February 1886, and had been very anxious for information as to what was being done.

5. I handed to Mr. Charles Ross the letters for his brother from His Excellency the Governor and the Colonial Secretary. I also showed him copies of the Letters Patent and the grant-in-fee of the islands, and arranged for the public reading of the Letters Patent.

6. On Sunday the 22nd I went on shore and stayed at an unoccupied house called the "bachelors' quarters," by Mr. Ross's invitation, until the following Friday. During this

time I had every opportunity of seeing the people and hearing all that they had to say, and also of obtaining information on various points, which he was most ready to give, from Mr. Charles Ross;

7. I am glad to be able to report, on the whole, satisfactorily on the administration of the islands. There is one point in regard to the Bantamese coolies, which I shall mention later, as to which some alteration may be desirable; but, generally speaking, the people appeared to me to be contented, and they are certainly not in any way harshly governed or ill-treated.

8. On Tuesday, the 24th, Mr. Ross gave all the people a holiday, and those who were at work on the other islands were brought in to Settlement Island in order to give them an opportunity of being present at the ceremony which had been fixed for that day. At 9 a.m. I read the Proclamation and the Letters Patent in the presence of Mr. Charles Ross and his three brothers, then in the islands; a fair number of the inhabitants, both Cocos-born and Bantamese coolies, and of Captain Hope and the officers of H.M.S. "Zephyr." A party of bluejackets and marines had been landed by Captain Hope's orders, and after I had finished reading the Union Jack was hoisted on a new flagstaff erected by Mr. Ross, a royal salute given, and *feu-de-joie* fired. I then handed to Mr. Charles Ross the Grant-in-fee of the islands in favour of his brother, Mr. George Clunies Ross, and the formal part of the ceremony was over.

9. I then explained in Malay to the people the meaning and effect of the new Letters Patent, and invited any who had a complaint to make, or any question to ask, to come to me. I was asked by some of the Cocos men whether it was intended that a Government officer should be sent to administer the government of the islands, and I informed them that there was at present no such intention; that Mr. George Ross would remain as before in local charge of the islands; but that the Governor of the Straits Settlements was now their Governor, and had sent me to hear any complaints or representations the people wished to make, in order that he might judge what action, if any, it would be desirable for him to take for the general benefit of the islands and the people; and I again invited them to speak to me and tell me any grievance they had. No Cocos-born man, however, came forward at this or any other time during my stay to complain, and I am of opinion that they have no serious grievances. They are not ambitious, nor particularly energetic, nor have they had experience of any better kind of life. They are kindly treated, and they find that in their present circumstances they can without difficulty earn sufficient to keep them, and with this they are quite content.

10. With regard to the Bantamese coolies, the case is somewhat different; they do not belong to the islands, and most of them, no doubt, desire at some time to return to their own country. Two men came forward on this occasion to me to say that they would like to go back to Java, and asking if they would be allowed to. On making inquiry into these cases, I ascertained (what appeared to me to be most extraordinary) that these coolies are not engaged under any written contract at all, and that the only document they bring with them is the "Pass," of which a copy is given in last year's Report. I could hardly believe this at first, but I inquired carefully, and Mr. Ross assured me that there was not a cooly in the islands who was under a written contract. Perhaps this is more a matter for the attention of the Netherlands Indian than of this Government, and I do not think that it would be of great importance if it was clear that the coolies themselves were aware that they are not bound to remain and work in the islands for an indefinite period, but that they were free to return to their country after giving due notice of their intention, and provided they were not indebted to their employers. I cannot, however, say that I am satisfied that this is the case; in fact, I feel convinced, from the questions put to me by coolies, that they consider themselves obliged to stay until Mr. Ross chooses to let them go. In connection with this it must be remembered that there are no means of return to Java, except by the schooner belonging to Mr. Ross. No coolie had, I found, so returned during the year since the last visit. I took care to explain to the two men who came before me and to all the others the true state of the case. No further complaints were made to me by the Bantamese.

11. The history and description of the islands, and of the Ross family and the Cocos people, have been so fully set out by Mr. Birch in his Report that I can add nothing as to these matters. I obtained some statistics regarding population, trade, &c., which I will now give in continuation of the figures in that Report.

12. The population of the islands has increased since August 1885 from 516 to 556 at the date of my visit ; the following table shows the number of each class, viz., Cocos-born people and Bantamese coolies :—

	Cocos born.	Bantamese.	TOTAL.
August 1885 - - -	377	139	516
August 1886 - - -	366	170	536

The numbers of births and deaths were :—

	Cocos-born.	Bantamese.	TOTAL.
Births - - - -	18	14	32
Deaths - - - -	7	9	16

Twenty-six new coolies arrived from Java, and two Cocos men left the islands in May last as sailors in a German barque which called there with an incomplete crew.

13. The general health of the people has been very good, though beri-beri still troubles them. Of the 16 deaths 10 were those of children, while, among the adults, there were five deaths from beri-beri, three of them occurring among the 26 new coolies.

14. The following table of reading of the thermometer from August 1885 to August 1886 was supplied to me :—

MONTH.	Highest.	Lowest.
	<i>Degrees.</i>	<i>Degrees.</i>
August 1885 - - - -	82	73
September „ - - - -	85	75
October „ - - - -	85	73
November „ - - - -	85	78
December „ - - - -	83	77
January 1886 - - - -	85	78
February „ - - - -	89	77
March „ - - - -	86	81
April „ - - - -	85	79
May „ - - - -	85	78
June „ - - - -	85	79
July „ - - - -	83	78
August „ - - - -	81	78

There is no rain-gauge in the islands, but Mr. Ross will be happy to furnish all such information as is now supplied from the meteorological stations in the colony if the necessary materials are sent to him with forms and instructions.

15. The only exports are still copra to Europe, and cocoa-nuts to Batavia. In July 1885, 330 tons of copra were shipped and fetched a price of 16*l.* a ton. On the 17th June 1886, 552 tons were shipped by the Italian barque “Clementina,” but the result of the sale is not yet known. A cargo of 280,713 nuts was taken by the schooner “Tweed” to Batavia on the day after we arrived ; this was the only shipment of cocoa-nuts during the year.

16. The only vessel besides the one named above which has called at the islands since the last visit is the German barque “Louisa,” which arrived in distress on the 3rd March, and left, after being repaired, for Bombay on the 19th May.

17. No new regulations for the punishment of crime or other purposes have been made since the last visit.

18. Only one offence was reported during the year, which was an attempt by one of the new coolies to escape from the islands, for which purpose he took a boat belonging to Mr. Charles Ross, and went after the German barque. From what I could gather he appears to have been unhappy on his first arrival in the islands, and slightly wrong in the head. He was rescued and brought back, and is now working contentedly. Mr. Ross informed me that this cooly was not punished in any way.

19. I made some inquiries regarding the particular grievances mentioned in paragraph 32 of last year's Report, but Mr. Charles Ross, though willing to give me all the information he could, particularly asked that no final opinion might be formed, and no action taken before the Governor had heard the representations which his brother wished to make. He referred especially to the first three subjects, viz. :—

- (a) The price of provisions.
- (b) The rate of exchange between Cocos money and guilders.
- (c) The want of small shops.

20. I did, however, make some inquiry as regards the first of these three, from which it appeared to me that the price charged for rice, which is the principal article imported and sold, was not unduly high when compared to the price charged to Mr. Ross in Batavia. As to tobacco I cannot say the same, as the price seemed to me rather exorbitant.

21. Mr. Ross distinctly denies that there is any restriction on correspondence with the outside world, and he brought before me two or three men who corroborated his statement, and said that they had themselves sent letters to Singapore and other places. Others whom I asked did not seem to know whether there was any such restriction or not.

22. I regret to say that matters have not in any way improved in regard to education since last year. Mr. Ross is anxious that some system of education should be introduced, but has not at present decided what steps it will be best to take. He has some idea of getting a clergyman to settle on the islands, and of setting apart for his use one of the islands, where a school would be established and the parents would be forced to send their children to reside. There is no one now resident in the islands who is capable of teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic.

23. We left the Cocos on our return voyage on the morning of Saturday, the 28th August.

September 16, 1886.

A. P. TALBOT,
Assistant Colonial Secretary.

No. 4.

SIR. C. C. SMITH to SIR H. T. HOLLAND.
(Received November 26, 1887.)

Government House, Singapore,
October 26, 1887.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to transmit for your information the enclosed copy of a Report by Mr. R. S. O'Connor, Senior Magistrate, Singapore, who was deputed by Sir F. Weld to pay the annual official visit to the Cocos-Keeling Islands this year.

2. I also enclose a copy of the instructions* which were given by Sir F. Weld's directions to Mr. O'Connor, who carried out the duty with which he was entrusted in a very satisfactory manner.

3. I propose to inform Mr. Ross of the general tenor of Mr. O'Connor's Report, and should he wish my assistance in obtaining any relaxation of the existing regulations in Netherlands India as to the emigration of labourers, I will communicate with the Governor General.

4. Sir F. Weld appointed Mr. George Clunies Ross and Mr. Charles Ross to be magistrates for the Cocos Islands; but the subject of introducing regulations for the purpose of dealing with crime is still under consideration. Mr. Ross has been supplied

* Not printed.
C 2

with copies of the Penal Code and of the Summary Criminal Jurisdiction Ordinance (No. XIII. of 1872), and he has asked for a longer time to consider them before any action is taken to make any portion of those enactments applicable to the Cocos Islands.

5. I think that Her Majesty's Government may be satisfied that the affairs of the Cocos Islands do not require at the present time any interference on my part. The people are happy and contented, and there are no reasonable complaints of any kind.

I have, &c.,
CECIL C. SMITH.

Enclosure in No. 4.

REPORT of Official Visit to the Cocos-Keeling Islands.

IN accordance with instructions received, as per margin, I embarked on board H.M.S. "Rattler," Lieutenant-Commander Maitland-Dougall, R.N., at 8 a.m. on September 15, 1887. We reached Batavia at 3.30 p.m. on the 19th, having been delayed 24 hours in Banka Straits, where we anchored in order to repair engines.

Naval,
1880-87,
September 12.

2. Here I called on Her Majesty's Consul, Mr. McNeil; also on Mr. Foster, senior partner of Tidman and Balfour, the Batavia agents of Mr. Ross. The Consul kindly supplied me with a list of Batavia prices. Mr. Foster informed me that it was now impossible to get coolies for the Cocos, owing to the passing of the new Ordinance prohibiting labouring coolies leaving Netherlands India. Mr. Foster also stated that Mr. Ross's people could send for anything they required from Batavia by the captain of the Cocos-steamer. This I inquired into on arrival at the Cocos.

3. Left Batavia morning of the 22nd. That night anchored in Bantam Bay, owing to the ship's engines breaking down, and we were detained in consequence of their repair until Monday the 26th, when we pursued our voyage, stopping same day at Anjer Head to telegraph to Senior Naval Officer, Singapore.

4. Arrived at the Cocos-Keeling Islands on the morning of the 29th, after a pleasant voyage, excepting the last 36 hours, when the weather changed. There were heavy squalls and a high sea running as we approached the Islands. Mr. Ross informed us this kind of weather had prevailed for several months, beginning with a destructive gale in February last.

5. Mr. Edwin Ross and his cousin William came off to pilot us into a better anchorage, after which Captain Dougall and I went on shore, where Mr. George Ross received us, and kindly invited us to put up in the Bachelors' Quarters.

6. We sighted North-Keeling Island early in the morning, and, owing to having been carried by the current too much to the westward, we had, a little later, a good view of the whole group, their extent and height above the water being greater than I expected, and with the high surf breaking over the barrier reef in every direction they presented a very imposing sight. The lagoon in which we anchored also impressed me by its size, being nine miles in length from the entrance between the Horsburgh and Direction Islands to the Southern, and is seven miles wide. Settlement Island, the one on which we landed, is a good size, and from Mr. Ross's house, which is close to the landing, there is good walking for 28 miles, to the extreme end of West Island. In the islands, excepting North Keeling, where there is no cultivation, there are in all five square miles under cocoa-nut tree cultivation, and two miles waste. Mr. Ross is very busy changing his workshops to a more sheltered position on the Home Island, and is laying down a small tram to lessen the labour. He has also commenced the foundation of a new house, the bricks for which he had imported from Scotland; the work is delayed by Mr. Ross having lost all his brick-masons, and having to teach new ones. The new flag staff is to be erected here, the temporary one put up on the occasion of Mr. Talbot's visit being blown down in the storm of February last.

7. Mr. Ross confirms what I heard from his agent in Batavia about the difficulty of procuring coolies, it being impossible to get labour from Batavia, owing to the Dutch authorities having passed an ordinance forbidding any one leaving Netherlands India to labour in a foreign country. Mr. Ross is gradually introducing more machinery; with the help of this, and his own Cocos-born people increasing, he may in a few years be

able to dispense with outside help. In the meantime he is very short-handed in the nutting season, and an addition of 30 or 40 men would be very acceptable. Perhaps our Government might be able to aid in this matter by addressing the Government of Netherlands India. Any men engaged would, of course, be placed under contract. Mr. Ross gives very liberal wages, and seems to treat his people very kindly. He has no fear but that he could get all the labour he required were it not for the restraint put on labour emigration by Netherlands India.

8. Mr. Ross is anxious to get one or two men with some knowledge of gardening, Chinese if possible, from Singapore. I have promised to inquire about this, and to consult the Chinese Protector on the subject.

9. I see no reason to doubt Mr. Ross's statement, in his memorandum to Government, that his people are allowed free liberty to correspond with their friends. He repeated it to me, and I believe it to be perfectly true, and no complaints were made to me on this point. On inquiry I found the agent's statement correct in regard to the islanders being allowed to send for any supplies they require from Batavia. The captains of Mr. Ross's steamers go round, before starting for Batavia, to get lists of requirements.

10. On speaking to Mr. Ross on the subject of people opening independent shops, he informed me that he would only be too happy if others undertook the trouble and loss, for loss there often is. As things are sold now, compared with the prices in Batavia, and taking into consideration the cost of the up-keep of the two schooners, pay of two captains, and crews, commission to agents, boat and coolie hire, there would seem little margin for profit.

Appended is a Memo.* of the average prices of flour, rice, and tobacco, taken from Mr. Ross's books, for the last 15, 16, and 17 years. It will be seen by this memo. that, excepting flour, there is no profit made, rice and tobacco being sold at a loss.

11. With regard to the price list procured in Batavia, Mr. Ross tells me the prices quoted for rice and flour are too low, being taken from the ordinary market list for goods of inferior quality. His people will not eat the cheap rice. I examined the rice in store, and it appeared good. Mr. Ross has commenced to get stores, clothing, &c., direct from England, at wholesale prices, direct from the manufacturers, being better in quality, and more reasonable. I inspected the first consignment, and all seemed satisfactory.

12. The rate of exchange† has not been altered from what it was fixed at in Mr. Ross's grandfather's time. 100 cents Cocos currency equal to 1 rupee or $\frac{1}{12}$ guilders. No complaints were made to me with regard to this matter.

13. Barometer and thermometer readings (*see* Appendix).

14. Rain-gauge not yet set up, as a suitable building is not ready.

15. Fifteen persons sick at this date. Half of these from Beri-beri and the remainder from fever. Toddy drinking is the bane of the Bantamese, and Mr. Ross is sorry he sees no way of stopping the supply as toddy is required for the making of sugar and soap; to stop the extracting of toddy stops the making of these necessary and useful commodities. I suggested giving free licenses to certain people, but this, Mr. Ross said, would deprive others of a free right to make sugar, and he would not like to make such a restriction; otherwise the health of the island is good; most of the deaths occurring from beri-beri, imported Java fever, and infants dying shortly after their birth.

16. *Census*.—Corrected return only given me the day before I left. I regret to say I did not compare it with former returns, until after leaving the settlements. It appears that either last, or this, year's figures, are not correct, but this can be explained by Mr. Ross, to whom I have written for his further report.

17. *Crime*.—There has been none since last inspection, and no punishments. I have had several conversations (as requested by Government) with Mr. Ross as to the advisability of introducing part of the Penal Code and Summary Jurisdiction Ordinance. He seems very averse to altering present regulations (regarding which see

* Not printed.

† See also para. 13 on pp. 83-84.

paragraph 24 of Mr. Birch's Report), or introducing into his Islands new laws of any kind, and I must say that, for various reasons, as far as I can judge, I am very much of his opinion. Since his father's death in 1871 he has, with the aid of his brothers, when present, and the moral support of his Cocos-born men, kept perfect order in the Islands, and there has been a wonderful absence of crime. To make new regulations, or to introduce new laws into such a peaceful community, would, in my opinion, be only an incentive to crime. It must be remembered there are no means at hand, such as jails, police machinery, &c., wherewith to carry out a sentence. In the future, should the Islands be put in more direct communication with the outer world, other regulations will be necessary. At present they are not required.

18. With the help of his people Mr. Ross has steadily improved the Islands, and the condition of every one living on them. Everything a mechanic or carpenter can turn out is made on the Island; these crafts have been taught entirely by Mr. Ross. He built a 95-ton schooner, which he sailed himself to England, bringing most of his family with him, and it is a model of strength and speed, being classed A1, 18 years, at Lloyd's. Most of his men are splendid sailors, they man his schooners, and cross the bay in their fishing-boats single-handed in all weathers. I visited nearly every house in the settlement, both of the Cocos-born and Bantamese. Every house was a model of cleanliness and order, being furnished almost similar to European dwellings, with tables, chairs, beds with curtains, cutlery, crockery, &c., some being ornamental with pictures, others had store rooms in addition, containing sugar, oil, soap, &c. Some of the houses of the coolies were not so tidy as the Cocos-born, but this was accounted for by the fact of their having to keep up two places; one in the Home Settlement, and one in the "West" Island, where their work lay at times. All the huts are superior to any I have seen in the East, and would bear comparison with English and Irish cottages. The inhabitants (Cocos-born), reminding me by their appearance and dress of the natives in the southern part of the "Middle Island" of New Zealand—the descendants of the old whalers married to Maori women—seem contented and healthy, owing to the wholesome, steady life they live, and the fine climate of the Islands. They all seemed to be on very good terms with the Proprietor, appeared pleased at our visits, and took pride in showing us their houses.

19. In addition to visiting the houses, I inspected the people, all assembled by Mr. Ross together, in order that I might hear anything they had to say. The Cocos-born men said they were perfectly contented, and had no complaint. Among the Bantamese there were a few who seemed to think they had a grievance, which being inquired into seemed of their own causing. They complained of receiving a weekly ration of only 7 measures, equal to 7 lbs. of rice. On looking into the accounts of two of these men I found they were heavily in debt, particularly one, "Salone," who is owing £. 285.50, this was mostly incurred by a trip he took to his country (Java), an advance he received at Batavia on his re-engagement, and for different extras from the store on the occasion of his second marriage. In addition to these "extras," such as tea, coffee, biscuits, sugar, flour, &c., bought on the occasion of any of their feasts, Mrs. Ross is in the habit of contributing from her private store these articles liberally as presents. Having inquired into these trivial complaints, the men in debt were informed they could work off such debt, and then leave the Island; but to enable them to do this no "luxuries" or "extras" would be served out to them. To this they demurred, and retired, being well laughed at by their companions, who came forward to say they were perfectly content and wanted no change.

20. The following notes relating to labour and remuneration I have procured from Mr. Ross, and I think will plainly show that all his people are treated in a most liberal manner, and except for the grumbling of idlers and discontented men, some of whom are sure to be found in any community, there is, I firmly believe, no substantial grievance whatever.

Memoranda by Mr. Ross.

(a.) "Coolie leaving the Keeling-Cocos Islands, after a term, takes back to Java his earnings—averaging from fifteen (£. 15) to two hundred guilders (£. 200). A few as high as five hundred guilders (£. 500), but has never left the Islands with less than five guilders (£. 5)."

(b.) "Boys commencing work on the Islands at about fourteen years (14) of age. If he is a Cocos-born he has to serve his apprenticeship up to twenty (20) years of age; that is

to say, he learns carpentry, blacksmith, boating, seamanship, and cocoanut nutting, &c. From the day he commences work his pay is one (1) rupee a week; one (1) rupee a week goes towards paying for five measures of rice = $f. \frac{4}{100}$ and $f. \frac{5}{100}$ for his clothing. His wages are increased every year according to the progress he has made in whatever department he is in during the year."

"Two schooners are maintained in the Islands for procuring supplies and other requirements for the safety of the Islands at the rate of eleven thousand two hundred and sixty guilders ($f. 11,260$) a year. (c.)

"For the last two (2) years the sole use of the two schooners is to fetch letters and rice from Java, as no business had been effected with Java within that date."

"Five (5) measures of rice are sufficient for Cocos people for the term of seven (7) days, seven (7) measures are given free to the Java coolies." (d.)

"A coolie and his wife are capable of earning twenty-eight (28) rupees a month, that is to say, if he works as a coolie, but if he works as a Cocos people he is capable of making during the nutting season, of say forty-six (46) weeks a year, eighty ($f. 80$) rupees a month full work." (e.)

"The average earnings of Cocos people is about seven ($f. 7$) rupees a week throughout the year. The same for a good and industrious coolie, but for a lazy man he never earns more than three ($f. 3$) rupees a week." (f.)

"The privileges of Java coolies working in the Keeling-Cocos Islands are— (g.)

"He gets a free house, with from an acre to two acres of land for gardening purposes, as much cocoanuts as required for domestic use, free firewood, fishing, salt, doctor's attendance and medicine, and all materials for repairing house and boats; liberty to buy and sell any things that he can make or rear, such as vegetables, poultries, &c."

21. *Trade*.—Copra has been the only article exported during the year. The "Harrington" took 690 tons of Copra to fill a Lisbon order and sailed on the 28th September, a day before my arrival. The return from the "Clementina," mentioned in last year's report, is 5,902*l.* 18*s.* 7*d.* The cargo of cocoanuts shipped to Batavia by the "Tweed" last year is still unsold, prices have gone so low, and no trade doing, showing that it does not pay to ship to Batavia.

Mr. Ross hopes that when the weather, which has been very boisterous for the last eight or nine months, improves, he will be able to get a cargo of *bêche-de-mer*, and ship it to Singapore, if practicable.

22. *Shipping*.—Since last inspection 1886, September 17, French Gunboat "Allier," Commander Lermier, from New Caledonia to France; 1887, July 18th to September 28th, British Barque "Harrington," Master Porter, to Europe; 1887, September 29th, H.M.S. "Rattler," Lieutenant Commander Maitland Dougall, R.N., on Inspection from Singapore.

23. In addition to above, a Norwegian vessel arrived in distress, on fire, some months ago. Assistance was afforded, and some of the cargo saved, and sent to Batavia, but the ship was burnt.

24. *Education*.—Nothing further has been done with regard to establishing schools, or religious teaching, but Mr. Ross is still looking out for a suitable clergyman to live on the Islands, and teach his people. At present education is carried on in a very simple manner and not forced, most of the Cocos-born can read and write, many understanding English; and it would seem that not much further is required than the very practical education Mr. Ross gives them, in such useful lines as ship and boat building, carpentry, joining, smithing, and house building; in fact, there are few trades the Cocos people have not learnt something of under the clever superintendence of the Messrs. Ross. I visited the only school in the Island, a large house set apart for the purpose, the parents paying a small fee to the teacher for his services.

25. The weather during our visit was very boisterous and squally, much against our going about the Islands; communication with North Keeling was impossible, the

anchorage not safe, and landing out of the question, on account of the surf. Mr. Ross advised a visit in February, as at that period of the year the climate on the Island is more settled, and Mr. Ross would like, if possible, an intimation as to when he might expect a visit of inspection, in order that he may get together supplies of food, such as mutton, fowls, &c. The cyclone season would seem not quite over in February, seeing the severe storm there was in that month of this year, but this year the weather has been exceptionally bad.

26. Mr. Ross kindly gave me several specimens of birds and eggs found in the Islands, which I have sent to the Straits Museum. He has promised to send specimens of woods, &c., belonging to the Cocos.

27. On some of the Islands, rats, imported from a wrecked vessel, have become very numerous and destructive. Mr. Ross has endeavoured to keep them down by hunting with imported dogs, but would be glad of a few couple of mongoose. I believe they are not to be procured nearer than Calcutta. If Government could procure some of these useful animals, Mr. Ross would feel very grateful for the favour.

28. I cannot close my Report without expressing my thanks to Mr. Ross for his hospitality during my stay on the Island, and for the straightforward help he afforded me in seeing everything for myself. I should also wish to express my gratitude to Captain Maitland-Dougall, and the officers of H.M.S. "Rattler" for their courtesy and kindness during the voyage.

29. Arrived at Singapore on the afternoon of the 12th instant, having left the Cocos on the morning of the 5th; the passage to Anjer Head was somewhat rough and disagreeable.

30. I would suggest a copy of this and future Reports be sent to Mr. Ross. I might add the official visit this year was not expected, as the usual time for coming had elapsed.

R. S. O'CONNOR,
Senior Magistrate's Office, Singapore, October 17, 1887.

(D.)

Memo.

November 1886 to September 1887.

Barometer.				Thermometer.			
November	-	-	30·02	77°	-	-	3 days rain.
December	-	-	29·95	77°	-	-	13 "
January	-	-	29·94	78°	-	-	6 "
February	-	-	29·87	77°	-	-	12 "
March	-	-	29·91	74°	-	-	6 "
April	-	-	29·97	78°	-	-	8 "
May	-	-	30·00	77°	-	-	9 "
June	-	-	29·98	75°	-	-	7 "
July	-	-	30·02	75°	-	-	9 "
August	-	-	30·01	75°	-	-	7 "
September	-	-	30·01	75°	-	-	9 "

Average rain 8 days in the month.

Memo.—February 1, 1887. The Barometer, 29·30.
Thermometer, 85°
Gale.

(E.)

KEELING-COCOS ISLANDS.

Census.

From August 28, 1886, to August 28, 1887.

Cocos Inhabitants :

	400	95 men	-	-	-	110 women.
Deaths	- 23	95 male children	-	-	-	100 female children
Total	- 377	190 Total	-	-	-	210 Total.

23 Deaths. Out of these 17 were infants.

2 women.

4 men.

23 Total.

Coolies :

	125	57 men	-	-	-	-	26 women.
Deaths	- 7	19 boys	-	-	-	-	23 girls.
Total	- 118	76 Total	-	-	-	-	49 Total.

7 Deaths. Out of these 6 were infants. 1 man.

Grand Total:—Cocos - - - - - 377
Coolies - - - - - 118

Total - 495

(F.)

KEELING-COCOS ISLANDS.

Memo.

Marriages, Births, and Deaths from August 28, 1886, to August 28, 1887.

Cocos.

Deaths.	7 marriages.	29 births.
4 men.		16 males.
2 women.		13 females.
8 male children.		
9 female „		29 Total.
23 Total.		

Coolies.

Deaths.	2 marriages.	5 births.
1 man.		2 males.
2 male children.		3 females.
4 female „		
<hr/> 7 Total.		<hr/> 5 Total.
<hr/>		
Total marriages, 7 Cocos.	Total births, 29 Cocos.	
2 Coolies.	5 Coolies.	
<hr/> 9 marriages.	<hr/> 34 births.	
<hr/>		
Total Deaths, 23 Cocos.		
7 Coolies.		
<hr/> 30 Deaths.		
<hr/>		

No. 5.

SIR HENRY T. HOLLAND to SIR C. C. SMITH.

SIR, Downing Street, December 29, 1887.
 I HAVE received and read with interest the report by Mr. R. S. O'Connor upon the Cocos-Keeling Islands which accompanied your Despatch of the 26th of October,* and I have been glad to learn from it the satisfactory condition in which he found the islands on his recent visit.

2. With regard to Mr. O'Connor's observations in paragraph 15 of his report, I shall be glad if you will consider whether it might not be desirable on the next occasion when the islands are visited to send with the officer selected for the purpose a member of the medical department of the Straits Settlements to report specially upon the health of the islanders, the causes of the prevalence of beri-beri, and the effect of the toddy-drinking to which Mr. O'Connor refers, and I should also wish the visiting officer to consider specially whether this evil might not in some way be removed or mitigated.

3. Referring to paragraph 17 of the report, I have to express my concurrence with the view taken by Mr. O'Connor, that it would not be advisable at present to introduce any part of the Straits Settlements Penal Code, or to alter the existing regulations, which appear best suited to the present condition of the community.

I have, &c.
 H. T. HOLLAND.

No. 6.

SIR C. C. SMITH to LORD KNUTSFORD.
 (Received September 28, 1888.)

EXTRACT.

Government House, Singapore,
 August 30, 1888.

HAVING learned from the Senior Naval Officer that he was about to send H.M.S. "Firebrand" to make the annual visit to the Cocos-Keeling Islands, I appointed my private secretary (Mr. Trevenen) to proceed in her as my agent. There was no officer of the permanent Civil Service who could be spared for this duty as the Government is very short-handed, and being anxious that the inspection should not be omitted and

should be made by a competent officer who could speak the language of the natives' I made the selection I have reported, though it carried with it no little personal inconvenience to myself, as I had no one to take his place during his absence.

The "Firebrand" left here on the 22nd June, and returned here on the 27th July. She is rather an unsatisfactory vessel for such a trip owing to her very small coal-carrying capacity, and there is absolutely no accommodation for a passenger. It was only through the kindness and consideration of Lieutenant Commander Denison that Mr. Trevenen's presence on board was possible. The want of accommodation also prevented my acting on your Lordship's desire, as expressed in paragraph 2 of your Lordship's Despatch of the 29th December,* though I doubt if a medical officer of the Government could have been spared for a trip so long, owing to the slowness of the vessel employed. I had, however, the services of Dr. Nolan, R.N., courteously placed at my disposal by the Senior Naval Officer, and he made as full and exhaustive inquiry as was practicable into the sanitary condition of the islands and the people.

It is to be regretted that no definite conclusions on the subject of beri-beri could be reached, though it is not a matter of surprise when the mysterious nature of the disease is considered, and that it has hitherto baffled all the medical research which could be brought to bear upon it. Mr. Trevenen informs me that the Netherlands Indian Government have had an eminent scientist from Holland engaged on the investigation of beri-beri in Java for some years without his being able to publish any results or mitigate its ravages.

I enclose Mr. Trevenen's report, and I do not doubt that your Lordship will concur with me that he performed the special duty with which he was entrusted with judgment and discretion.

I need not go through the report, but I may mention that, regarding the want of education, I propose to cause Mr. Ross to be invited to send some intelligent youth belonging to the islands to Singapore to be trained as a teacher in the Malay College.

August 10,
1888.

Enclosure in No. 6.

Mr. TREVENEN to the COLONIAL SECRETARY, S. S.

REPORT of a Visit of Inspection of the Cocos-Keeling Islands by Mr. N. P. TREVENEN, under the Instructions of Governor Sir CECIL C. SMITH, K.C.M.G.

SIR,

Singapore, August 10, 1888.

I HAVE the honour to report that, in accordance with instructions received from His Excellency the Governor, I embarked at noon on Friday, the 22nd June, for the Cocos Islands on board H.M.S. "Firebrand," Lieut.-Commander J. Denison, R.N.

2. On the evening of the 24th, while passing through Banka Straits, we made out the British-ship "Niobe" on shore signalling for assistance. We anchored near her, and an attempt was made to tow her off, which unfortunately failed, owing to the hawser fouling the "Firebrand's" screw.

The master, Mr. Raiston, then came on board and begged Captain Denison to stand by him, and repeat the attempt at high water the following evening. Captain Denison agreed to this, and the "Niobe" was, after some two hours' hard work, successfully floated and towed into deep water on Monday evening at 10 p.m. She was a vessel of 1,500 tons, carrying a cargo of 2,000 tons of coal, and had been on shore for 10 days, during which, the master stated, two unsuccessful attempts had been made by other steamers to get her off.

3. We proceeded on our journey to Batavia, where we arrived at midnight on the 27th. While there I called on H. B. M.'s Consul, Mr. McNeill, and on Mr. Forster of Messrs. Tidman, Balfour and Co., Mr. Ross's agents. From Mr. Forster I learned that the Netherlands Indian Government had sanctioned the emigration of Batamese coolies, to a number not to exceed 30 annually, to the Cocos Islands, and I obtained from him a copy of a contract under which he had dispatched 18 men there on the 23rd April last. Appendix A.†

4. We left Batavia at noon on the 1st instant, the screw having been cleared by the "Orion's" diver of the hawser which had fouled it while assisting the "Niobe," and

* No. 5.

† Not printed.

a supply of coal taken in; and arrived at the Cocos on the morning of the 6th at 8 a.m., the distance from Java Head to the Islands being entirely performed under sail.

5. Mr. Bursley came on board on behalf of Mr. Ross and Captain Denison, and I subsequently went on shore and called upon Mr. Ross.

6. The following day Dr. Nolan, of H.M.S. "Firebrand," and I, accompanied by Mr. Ross, visited the Bantam village, and made enquiry as to the health of the people and the sanitary condition of the village.

7. The village is situated on the lee-side* of Settlement Island; the houses are clean and spacious; each is provided with separate cook-room and latrine. The inhabitants are accustomed to use the sea beach at night for the latter purpose, but if compelled to resort to the latrine during the day the night soil is removed as soon as possible to below high-water mark. The latrines were clear of soil when we visited them, and there were no debris or rubbish worth mentioning in the cook-houses. The earth floors of many of the houses showed traces of washing with quick-lime, which Mr. Ross said he had found efficacious in checking the progress of beri-beri.

8. The houses though as I have stated roomy, are dark, and as the Bantamese have a great dread of cold, and close all windows and doors at night, the ventilation is not as good as it should be. Mr. Ross stated that he found the greatest difficulty in persuading the villagers to ventilate their houses.

Appendix B.† 9. There were four Bantam men confined to their quarters—we visited each separately, and I took notes of the answers made by each to our questions. Besides these there were several slight cases of both Bantamese and Cocos men not sufficiently affected to prevent their carrying on their work.

10. Mr. Ross stated that the present outbreak of beri-beri had coincided with the arrival of a new batch of coolies from Java at the end of April, one of whom died of the disease immediately after arrival and before landing. The body was buried on Direction Island, two miles from the Settlement, and the clothes, &c. of the deceased were burned.

In spite of these precautions, others of the new arrivals were attacked and the disease spread to the older inhabitants. Of the new arrivals, all had, however, recovered at the date of our visit, except one, who died during our stay. There can be little doubt that the fear the people have of beri-beri strongly predisposes them to the disease when it appears among them. We could not ascertain that the persons recently attacked had been in any way specially mixed up with the newly arrived coolies.

11. The water supply of the Settlement is obtained from wells, varying from 6 to 12 feet in depth. I took four samples of water:—one (I.) from a well in the Bantam village, from whence infected cases had previous to and during their illness been supplied, and another (II.) from a well which had not, so far as I could ascertain, been used by any beri-beri patients, two samples (III. and IV.) from the Cocos village were taken in a similar manner. Dr. Nolan kindly analysed all four, and could find no important differences, there being no evidences of oxidisable matter or nitrous acid in any—a trace of ammonia in II. and IV., and small differences in the amount of lime and chlorine. He considered all the samples perfectly wholesome.

12. Men are more frequently attacked by beri-beri than women, and children after teething enjoy comparative immunity, though before that period infant mortality is large.

13. Mr. Ross informed us that cases sent to North Keeling almost invariably recovered, and that he had tried the experiment of bringing water from that Island in tanks for the use of sufferers, but that they were so unwilling to make use of it that several barrels had become spoiled through lapse of time.

14. In answer to an enquiry of mine, suggested by a paragraph in Dr. Mugliston's Annual Medical Report for 1886, he stated that he had tried a daily ration of lime-juice, but without any apparent results. It appeared, however, that the lime-juice had been issued to patients only, and not to all the labourers without distinction.

* The Cocos being within the range of the South-east Trades, the South and South-east sides of the Islands are called the weather or windward, and the North-west and North the lee sides.

† Not printed.

15. To sum up the results of the enquiry, there appears no assignable cause for the prevalence of beri-beri, except importation from Java. Mr. Ross states that an outbreak has so regularly followed upon the arrival of fresh coolies from thence as to compel him to restrict the import of labour to the minimum necessary for the working of the Islands.

16. From this contagion might be inferred, but I may mention that the man Satipan, referred to in the notes of cases visited, has been suffering for more than a year, and during that time has inhabited the same house as his wife and four children without any of them being affected.

17. The condition of the Islands would appear distinctly inimical to the prevalence of beri-beri; there are no swamps or marshy ground, the soil is dry, and rain is speedily absorbed; the South-east Trade, a cold and bracing breeze, blows steadily over the land; fresh fish is readily obtainable for food, the water supply is good, while the dwellings are, as have been stated, sufficiently spacious, and the sanitary arrangements as good as possible.

18. Dr. Nolan and I are, however, of opinion that the coolies are unable to obtain as large a quantity of fruit as they were accustomed to in Java. This is, in a great measure, due to themselves, as each man has a plot of land assigned to him, and has his time from midday on Saturday till sunrise on Monday at his own disposal.

19. It is right to state that Mr Ross has, so far as we could judge, done all in his power to check and palliate the disease, and he was most willing and indeed anxious to carry out any suggestion which could be made to him. And as a proof of his good faith, I should add that, thinking that sickness might arise from occasional high tides flooding the Cocos village, he has constructed a sea-wall half a mile in length, about five feet high, and ten wide to keep the water out.

20. This portion of the Report has been written after consultation with Dr. Nolan, and he entirely concurs in the views expressed.

21. On my return voyage, I ascertained from Mr. Forster that all the coolies, who embarked in April, had been examined by the Medical Officer of the Dutch Government and duly passed. This would seem to point to subsequent substitution, as it is difficult to conceive that a man, so affected as to die of beri-beri a week afterwards, could have escaped the Doctor's observation.

POPULATION.

22. The population of the islands on the 30th June last amounted to 535 souls, of whom 385 were Cocos people, and 150 Bantamese.

The following table was furnished to me by Mr. Ross. It is in the form hitherto supplied, but is misleading, as all persons under 21 years of age are set down as children, and I suggested to Mr. Ross that he should, in future, divide the return into two classes, one of children under 10 years, and the other of persons over that age.

As now entered some of the children may themselves be parents.

Keeling Cocos Islands.

From August 1887 to 30th June 1888.

Cocos People.							Bantam People.						
	Number.	Births.	Deaths.	Arrivals.	Departures.	Total.	Number.	Births.	Deaths.	Arrivals.	Departures.	Total.	Grand Total.
Men - - - - -	79	-	1	-	2	76	58	-	5	22	2	73	
Women - - - - -	85	-	2	-	2	81	32	-	1	3	1	33	
Male Children - - - -	100	10	10	-	1	108	20	-	1	-	-	19	
Female Children - - -	113	13	6	-	-	120	24	4	3	-	-	25	
						385						150	535

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES AND DEATHS.

23. There were 23 births and 19 deaths among the Cocos people, and 4 births and 10 deaths among the Bantamese.

Seven marriages have been contracted since Mr. O'Connor's visit, four between Cocos people and three between Bantamese.

The deaths amounted to 29 out of a population of 535, or 54 per thousand in ten months, as compared with 37·6 per thousand per annum in the Straits Settlements.

They were almost all caused by beri-beri, 16 being infants under six months. One child was accidentally drowned.

Of course, in so small a population, a very few deaths more than the average make the percentage of mortality very high.

CRIME.

24. There has been no crime on the Islands since the last visit.

TODDY DRINKING.

25. In regard to the toddy drinking, I can make no suggestions. It is not openly practised, and Mr. Ross tells me that, though he knows a great deal of toddy is consumed both by the Cocos people and the Bantamese with very deleterious effects, he has not for some years seen any man in a drunken condition or incapacitated for work from the effects of drink. Those addicted to it take it in their own houses after their day's work is done.

Toddy is almost a necessity of life in the Cocos; it is required for making bread and cakes, whether of flour or rice, and for sugar, and as vinegar.

26. To prohibit its manufacture would be to punish all, especially the women and children, and would tend to lessen the use of flour among the people, and thus perhaps, by lowering the diet, increase their liability to beri-beri.

The difficulties also in the way of enforcing such a prohibition would be very great, if not insuperable. There are nearly half a million trees on the Islands, any one of which affords a supply of the juice, which has only to be allowed to stand for 24 hours after extraction to be ready for consumption. To regulate its manufacture by placing it, on certain terms, in the hands of a few selected persons, as a farm, would be equally difficult in the absence of any police, and would place temptations to theft and other evils, from which the Cocos are happily free, in the way of the people.

27. The only means I could see that would be of any effect were moral suasion by the priests, and I took advantage of conversations with the Cocos and Bantam Imáms to try to gain their assistance in impressing on the people the prohibition in the Koran against indulgence in intoxicating liquors.

The Cocos Imám readily promised to do his best; the Bantam man took up the ground, firstly, that toddy was merely a juice and as such not an intoxicating drink; and on being driven from this position by my pointing out to him that it became intoxicating through fermentation, he said that the prohibition in the Koran applied to getting drunk and not to drinking! He was, however, obliged to admit that all habitual toddy drinkers were sooner or later attacked by beri-beri, while abstainers escaped, and in the end he also promised his assistance, though I have not any faith in the promise.

28. On the Sunday evening after my arrival, about 200 of the people, all who could be readily got at, were assembled at the quarters which had been very kindly placed at my disposal by Mr. Ross. I told them that I had been sent by the Governor to visit the Islands as on former occasions, to see how they were progressing and how the people were, and whether any assistance was needed either by Mr. Ross or by the people, and to report to the Governor anything which they might wish to represent, and I invited them to come to me either then or at any time they liked during my stay and freely make any representations they wished.

COMPLAINTS.

29. A man named Antonin, one of the newly imported coolies, complained of the substitution of a money allowance of *f 2 in lieu of the rice ration formerly given.

* The sign *f* signifies guilder. The Dutch guilder is worth about one shilling and eight pence. The Cocos currency guilder, which is a sheepskin-note, is worth five sixths of a Dutch guilder.

This change, which was, I am informed, introduced at the suggestion of Mr. O'Connor, seems beneficial, as an incentive to thrift, and as enabling a man to obtain flour in lieu of part of his rice ration if he prefers it. Mr. Ross wishes to encourage the use of flour as much as possible, as a preventive measure against beri-beri.

30. The man also complained that he had been told he would have to gather coco-nuts only, and not to husk them; while Mr. Ross stated he was an incompetent workman. I sent for him the next morning and told him to husk some coco-nuts in my presence, when he certainly proved very incompetent, taking nearly two minutes to one coco-nut, other men doing the same thing in a few seconds.

As he still complained that he had engaged only to pick nuts and not to husk them, I referred to his contract, which mentions "such labour as he may be called on to perform," and further pointed out to him that the work of delivering coco-nuts unhusked would really be infinitely greater owing to their weight. A husked coco-nut weighs about 1½ lb., one unhusked about 8 lb.

To deliver 400 coco-nuts per diem, as the terms of the contract required, would, therefore, require the transport of a weight of one ton eight cwt., an impossible task.

CORRESPONDENCE.

31. I handed a letter which had been given me in Singapore to the addressee in the presence of the people, and told them all that I would take charge of any letters which they liked to bring me, and post them in Batavia or Singapore. About a dozen were brought me by Cocos people mostly for Singapore. None being brought me by Bantam people, I went down to the village, but could not find any one there who could read or write.

Mr. Ross assured me that every facility was given to any one who wished to write by his schooner, and that his agents in Batavia paid the postage when requisite.

EDUCATION.

32. I visited the school kept by the Cocos Imám; only 17 boys were present, though there are at least 40 of school-going age. Of the 17 present, only two, who had attended some four years, could read, and that not well. No arithmetic or geography is taught, the teacher knows little or nothing of either. The books used were few in number, mostly theological and moral manuscripts; there were only two slates and no maps. The teaching is practically confined to reading the Koran. I asked the Imám if he would use any books that might be sent him from Singapore, and whether especially he would try to acquire sufficient arithmetic to enable him to afford the boys a grounding, the importance of which I pointed out to him. He promised me that he would do so. He is an old man, but intelligent, and seemed acquainted with countries and nations, such, for example, as Russia, of which it would hardly have seemed likely he should have heard. He is paid by the parents of his pupils, receiving a fee from each family which sends boys to the school. His age is against him, and he could never become an efficient teacher, but if supplied with a few elementary books selected from the Educational stock here, some improvement might be effected, the extent of which could be ascertained at the next visit of inspection.

33. There are two ways in which the school might be made efficient—one by the supply of a trained teacher from Singapore, as suggested by Mr. Birch. Mr. Ross would be ready to accept such a teacher, though he seemed afraid of rousing friction among the people, and of the influence of the present teacher being exerted against a newcomer. He also seemed to fear that a stranger might introduce ideas of discontent among his primitive people.

I should, however, hope that if the teacher sent was a man of tact and made to understand that he was to act as assistant to the present man, in whose hands the religious teaching should be left, and who should not be allowed to suffer pecuniary loss, the old man would, before long, be content to leave the actual teaching in the hands of his assistant.

The other alternative, which I think, looking to Mr. Ross's apprehensions, would be perhaps preferable, would be to select some intelligent Cocos youth to undergo a course of training in the Malay College, with a view of becoming the assistant of the present teacher and ultimately his successor.

34. Mr. Ross still seems to entertain the idea of inducing some clergyman to settle on the Islands and undertake tuition, but nothing has been done in this direction; the scope for such a gentleman would be very limited, the friction apprehended by Mr. Ross would

be much greater than in the case of a co-religionist, and in the meanwhile the children remain ignorant.

35. It would be unjust to pass over without notice the excellent practical education selected young men receive in carpenter's and blacksmith's work in Mr. Ross's workshops. It would be difficult to find anything better. The work turned out is excellent, and one or two Cocos-born men who served their apprenticeship in the islands are now in the receipt of high wages in Singapore.

LABOUR.

36. As has been stated, the restrictions on the import of coolies from Java have now been removed, and there is no difficulty in obtaining a sufficient supply.

37. I regret to state that most of the Bantamese coolies are in debt. I found that out of 49 men who had been three years and upwards in the islands, 41 are in debt in sums varying from £283.75* downwards. The average indebtedness of each individual is £80.39, the 41 owing among them in round figures £3,295. Eight have a credit balance of £376, or an average of £47 per head.

38. The men themselves attribute their indebtedness to the high prices of provisions. Mr. Ross says they are frequently lazy, and absent themselves without cause, thus rendering themselves liable to deductions.

39. Every Bantamese coolie starts with a debt of £60 currency, the equivalent of £50 Dutch, which he receives as an advance before leaving Batavia; they also occasionally ask for and obtain advances to enable them to provide a dowry for their wives on marriage in the islands. One man applied, while I was there, for an advance of £250 for this purpose.

Dowries are payable in silver, so the advance, if granted, would have involved the applicant in a debt of £300 currency, a sum he would find it very difficult to pay off.

40. The Bantamese receive now £0.50 per working day in lieu of their expired verbal contract wages of £10 per month of 30 working days, and allowance of £2.80 worth of rice. This change, which is somewhat more favourable to the labourers, has been recently effected. Women, if desirous of adding to the family earnings, can obtain £0.50 for 400 nuts shelled. They can thus earn about £3 per week without interfering with their household duties. I saw a number of women working daily at the warehouses.

41. A coolie employed in nutting is bound to deliver 2,400 husked nuts weekly to obtain these wages, with proportionate deductions if a less quantity is delivered, and extra payment at the rate of £1 for every 400 nuts in excess.

42. Having satisfied myself that this extra payment could be earned, and not infrequently was, at all events by those who have enjoyed a year or so's experience, in view of the bad effect produced by the system of running into debt, I spoke to the men on the subject, pointing out the possibility afforded them of increasing their earnings, and stating that I had requested Mr. Ross to discourage as much as possible the incurring of future debt, except on such grounds as illness or for necessities.

43. Mr. Ross thanked me for so doing, and said I had rendered him a very considerable service in strengthening his hands; he wished to avoid debt as much as possible, but frequently found it difficult to refuse.

44. Of those in debt some have made one or more trips to Batavia, 12 men in all having been to Batavia since January 1st, 1880, the majority of whom have returned to the islands. It is unlikely they would have done so if they had been dissatisfied with their treatment there.

45. That they can avoid debt is shown by the fact that one man with a family of five children has a credit of £159.50, while another who has not yet been five years in the islands has a credit of £103.75.

46. In the course of my inquiries, I met with an interesting case of a man of some 50 years, a widower, who has brought up, entirely at his own charge, several children who were orphans, until they were old enough to take care of themselves. He has now three such children in his house, a girl and two boys, sister and brothers. Though ranked among the coolies, he is a Madura man, not a Bantamese. He is named Bandoot.

* This man has been 12 years in the Island.

47. The Cocos men are not in debt, and have credit balances aggregating *f*9,464.75. Each man possesses his own boat, house and garden, though they make little use of the latter.

They receive if, as they usually are, employed in nutting, *f*1 per 500 husked nuts delivered in store. Journeyman mechanics of ordinary capacity earn about *f*6 per week. Seamen employed in Mr. Ross's schooners are shipped before the Consul in Batavia in the ordinary way.

48. Each man, whatever his nationality or employment, is granted a house, or building materials, as many coco-nuts as he can use, and the right of free fishing. The Cocos men are, of course, able to make more profitable use of the fishing privilege than the Bantamese, owing to their greater expertness, and it is probable that the Bantamese, in many instances, at all events, are compelled to purchase fish from them.

PROVISIONS. PRICES.

49. Rice, the staple article of diet, is sold by Mr. Ross at *f*1 per seven measures, equivalent to 12 lbs. English. Tobacco is sold in packages at *f*1 per package, weighing about $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. Flour is sold according to the cost, only rice and tobacco being sold at fixed rates, which were settled a long time ago.

50. The price of rice in Java has lately fallen very much, but, on the other hand, the relative cost of transport to the Cocos has increased, owing to the schooners being no longer able to take remunerative freight to Batavia. They are consequently idle except when fetching provisions.

Formerly the profit on produce sold in Batavia contributed towards the up-keep of the schooners, which Mr. Ross states amounts to *f*27,000 per annum. 1,145 pikuls* of rice have been imported since the last visit.

51. The natives make such purchases of curry-stuff, &c., as they require through the crews of the schooners.

There is nothing approaching a bazaar in the islands, nor could I find that there was any dealing to speak of among the natives themselves. For instance, I could not ascertain the average price of fresh fish. Nothing seems to sell under *f*0.25 ($\frac{1}{4}$ of a guilder) which is the lowest currency in use.

Thinking the absence of currency of a lower denomination must prove inconvenient to the people, I made inquiries of Mr. Ross, and was told that formerly currency of *f*0.12 $\frac{1}{2}$ ($\frac{1}{8}$ of a guilder) was in circulation, but it had been gradually returned, the natives always changing it for higher denominations, and it was no longer in circulation.

The general measure of value seems to be the purchasing power of a quarter-guilder.

52. I could not learn that the Bantamese coolies were informed on engagement of the higher prices of provisions, &c., in the Cocos as compared with Java. I think, though perhaps it is rather a matter for the Netherlands Indian Government than our own, that they should have this information.

53. Articles of European manufacture, such as clothing, imported by Mr. Ross direct from Europe, are sold by him at prices much below those common in Singapore. I saw some excellent Oxford shirtings and French silks which seemed very cheap. The silks are much affected by the Cocos women.

54. That the inhabitants, as a whole, are well-to-do is proved by the fact that, though there was a large quantity of fowls, &c., and a number of sheep on the islands, I was unable to procure any, though I offered considerably more than the ordinary prices.

CURRENCY.

55. In addition to the balances of *f*9,464.75 and *f*376, stated before as owing to the Cocos and Bantamese respectively; there are *f*2,519 currency and about *f*1,000 silver in circulation, principally among the Cocos people.

The credit balances are represented by *pay notes* specifying the work done, the rate, and the date. They can be at any time exchanged for currency, but the people seem to prefer them, as, being payable to the owner by name, and registered in the books, they can be cancelled if lost or stolen.

*f*9,464.75
376

*f*9,840.75.

* A pikul is 133 lbs. Avoirdupois.

PRODUCE.

56. Six hundred and twenty tons of copra have been manufactured for export since last inspection, and are now awaiting the arrival of the annual chartered vessel. No other manufacture is carried on, the prices of cocoa-nut oil and of fresh cocoa-nuts having fallen so much as to render their export to Java no longer remunerative. Mr. Ross informed me he intended to prepare a cargo of bêche-de-mer as a venture for the Singapore or Hongkong markets.

VESSELS.

57. Only one vessel, the Dutch barque "Dorathoea," has called at the Islands since H.M.S. "Rattler" was there. She was in need of slight repairs, which were effected, and she proceeded on her voyage.

METEOROLOGY.

58. I attach a table showing the highest and lowest readings noted of the barometer and thermometer since the last visit:—

Month.	Barometer.		Thermometer.	
	Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.
December 1887	31.00	29.78	86	73
January 1888	30.02	29.84	87	72
February "	30.06	29.90	88	72
March "	30.04	29.90	85	74
April "	30.07	28.00	80	75
May "	30.00	29.87	80	74
June "	30.07	29.90	83	74

The standard barometer and maximum and minimum thermometers supplied from Singapore last year arrived out of order. I have brought them back with me to be put right.

The rain gauge has not been put up yet.

FLAG-STAFF.

59. The flag-staff put up when Mr. Talbot hoisted the flag has been blown down, and has not as yet been re-erected.

RATS.

60. Rats still cause very considerable damage to the cocoa-nut trees and destruction of young chickens and pigeons. Their numbers are kept down as much as possible by continuous hunting by men and dogs.

IMPROVEMENTS AND ALTERATIONS.

61. A steel tramway half a mile in length now connects the warehouses with the landing stage. The tramway is laid upon land which was sea beach three years ago, so rapidly is reclamation being carried on in Settlement Island. The foundations of the new house which Mr. Ross proposes to build for himself are nearly completed.

COAL.

62. If desired, Mr. Ross would build a shed and take charge of coal for the use of H.M.'s ships or the Colonial Government steamers. The cost would be that of the shed and the freight from either Batavia or Singapore in the schooners.

63. A melancholy accident occurred during our stay at the Islands, by which the gunner (Mr. Mayne) and a quartermaster named Rice, of the "Firebrand," lost their lives.

They left the ship in the afternoon of the 10th July for a sail in the bay in a small skiff, and were last seen near some rocks about two miles to leeward of Settlement Island by some natives, who said they saw them haul down their sail. From what information I could gather from the natives, I concluded that when they thought the sail was being taken in the boat really capsized. If this was the case, the boat, and any persons clinging to it, would either have struck upon some of the numerous rocks in the bay, or, if they escaped them, have been carried down by the wind and tide on to the barrier reef. As soon as the sad occurrence was reported to Mr. Ross, the following morning, he sent his boats to search the other Islands and the reefs, but without success. The "Firebrand" searched outside thirty miles to leeward, on the chance of the boat having escaped the barrier and drifted out to sea.

No trace, however, could be found of either the boat or its occupants. Seventeen lives in all have been lost in this way within Mr. Ross's recollection, all being Europeans, strangers to the place.

64. Nothing could have exceeded the readiness with which Mr. Ross placed his services and those of his men at Captain Denison's disposal, or that with which the men responded to the call made upon them, while the skill, bravery, and perseverance with which the many most dangerous places in the bay were searched was most marked.

GENERAL.

65. The conclusions to which I have come are that the Cocos people are well off and contented; the Bantamese are not so well-to-do as the others, but they have no serious grievances. All classes looked well fed and clad, and the Bantamese who had been some years at the Cocos compared favourably in point of physique with the new arrivals. If all classes could be induced to follow Mr. Ross's wishes and cultivate vegetables and fruits for their own use it would be a great gain, and might probably lessen beri-beri. Since my return I have obtained from the Forest Department a collection of 16 varieties of vegetable seeds, which will be sent to Mr. Ross by the next opportunity.

That the administration of the Islands by Mr. Ross is good is sufficiently shown by the absence of crime and the non-existence of police.

A community which has been free from even petty offences for seven years must be a very well ordered one.

The people are well cared for when sick, and receive medicine *gratis*. Every care that experience can suggest is taken for their safety; a watch is kept at night, and any boat missing is at once reported and searched for, while depôts of provisions are kept at the lee islands for the use of any persons prevented by stress of weather or other cause from returning to Settlement Island.

66. Every possible facility in making my inquiries was afforded me by Mr. Ross, who placed his services and his books at my disposal during my stay, besides showing me much personal kindness.

67. To Captain Denison especially I am indebted for much hospitality, and my thanks are also due to the officers of H.M.S. "Firebrand" for their readiness to assist me in any way.

Dr. Nolan was most painstaking in endeavouring to trace the source of beri-beri, and gave me much valuable assistance.

68. We left the Islands on the 14th, and, after calling at Batavia for coal, arrived in Singapore on the 27th July.

69. Since my return to Singapore I have been favoured by Mr. E. J. Nanson with a description of a memorial tablet erected in Carisbrooke Church to Mr. William Keeling, the discoverer of the Keeling-Cocos Islands, which is so interesting that I append it in full.

I have, &c.

N. P. TREVENEN.

APPENDIX C.

Mr. E. J. NANSON to Mr. TREVENEN.

* * * * *

A curiously painted wooden tablet hangs against a pillar in the body of Carisbrooke Church in the Isle of Wight, with a representation of a ship, her sails unfurled, a man upon her deck and over his head a garland. The sail bears the word "Fides—Faith"; on the compass is written "Verbum Dei—God's Word"; on the sails "Spes—Hope." Underneath is the following quaint inscription:—

"Here lyeth the body of the right worthy William Keeling, Esquire, Groom of the Chamber to our Sovereign Lord King James, General for the Hon. East India Adventurers, where he was thrice by them employed, and dying in this Isle, at the age of 42, An. 1619, Sept. 12th, hath this remembrance heer fixed, by his loving and sorrowful wife, Ann Keeling:—

Fortie and two years in this vessel frail
On the rough seas of life, did Keeling saile
A merchant fortunate, a Captain bould
A courtier gracious, yet alas! not old,
Such wealth, experience, honour, and high praise
Few winne in twice so-many years or daies
But what the world admired, he deemed but dross,
For Christ: without Christ, all his gains but losse;
For him, and his dear love, with merrie cheere,
To the holy land his last course he did steere.
Faith served for sails, the sacred word for card,
Hope was his anchor, glorie his reward;
And thus with gales of grace, by happy venter,
Through straits of death, heaven's harbour he did enter."

No. 7.

LORD KNUTSFORD TO SIR C. C. SMITH.

EXTRACT.

Downing Street, October 25, 1888.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your despatch of the 30th of August* enclosing Mr. Trevenen's report on his late visit to the Cocos Islands.

This report is very interesting and reflects much credit upon its author.

I am glad to notice that you propose to take steps for having one of the islanders trained as a teacher at Singapore, with a view to taking up educational work on his return to the islands.

* No. 6.

No. 8.

SIR C. C. SMITH to LORD KNUTSFORD.
(Received September 28, 1889.)

Government House, Singapore,
August 29, 1889.

MY LORD,

I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship the enclosed copy of the report of Lieutenant and Commander Maitland Dougall, of H.M.S. "Rattler," detailing the account of his visit to the Cocos-Keeling and Christmas Islands. I also enclose a copy of my letter* to the Senior Naval Officer in connection with this annual visit of one of Her Majesty's ships to those islands.

2. There is nothing of a special character in the report to which I need draw your Lordship's attention. Since its receipt I have got Mr. Ross's application for land at Christmas Island, and I propose to issue to him a lease of a portion of that island, where he has effected a settlement. I am glad to hear from Commander Maitland-Dougall that the prospects of cultivation are very fair, and that the supply of good drinking water is ample.

I have, &c.
CECIL C. SMITH.

Enclosure in No. 8.

Report on the Cocos-Keeling Islands, 1889.

1. IN other than the undermentioned headings, with the remarks thereon, for the last twelve months, the able report of Mr. N. P. Trevenen in 1888 holds good for the welfare and prosperity of the islands and their inhabitants at the present date.

2. *Paragraph 10.*—There is now no case of beri-beri in the islands. No fresh case has occurred since the last visit, and the four natives then affected have entirely recovered.

Paragraph 12.—Surgeon W. M. Craig, of the ship under my command, is distinctly of opinion that beri-beri is accredited to many ailments which are not of that nature, especially so in the case of infants, the real cause of whose deaths is neglected infantile complaints.

Paragraph 22.—The following is a statement of the population, with details of the births, deaths, and marriages, in the past year:—

CENSUS.

July 1888 to July 1889.

Sex.	COCOS-BORN.						BANTAMESE.						General Total.
	No.	Births.	Deaths.	Arrivals.	Departures.	Total.	No.	Births.	Deaths.	Arrivals.	Departures.	Total.	
Men - - - -	76	—	4	2	1	73	73	—	4	1	5	65	138
Women - - - -	81	—	5	1	2	75	33	—	—	—	6	27	102
Male Children - -	108	15	10	—	1	112	19	5	1	—	1	22	134
Female Children - -	120	12	7	—	—	125	25	6	3	—	1	27	152
						385						141	526

Marriages, 5.

Marriages, 5.

Mrs. George C. Ross and six others died from an epidemic of so-called influenza.

* Not printed.

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Paragraph 24.—I may draw attention to the fact that again this year there has been no crime whatever in the islands.

Paragraphs 29 and 30.—There is not a single complaint among the Cocos-born inhabitants or Bantamèse coolies this year. Both classes now share the same privileges and rights.

Paragraph 37.—Nearly every coolie has paid off his debt, the largest single debt being now only 25 rupees.

Paragraph 56.—The produce of the islands this year will fall short, both in quantity and in value, of that of last year; the former being due to a long drought early in the year.

Paragraph 57.—Only two vessels have called since H.M.S. "Firebrand" was at the islands: one, the British ship "Bothan," in need of water and provisions; the other the Italian barque "Unione," chartered by Mr. Ross to carry copra to Hamburg.

Paragraph 59.—A flagstaff has been erected on the pierhead, Settlement Island.

Paragraph 63.—Nothing of the late Mr. Mayne, gunner, and Quartermaster Rice, late of "Firebrand," has been discovered, beyond a broken oar of their boat, which was picked up on one of the lee islands.

3. Mr. George C. Ross showed me every kindness, and enabled me to visit both the dwelling-houses and the workshops of the natives during my stay. His fatherly solicitude toward his people is most marked, as is also the depth of his grief at the bereavement he and his children have lately sustained by the death of that good and amiable woman his late wife.

H.M.S. "Rattler," Anjer, Java,
August 12, 1889.

W. MAITLAND DOUGALL,
Lieut. and Commander.

REPORT on the Settlement made on Christmas Island.

1. Mr. Andrew F. C. Ross, with a party of 13 persons, was landed at Flying Fish Cove from a schooner belonging to Mr. George C. Ross in November last year. Since then five Malays have been withdrawn to Cocos-Keeling. The settlers now consist of the following individuals:—Mr. Andrew F. C. Ross (in command), Mrs. A. F. C. Ross (wife), Kenneth Ross (son), Mr. Alexander C. Ross (brother), Sadi, Rivers, Gondoot, Duncan Lindsay, (brother-in-law), Marline (nurse).

2. A dozen huts have been built at the head of Flying Fish Cove, and cocoa-nut trees and various vegetables planted in the immediate neighbourhood; the undergrowth, but not the forest trees, having been cleared away for the purpose. Cocoa-nuts to the number of some hundreds have been planted on the southern slopes of the hill which rises immediately above the cove; a well, from which good water is obtained, has been sunk close to the hamlet.

3. Mr. Andrew Ross informed me that though the island had no indigenous trees or plants of value, he had great hope, the outcome of a nine months' experience, that imported cocoa-nut, coffee, and pepper would thrive well.

4. He appears to have explored the island to a certain extent to the southward and westward of the cove, and to have found its surface everywhere alike in feature.

5. Fresh food, in the shape of fish, crab, frigate bird, pigeon, and dove, seems easily obtainable, while the imported vegetables grow rankly.

5. The Cocos-Keeling schooner is shortly to visit them with supplies, and everything points to the fact that the Settlement, if a grant of sufficient land be obtained from H. E. the Governor of the island, is intended to be permanent.

7. Her Majesty's Letters Patent were duly read and proclaimed, and Mr. A. F. C. Ross informed that legal tenure could only be obtained from H. E. the Governor of the island.

H.M.S. "Rattler," at Sea,
August 2, 1889.

W. MAITLAND DOUGALL,
Lieut. and Commander.

No. 9.

ACTING GOVERNOR Sir J. F. DICKSON to LORD KNUTSFORD.
(Received September 10, 1890.)

Government House, Singapore, August 6, 1890.

EXTRACT.

I HAVE the honour to transmit, for your Lordship's information, the enclosed copy of a report by Mr. H. N. Ridley, Director of Gardens and Forests, on his recent visit to the Cocos-Keeling and Christmas Islands.

Enclosure in No. 9.

Mr. RIDLEY to the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

Botanic Gardens, Singapore,
July 30, 1890.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to report my return from the visit of inspection of the Cocos and Christmas Islands in H.M.S. "Redpole," and beg herewith to submit my account of the voyage and inspection.

Voyage.—The "Redpole" left Singapore on Saturday, June 28th, at 10.30 a.m., and on the evening of that day an accident occurred to one of the engine cylinders which made it requisite to delay for one day (June 29th) for inspection and temporary repair. It was decided to go on to Batavia and properly repair the cylinder there. Starting again at night (June 29th) we reached Batavia July 2nd. Here it was found necessary to remain for over a week, till July 12th, and during this time I took the opportunity of visiting the Botanic Gardens of Buitenzorg and the hill gardens at Tjiboudas, making notes and investigations, arranging exchanges, &c., with Dr. Treht and Dr. Burck, the chiefs of these gardens. On July 12th the "Redpole" started again for Christmas Island, which was reached on July 13th. We delayed but one day (July 14th), and left that evening for Cocos Islands, having had sufficient time for all necessary inspection of the new settlement, and also for obtaining specimens of the fauna and flora of the island. Cocos Island was reached on July 17th at noon, and we remained here for two days, leaving on July 19th, 9 a.m., for Singapore. After a delay of one day at Anger Point in order to pick up the mails and obtain such fresh provisions as were possible, we arrived at Singapore July 28th, 5.30 p.m.

Christmas Island.—The Colony here is situate on the beach in Flying Fish Cove, where the ground has been cleared and planted, and several houses, one of corrugated iron, have been erected. The inhabitants are as follows:—Mr. Andrew F. C. Ross; Mrs. Andrew Ross; one son, four years old; Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Ross and two daughters; Duncan Lindsay, age 19, and James Lindsay, age 12, brothers of Mrs. Andrew Ross; a nurse and baby boy; three Cocos-born natives; three Bantamese coolies, engaged for one year.

As far as is necessary the rules of Cocos Islands apply to these latter.

Mr. Ross is at present planting Liberian coffee, vegetables, sugar, and cocoa-nuts, and hopes to add other vegetable products and live stock, the latter to supply passing ships. There is a good supply of chickens and fish and wild pigeons, besides frigate birds, which are good eating. The endemic palm-tree produces a good eatable sago.

Stores are brought to the island by the schooner on its way to Cocos Island every three months. There are two good wells, with excellent water, near the settlement.

The soil seems very good, though apparently not very deep, being brown and light, thoroughly impregnated with the droppings of the numerous sea-birds. There is plenty of good timber suited for building on the island.

Besides the houses on the beach, Mr. Ross has built another on the highest part of the hill, where it is very cool.

There is no report of sickness or crime, and all seem contented.

No vessels have touched at the island since the visit of the last Government ship from Singapore except the schooner,

E 4.

Cocos Islands.—Mr. George Ross was not here at the time of our visit. He had gone to England, partly, as we were informed, for medical advice as to failing eyesight, and partly also to make arrangements about an extension of the lease of the Christmas Island settlement. He passed through Singapore, en route for England, on the day preceding that on which the "Redpole" left for Cocos. Mr. C. Ross, however, came on board shortly after our arrival, and gave us every facility for making enquiries and seeing the place.

Population.—The census of the population kept by Mr. Ross is herewith annexed:—

COCOS ISLANDERS.

	No.	Births.	Deaths.	Departures.	Total.
Men - - - -	73	—	1	4	68
Women - - - -	75	—	2	2	71
Male children - -	112	7	2	1	116
Female children - -	125	13	2	1	135
					390

Marriages - - - 4

BANTAMESE.

	No.	Births.	Deaths.	Arrival.	Departure.	Total.
Men - - - -	65	—	—	—	3	62
Women - - - -	27	—	—	1	2	26
Male children - -	22	6	—	—	—	28
Female children - -	27	3	—	—	—	30
						146

Marriages - - - 3

Total of entire population, 536.

Disease.—The beri-beri has now entirely disappeared. At that part of the village where it had been prevalent a raised turfed bank forming a walk has been made to prevent the sea washing into the gardens and houses as it had done, and probably had at least aggravated the disease. All the people seemed remarkably healthy, and old Neh Basir, formerly one of Mr. Hare's slaves, appeared remarkably vigorous, though he must be at least 85 years old.

The influenza was introduced to the islands from Batavia by the schooner, but appears to be of a very mild type, and there were no bad cases. There does not appear to have been any epidemic or disease of any importance during the past year.

The causes of the deaths mentioned in the census were, in the cases of the two women, childbirth; the man was old and paralytic. The mortality of the children, nearly $\frac{1}{3}$ of the births, is perhaps due to the difficulty of procuring milk, as owing to the absence of grasses suitable for cattle it has been found impossible to keep them. The soil is very unsuited for almost every kind of grass, but attempts may be made to cultivate some of the shore grasses, such as Dub (Cynodon Dactylon) and Buffaloe Grass (steno taphrum).

Crime.—There has been no case of crime during the past year. There is very little drunkenness, but where it is impossible to do without toddy for making sugar and vinegar it will always be impossible to prevent a little drinking. Gambling is only permitted during three days of the annual holiday, and forbidden during the rest of the year, and Mr. Ross states that this latter prohibition is very rarely transgressed.

Coolies.—From enquiries made it appears that the population, both Cocos-born and Coolies, are well contented with their position and treatment, and Mr. Ross has now no difficulty in procuring coolies from Java. More, indeed, offer to come than he requires. He complains, however, of the three years' engagement system, stating that a Bantam Coolie on his arrival in Cocos is unable, from poverty of condition, to perform the daily task allotted, viz., to husk and carry to the store 500 coconuts. A Cocos-born can do this in a few hours, while an imported coolie cannot get through the work in less than the day. Indeed, Mr. Ross states that till the coolie has been three years in the island he is of little use, and by that time his engagement is terminated.

Mr. Ross does not intend to do away ever altogether with coolies imported from Batavia, and indeed it would be unadvisable to desist from introducing fresh blood from time to time into the islands for fear of injury from too close inbreeding.

Provisions.—The food supply, as far as fish, chickens, eggs, bananas, &c, seems abundantly adequate, but it is very much to be regretted that a fungus, which is stated to have been introduced into the islands in some vegetable seeds imported from Singapore a few years ago, destroyed the vegetables, orange and lime trees. I saw no specimen of the fungus itself, but gather it was of the nature of a black-blight, which here infests the orange trees. It appears that the seeds sent germinated and grew up satisfactorily, but that when apparently thriving the disease appeared and quite destroyed them and the fruit trees. The absence of cattle has been alluded to; there are still some sheep upon the islands, but not many, and the owners refused to sell to the "Redpole." The large wild fruit pigeon has been introduced into Cocos and seems to thrive, but it is of very little value for eating.

The rats seem to do a great deal of damage still among the coconuts, and Mr. Ross thinks of introducing the mongoose to combat it.

Introduced provisions, rice, tobacco, &c., are sold at the old prices. I compared the price with that of the rice in Batavia and found that there did not seem to be any over-charging, and the tobacco also seemed to be at a fair price, and on asking the natives if they considered it dear they stated that they thought it was quite fair.

There are now no shops in the island, and such extras as the natives require are bought in Batavia by the men in the schooner, who, of course, take a commission. This system might lead to extortion on the part of the sailors, but it is difficult to see how to avoid it.

Visits to Batavia.—Any islander who desires it is allowed a free trip to Batavia, but he is pledged to assist the sailors of the vessel if and when required. They rarely remain for more than one return of the schooner.

Education.—We visited the school, a very tumble-down building, chi-fly kept in repair by the master and scholars. The master, it appears, knows but little, and has a very small proportion of the children under his tuition. The eldest is about 13. Education is not compulsory, and the master admits that the boys prefer to learn the use of the chisel to that of books.

The Cocos children are very apt at learning mechanics. Some books were sent for the school through Mr. Trevenen some time ago, but they do not appear to have been much used. I did not see in the school any map or diagrams of any kind, and would suggest that this style of education would be probably better and easier for the children than the books sent.

Plotting, making models to scale, carpentering, come naturally to a Cocos child, and I think that diagrams of mechanical and similar subjects would really be studied by them.

Exports and Shipping.—No ship had visited the island during the past year except the chartered ship, which took away 850 tons of copra.

Copra now is the only export. Coconut-oil is no longer made, and the old factory has fallen into disrepair.

Mengkudu and Bêche-de-mer are also not exported any longer.

I have no more to add, except the suggestion that meteorological observations should be kept at Cocos Islands. There is there a rain-gauge and anemometer, but they do not seem ever to have been used.

In conclusion, I have only to say that throughout the voyage I received every assistance from Captain Freeman and the officers of the "Redpole."

I have, &c.,

HENRY N. RIDLEY,

Director of Gardens and Forests, S.S.

The Honourable Colonial Secretary.

No. 10.

SIR C. C. SMITH TO LORD KNUTSFORD.
(Received November 16, 1891.)

Government House, Singapore,

October 14, 1891.

MY LORD,

HAVING been informed by the Senior Naval Officer that H.M.S. "Rattler" would be detailed to make the usual annual visit to the Cocos Islands and Christmas Island, I deputed Mr. Walter Egerton, Acting Senior District Officer, Province Wellesley, to accompany the expedition.

I enclose a copy of Mr. Egerton's interesting report.

I have, &c.

CECIL C. SMITH.

4 September
1891.

Enclosure in No. 10.

"REPORT OF VISIT TO CHRISTMAS AND COCOS ISLANDS."

District Office, Butterworth,

September 24, 1891.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to report that in accordance with your instructions I embarked on board H.M.S. "Rattler" (Lieutenant and Commander Heugh, R.N.) at Singapore, at 8 a.m. on the 25th July last. The anchor was weighed immediately afterwards.

2. We arrived at Batavia on the 28th, and after a stay of four days for coaling, &c., left for Christmas Island on the morning of the 1st August, sighting the island in the forenoon of Monday the 3rd, and anchoring close to the shore in Flying Fish Cove at 2 p.m.

3. Mr. Alexander Ross came on board very shortly afterwards, and Captain Heugh and I went on shore with him. The beach is of snow-white coral shingle, heaped up almost perpendicularly about 10 feet high by the swell from the north-west in the winter months. I went all over the Settlement and saw the inhabitants, who are now only nine in number. We returned on board about nightfall, after shooting about 40 of the Christmas Island pigeons, Mr. Ross dining on board.

Walk to the
plateau.

4. The next morning we landed early with two of the officers, and accompanied by Mr. Ross and four of his men walked to the supposed highest point of the island, where I had been told Mr. George Ross had a small house, to which a good path had been cut.

and-crabs.

5. We found that the track was only marked by old blazes cut on the trees, which were difficult to follow without the assistance of a native; the trees on the way up were full of the large species of "Pergam" pigeon peculiar to the island, and a large number of them were shot by the party as we went along. The land-crabs were astonishingly numerous. They strike a stranger as more like lobsters or overgrown crayfish cut for a holiday than anything else; the ground was perfectly riddled with their holes, and if the rich soil of the island needs any turning over this is done by the "crabs" far more effectually than by worms, which appear absent here, in other countries.

6. The ground along the north side of the island, off which we were anchored, rises very steeply, in places forming high cliffs, to the plateau above; the only piece of level ground being the strip of coral beach, some 30 yards wide, on which the Settlement is located.

7. From this point, at the eastern extremity of Flying Fish Cove, however, the slope is much more gentle, and it is by this route that the plateau is reached.

8. Going as we did through thick forest, shooting on the way and loitering to observe the habits of the crabs, it is extremely difficult to estimate the distance to the top, but I do not think it is more than two miles.

9. I hoped and expected to find a clearing of some kind, enabling me to obtain a view of the island, but the cleared space is only some 50 yards square in the centre of the forest, and surrounded by very lofty trees. In it is a small shed, the roof of which is 6 feet high; I could find no path leading out of it except the one by which we had come. Mr. Ross and the natives with us knew of no way to the edge of the cliffs, and the only exploration of the plateau that I could hear of was a one day's walk of Mr. Andrew Ross, who started in the morning from Flying Fish Cove, returning the same evening. As the island is as large as Singapore, and it is covered to the water's edge with thick forest, he could not have got more than half-way across it. Unexplored state of plateau

10. The soil is an extremely rich chocolate loam (of volcanic origin ?) through which masses of sharply pointed greyish-coloured coral rocks project; this stone is perforated in all directions with small holes. The quantity of stone varies as the steepness of the ground, and where the ascent was very sudden, all the soil had been washed away, leaving nothing but piles of this rock. Character of soil.

11. At the top there was very little rock. The plateau varies from 900 to 600 feet above the sea, and there is probably a slight depression in the centre of the island. Everything planted by the settlers grows with the greatest luxuriance, and I was assured there are no long droughts, rain falling at all seasons of the year. On the other hand, the porous character of the stone and the lightness of the soil allows the water to sink in very rapidly, and the settlers have only been able to get water by boring into the coral rock close to the shore in Flying Fish Cove. Scarcity of water.

12. I saw several abandoned wells on the rising ground near to the cove, and at the top, in the small clearing where the Rosses had in vain tried to procure water; they have, however, no boring implements, and the excavations had not been carried more than 20 feet.

13. Remembering the size of the island and its unexplored condition, it is as yet much too early to say that water is not procurable on the plateau.

14. The planting done consists of a few hundred coco-nuts in the coral shingle near the Settlement, these have been allowed to become choked with weeds, and are in many cases much overshadowed by trees. I believe this is the reason why they are growing very slowly. Planting done.

15. Bananas, papayas, chillies, pumpkins, limes, oranges, tomatoes, radishes, soursop, egg-plants, sweet potatoes, &c., are growing in the vicinity of the huts most luxuriantly, though they are left almost untended.

16. The young coffee (Liberian) and tea-plants look extremely well. A small plantation of about half an acre of the former has just been formed about a quarter of a mile from the hamlet in the midst of the forest.* Coffee.

17. A remarkable feature is the entire absence of bamboos or rattans on the island, which makes progress through the jungle easier than in the Straits.

18. I saw some white ant-hills, but only on the lower part of the slope; they have probably introduced themselves within the last few years. White ants.

19. There can be very little doubt that the island has a great agricultural future before it, but I regret to say that at present very little is being done to develop its latent resources.

20. I made a collection of a number of orchids, but, unfortunately, my servant left them on shore at the Cocos.

21. It would be well in a future year to send a second officer with two natives to explore the island and make a collection of its flora and fauna, and a further search for water. They could be picked up by the gun-boat on its return from the Cocos. Exploration of island advisable.

22. The Settlement has now been established for three years, and the number of inhabitants has varied from 16 to 9. Their only meat is provided by the birds, which swarm all over the island and are extraordinarily tame. Number and tameness of birds.

23. To give an instance illustrating this (1), I caught a little thrush with a butterfly net; (2) I shot 10 pigeons on one tree, one after the other, without one of them attempting to fly away.

* See paragraph 88.

24. The gulls and frigate birds looked on unconcerned while the pigeons were being shot round them.

25. There are no snakes or scorpions on the island.

26. I noticed three kinds of pigeons (1) thrushy, a large white gull, the frigate bird, swifts, and three or four kinds of small birds about the size of a wren, and several species of bats; it is almost certain that further exploration of the cliffs will reveal caves to which the bats retire in the day time.

27. There were very few species of Rhopalocera. I noticed two *Terias* and a species of *Nymphalidæ*, very like an *Euthalia*, and what I took to be a *Charaxes*.

28. I saw two small kinds of lizards.

Departure of
Mr. Andrew
Ross.

29. Mr. Andrew Ross and his family had left in the schooner for the Cocos Islands a week before our arrival. His brother Charles is going to Europe, and he takes the latter's place as "Doctor" in the Cocos.

Present
inhabitants.

30. The inhabitants at the time of our visit were Mr. Alexander Ross, his wife and two little girls—they have been there since the foundation of the Settlement—his cousin, Duncan Lindsay, a lad of 21 years, two Cocos youths, two Bantamese youths. All seemed in excellent health and contented.

Insecure
anchorage
and unsurveyed
condition of
Flying Fish
Cove.

31. The slope from the shore seawards is so steep that it is only possible to anchor very close to the beach. The small bay is very insufficiently surveyed, and it is therefore difficult to pick up a secure anchorage; just after our return on board on the afternoon of our arrival the anchor was discovered to be dragging, and it was considered necessary to weigh it, it took two hours before another spot with suitable soundings could be found.

32. I should have liked to have stayed at least another day, but Captain Heugh was so anxious about the safety of the ship that I could not ask him to do so.

Cocos.

33. Leaving Christmas Island at sunset on 4th August we had a fair wind to the Cocos, and anchored in the lagoon inside Direction Island at about 3 p.m. on the 7th. The anchorage is about a mile from the landing place on Settlement Island, opposite Mr. Ross's house.

34. At 4 p.m. Mr. Andrew Ross, who was till a fortnight before our visit stationed on Christmas Island, came off with an invitation from his brother, Mr. G. C. Ross, to the captain and myself, to put up on shore with him during our stay.

35. We landed about 5, and were met on the jetty by the Superintendent, his daughter, Miss Ross, who came out in May last after finishing her education in Europe, and his second brother, Mr. Charles C. Ross, who acted as Superintendent when his elder brother was away.

36. We found very comfortable quarters awaiting us in a small annexe to Mr. Ross's house, which he keeps specially for visitors, and during our stay he did everything possible to make us thoroughly comfortable, assisting Captain Heugh in the survey of the harbour by the loan of a punt and its crew, and giving me the use of a sailing boat to visit the different islands of the atoll.

37. Mr. Ross and his daughter had only arrived from England, *via* Singapore and Batavia, a few months before our arrival, and Mr. Ross himself had just returned in his own schooner from a trip to Batavia. He had seen the notice in the papers of the intended visit of the "Rattler" to the Cocos, and we were therefore expected.

Mr. Ross's
house.
Garden, fruit
trees, &c.

38. Mr. Ross's house is a comfortable low brick bungalow with veranda all round, and an extensive garden filled with fruit trees and vegetables, amongst which the following may be noted as growing well*:—The European fig, grape-vine, chico, West Indian Avocado pear, guava, papaya, bananas, limes, which were especially fine, oranges, sugar-cane, pumpkin, yams. The house is surrounded by a substantial brick wall, with broken glass on top, built in the time when attacks by the Bantamese coolies were feared.

* All the trees have this year been attacked with blight, which threatens to seriously injure the gardens. I saw a yellow bamboo completely covered with blight, which appears to be the same as that common in England.

39. Inside the wall round the house are a number of large Nyamplom and Casuarina trees, forming a protection from the strong south-east trade-wind, which blows during the greater portion of the year.

40. Between this wall and the workshops and offices is the annexe in which we slept, a banana plantation, and more of these large trees, behind the house and beyond the garden all is coconuts up to the outer shore. Mr. Ross's house is nearly in the centre of the lee shore of the island, to the south of it along the shore of the lagoon lie the houses of the Cocos men, and to the north beyond the stores and offices the houses of his brothers, and beyond these again the Bantamese village. Position of the villages.

41. All the houses in the islands are thatched with coconut leaves, laid on layer over layer (as straw thatch is at home) to a thickness of from 18 inches to 2 feet. It forms a most excellent roof, keeping out the sun's heat and perfectly impervious to wet. Coconut thatch.

42. Paragraph 25 of Mr. E. W. Birch's report* states very clearly the many European habits adopted by the natives. The abandonment of the dirty Malay custom of throwing all the kitchen and other refuse of the house through the floor should also be mentioned. Cleanliness of Cocos houses

43. In the Cocos every house has a separate kitchen, and the soil under and around the houses is kept scrupulously clean.

44. Every young man has to build himself a house before marrying. This costs him hardly anything but the labour, as the coconut tree supplies both the roof and the walls; nails Mr. Ross gives free to any house builder.

45. I went through the Bantamese village several times and visited many of the houses. They are all very clean, with beaten earth floors, raised beds, and in many of them tables and chairs. They are all built in a line about 20 yards from the beach; in front is a cleanly swept expanse of sand, and opposite each house stands its kitchen on the edge of the water. Bantamese village.

46. I spoke to many of the coolies and their wives; all seemed contented, and many had been on trips to Java, frequently returning with relations. Appearance of coolies.

47. They all looked healthy and well nourished.

48. In the same way I paid several visits to the Cocos village; I heard no complaints of the price of provisions or clothing; but I was told, and I could see, that payment in coin would be much preferred to the present parchment currency, both by the Bantamese and the Cocos men. Complaints. Coinage.

49. The lowest "note" is now one quarter of a rupee. Mr. Ross informed me that nothing smaller is required; the inhabitants having so few wants and earning money so easily that anything of less value is either given up for nothing by its possessor or its sale refused. I do not think this tends to economical habits, and I feel sure that it would be far better if the Straits coinage were introduced. (Sa-tali.)

50. With an honest capable administrator, like the present Mr. Ross and his predecessors, the "Chit" system works smoothly enough, but it is at any time liable to serious abuse; and as Mr. Ross has stopped the cashing of his "notes" in Batavia, owing to certain forgeries of them there, the "notes" are only current in the Cocos.

51. Mr. Ross's reason for preferring the "note" system, as given in his memo. of 1st June 1887, are, that gunpowder and poison, &c., could then be purchased and introduced. But Mr. Ross professes that at any time he is ready to change the notes into silver for any one who is going on a trip to Java or elsewhere; and, therefore, I do not see the objection to a metallic currency in the islands. For the last two years no ship has called there, so that the opportunities for making an improper use of the money are very rare.

52. It would be quite easy to introduce our Straits coinage after due notice had been given, and I would recommend the following way:

53. On the occasion of the annual visit to the atoll let a supply of the coinage be taken down, a proclamation issued, and a week given to all holders to bring in their "Cocos Notes"; these being exchanged for coin as handed in could then be cancelled and handed to Mr. Ross with a supply of, say, another \$3,000, and he could give a draft on his agents for the total amount supplied; any further supplies could be indented for as required. Introduction of Straits coinage.

* Enclosure No. 1.

54. As regards the rate of exchange, which is permanently fixed at five-sixths of a guilder for a "Cocos Rupee" Note*, it appears to have been overlooked in all previous reports that the Cocos note represents the Indian rupee and not the Dutch guilder. At the present time an Indian rupee is worth 89 cents of a Dutch guilder.

55. I am of opinion that the Straits coinage is preferable to the Dutch. First, because the Islands are British; second, because the natives of the islands are more connected with Singapore and the Straits than with Java, as many of them speak English, and some have relations in Singapore and Penang, but none in Java. The Straits dollar is also readily exchangeable in the Dutch colonies.

56. There are, at least, 30 Cocos-born people living in Singapore, in Selegie-road and Short-street, and I brought back two parcels and five letters for them from their relations in the Cocos.

57. Mr. Ross informed me that there was no restriction on correspondence, but I gathered from the people that letter-writing was discouraged, if not prohibited.

Price of
Stores, &c.

58. I went through the store rooms, kept by Mr. Ross, and was told the prices of the various articles, which did not appear to me at all high, especially when the isolated situation of the place and the expense of freight is considered.

Wages.

59. The wages paid are exceedingly high; a man can easily earn a rupee in half a day in collecting† nuts; all the children and women can assist in this work, so that an industrious family could easily save a considerable sum.

60. The women, and children too, work at‡ shelling the nuts and the husband of one of the former pointed out his wife as a woman who could shell 1,600 nuts by 11 a.m. and thus earn a rupee.

61. The coolies' expenses are, on the other hand, very small. Rice is the only necessity. They have no rent and no taxes to pay; they keep their own fowls, and fish abounds everywhere.

Absence of
complaints.

62. I met only one man who was thoroughly discontented, and he was an old Bantamense. I came across him while out alone shooting on the West Island. He stated that he had a wife and four children and could only earn a rupee a day, and was, therefore, unable to save anything in order to return to Java. In cross-examination he said, his rice cost 11 rupees a month. This left him, supposing he worked only 24 days a month and that his wife and children earned nothing, 13 rupees for tobacco, clothing and other luxuries, so that I came to the conclusion he was a confirmed gambler. Mr. Ross says that gambling is very common on the islands.

Health.

Excessive
mortality of
infants.

63. The health of the islands during the past year has been very good. There has been no return of beri-beri, and no outbreak of any other disease. In a population of over 550 there were only three deaths of adults, but the infantile mortality is astonishingly large. During the year there were 37 births and 29 deaths of infants. That is to say, more than 50 per cent. of the children born.§

64. Mr. Ross attributes this to want of knowledge in the mothers of the proper way to bring up infants; this may be so, but the subject should, I think, be inquired into at a future visit. I only discovered it on the morning we left on receiving the Census returns. As there are no cattle or goats there is no substitute for the mother's milk, and possibly the climate, or food of the natives, may cause the mother's supply to be insufficient. At any rate it is extraordinary that there should be such excessive infantile mortality in a mild climate amongst a race who live such healthy lives and possess such robust health as the Cocos Islanders.

65. Amongst such a small community there must be much intermarriage of near relations; possibly this may be a cause of so many deaths of infants, but the parents show no signs of deterioration.

* This has been the rate since the time of Mr. Ross' grandfather. [See also para. 13, on pp. 83-4].

† The nuts are husked where found, so that collecting includes husking, and one rupee is paid for each 500 nuts brought in.

‡ Only Bantamense do this work.

§ The percentage was one-seventh of births in 1889-90. Mr. Ridley comments on the high rate in his report.

66. The births during the year August 1890 to August 1891 were—

	Males	Females.	Total.
Cocos born - - - - -	12	11	23
Bantamese - - - - -	7	7	14
And the deaths—			
Cocos - - - - -	11	9	20
Bantamese - - - - -	2	2	4

The deaths consisted of one old man of congestion of the liver; one middle-aged man of influenza; one middle-aged female of cancer; one boy of Java fever; 20 of *Infantile sicknesses*.

67. It will be observed that the mortality is much greater among the Cocos children than among those of Javanese parents.

68. I would suggest the placing of an apothecary for a year on the island with directions to attend every confinement and to instruct the women in midwifery and also in the treatment of young children.

69. Mr. Ross mentioned the frequent outbreaks of epidemics of "Java Colds" after the arrival of his schooner from that island. This further corroborates what I have lately seen mentioned in the English newspapers regarding outbreaks of colds on isolated islands on the arrival of any ship from the outer world. At the time of our visit half the inhabitants had colds, and they all declare it was due to the return of the schooner the week before.

Introduction
of "colds"
by vessels.

70. Enclosed is a detailed census of the islands, showing the Bantamese immigrants and their children separately from the Cocos settlers. According to the census there are now in the Cocos.

Population.

	Males above 18.	Females above 16.	CHILDREN.		Total.
			Males.	Females.	
The Ross family - - -	4	6*	7	7	24
Other Europeans - - -	3†	—	—	—	3
Cocos men (including many of mixed European and Malay blood).	84	94	81	87	346
Bantamese, &c. - - -	68	45	38	32	183
TOTAL - - -	159	145	126	126	536

* Four of these are Cocos women.

† Norwegian Officers of the "Tweed" and "G. C. Ross."

71. Included under Bantamese &c., are 38 males and 45 females born in the islands, so that the actual immigrant coolies only number 68 males and 32 females.

On the other hand amongst the 373 Cocos people are included nine men and seven women who were born elsewhere.

72. The total population at the time of the last census was returned as 536; during the year there have been four departures of Bantamese; eight persons have returned from Christmas Island, and Mr. George Ross and Miss Ross from England, and the excess of births over deaths is 13.

73. At present there is practically no education. A few Koran classes are held by the old priest, and this is all. The boy, Rajali, who returned with me to the Cocos after three years training in the Singapore Malay College, will, I hope, be set up in a school by Mr. Ross; but Rajali's father seemed anxious that the boy should go into the office, and I am of opinion that Mr. Ross is not greatly in favour of general education himself.

The English
language.

74. The Cocos men seemed surprised and disappointed that Rajali had not been taught English in Singapore, and it is certainly the language that would be most useful to the islanders.

75. Nearly all the older people speak English, but very few of the younger ones, and it is a great pity that this language should die out as it is now doing.

76. I am afraid Rajali is too young and inexperienced to make a good teacher, especially as he will have no supervision, none of the Rosses knowing the Malay character.

77. I urged Mr. Ross to select two clever boys and send them to the Raffles School, where they would be sure to secure a good education. It is lamentable to see the way in which even his own nephews and nieces grow up, unable to speak anything but Malay.

Rats.

78. The damage done to the coco-nut plantations by the rats, introduced by the wreck of a Norwegian ship some 10 years ago, is very great. On Settlement and the adjacent islands over 75 per cent. of the young nuts are eaten by them; on West Island they are not so numerous, and as yet they have not succeeded in crossing to Horsburgh Island.

79. The loss thus caused to Mr. Ross is very serious; he has imported a number of fox and bull terrier dogs from England, and in this way the number has been reduced, but I fear they will always be a serious nuisance.

80. The rats live in the tops of the trees, and the method pursued in destroying them is for a native to climb the tree and dislodge the rats, who then fall into the jaws of the dogs waiting below. Some of the dogs have become very cunning and "point" at trees containing rats.

West Island
plantation.

Annual crop
produced by
islands.

81. The coco-nuts on West Island are now the most fruitful. They are all trees planted since the cyclone of 1876, which swept away nearly all the plantations on this side of the lagoon. The present annual crop of copra amounts to from 700 to 800 tons. No oil is now made, and it forms the sole article of export. It is prepared in a much more cleanly and careful manner than that in the Straits, and consequently commands a higher price in the English market.

82. It is loaded in bulk by Mr. Ross's own men in the chartered ship, and compressed into a solid mass by rolling heavy barrels full of water over it during the loading; this method of loading is, I believe, peculiar to the Cocos.

Rain-gauge
and educa-
tional
drawings.
Climate.

83. I found the rain-gauge had not been used, and the educational drawings supplied by the Government have not been made use of.

84. The temperature and the barometer readings are taken daily at 6 a.m. The following are the monthly maxima and minima since the last visit:—

1890.

	Barometer.		Thermometer.	
	Highest.	Lowest.	Highest.	Lowest. (Taken 6 a.m.)
July - - - -	30.00	29.90	78	75
August - - - -	30.03	29.91	78	74
September - - - -	30.04	29.88	78	73
October - - - -	30.09	29.88	77	74
November - - - -	30.08	29.93	78	73
December - - - -	30.04	29.92	78	75
1891.				
January - - - -	30.07	29.82	80	74
February - - - -	30.05	29.81	80	74
March - - - -	29.98	29.83	80	74
April - - - -	30.01	29.74	80	77
May - - - -	30.03	29.91	81	79
June - - - -	30.05	29.93	78	75
July - - - -	30.06	29.93	78	75
August - - - -	30.07	30.01	79	75

85. From the 7th April to the 16th August, with the exception of the 13th May, the wind was invariably between east and south at the time the morning observation was taken. From the end of January to the 7th of April it was variable, but still principally in the same quarter.

86. The cargoes of copra during the last four years have been despatched as follows :—
 1888, by "Unione" to Lisbon, 782 tons; 1889, in September, by "Phaeton" to London; 1890, by "Vanadis" to Hamburg, 850 tons; 1891, in February, by "Esther," 619 tons, and this autumn the cargo is also to be sent to Liverpool. Mr. Ross stated to me that the price to be obtained on the Continent is generally higher, but that there is greater difficulty in obtaining payment, and therefore he has decided to always ship to England in future.

Copra
exported.
Shipments to
England.

87. The stoppage of Messrs. Tidman, Balfour & Company, of Batavia, owing to the failure of the connected firm, Mactaggart, Tidman & Company, of London, occurred shortly before our arrival. This firm has for a long time acted as Mr. Ross's agents, and he is a very heavy loser by the failure; his loss including the whole of last year's crop, which had just been placed in their hands, as well as a considerable cash balance in Mr. Ross's favour.

Loss by
failure of
agents.

88. Mr. Ross informed me that he was in Batavia, taking steps to procure a gang of coolies for work in Christmas Island, when the news came, and that owing to the failure he is obliged to give up for the present all plans for the development of that island. This is much to be deplored, as I feel sure that plantations there would prove profitable.

89. Nearly all Mr. Ross's stores are now procured direct from England, with the exception of rice, tobacco, and sugar, and a few other unimportant articles, and he finds that this plan, which was just being tried for the first time when Mr. O'Connor visited the Cocos, is far better than making local purchases in Batavia.

Stores now
obtained from
England.

90. No ships had visited the islands during the last two years, with the exception of the ones chartered to carry home the copra produced.

No ships
stopping at
Cocos.

91. There was no crime during the year.

Absence of
crime.

92. Toddy-drinking is now general amongst the Bantamese, and to a lesser extent amongst the Cocos people, but cases of drunkenness are rare.

Toddy
drinking.

93. No new coolies have been brought to the islands since the last visit.

94. I was disappointed at not being able to visit the North Keeling Island. It is the largest of the group, 16 miles away to the north of the Cocos Atoll. The landing there is difficult in rough weather and the anchorage is unsurveyed. No officer has yet landed there, though from what was told me by the natives, the difficulty of doing so seems to have been exaggerated.

95. During our stay an accurate survey of the anchorage at the lower end of the lagoon was completed, which will be of great use to all ships visiting the harbour.

96. In conclusion, I wish to bring to your notice the cordial way in which I was received by the officers of the "Rattler," and the great trouble taken by Captain Heugh to make me thoroughly comfortable during my stay on board.

I have, &c.

WALTER EGERTON,
Acting Senior District Officer.

No. 11.

LORD KNUTSFORD to SIR C. C. SMITH.

SIR,

Downing Street, December 23, 1891.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Despatch of the 14th of October, enclosing a report from Mr. Walter Egerton respecting his visit to the Cocos and Christmas Islands.*

I have read this very clear report with much interest, and I should be glad to be favoured with your opinion on what Mr. Egerton says as to the introduction of metallic currency into the Cocos islands, in substitution for the so-called Ross paper currency. If it is the wish of the people, I am inclined at present to think that it should be done.

I regret that although they have done so much good work in other respects, the leading members of the Ross family should have failed to promote the study of the English language, and that there should even be certain of Mr. Ross's nephews and nieces who are growing up ignorant of it. Unless the Ross family as a whole maintains its status as that of a race boasting a higher civilization than that of the natives, it will be difficult hereafter to allow the leaders of the family to continue in that unique position of authority over the population which they have hitherto enjoyed. I trust to you to use your influence to bring about a better state of things.

I have, &c.

KNUTSFORD.

No. 12.

SIR C. C. SMITH to LORD KNUTSFORD.

(Received August 22, 1892.)

Government House, Singapore,

July 23, 1892.

MY LORD,

13 July 1892.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship copy of the report of Lieutenant and Commander Bell, R.N., of H.M.S. "Plover," which made the annual visit this year to the Cocos-Keeling, and Christmas Islands. I regret to say that I was unable to send any officer from this Government with the "Plover."

2. Commander Bell's report is satisfactory. The health of the people on the Islands is good. There have not been any more cases of Beri-Beri.

3. The loss of Mr. Ross's schooner is a very serious one. He was in Singapore a few days ago on his way to England, and I learnt from him that he considered that the Italians must have pirated the vessel. He had reported the case to Lloyds', but, unfortunately, as I think, he had not taken any other steps to make his loss known. It would have been well to have sent an account of the missing vessel to the Australian Colonies, whither she was most probably taken.

4. I enclose a copy of the correspondence which has passed with Mr. Ross arising out of Mr. Egerton's report of last year. I do not recommend that any further steps should be taken at present as regards the currency of the Islands.

I have, &c.

C. C. SMITH.

Colonial
Secretary to
Mr. Ross,
5 February
1892.

Mr. Ross to
Colonial
Secretary,
28 June 1892.
25 July 1892.

P. S.—I enclose a copy of Mr. Ridley's remarks on Commander Bell's report, and I would suggest that a copy be sent to Mr. Murray, who could discuss it with Mr. Ross.

• No. 10.

Enclosure 1 in No. 12.

COMMANDER BELL, R.N., to CAPTAIN BALFOUR, R.N., Senior Naval Officer,
Straits of Malacca.

REPORT on Visit to Christmas and Cocos Islands.

H.M.S. "Plover," Singapore,

July 13, 1892.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to submit this report on the recent visit of Her Majesty's gunboat under my command to the Christmas and Keeling Cocos Islands.

2. Christmas Island was visited on 23rd June, and a short stay was made at anchor in Flying Fish Cove. I found there seven residents, viz., Mr. Alexander Clunies Ross, a brother of the proprietor of the Cocos Islands, and six Cocos-born men, one of them being a grandson of Mr. Lindsay, one of the early Cocos settlers.

3. To the eastward of Flying Fish Cove and just above the sea cliff, a clearing has been made, and several hundred young coffee trees of the Liberian variety are growing in a promising manner. They will be in bearing during the next two years. Cocoa has also been grown for trial; and chilies and such fruits as papaws, bananas, &c., grow in abundance.

4. The island is surrounded on its lower levels by a zone of teak forest, varying from 300 to 1,000 yards in width. A quantity of this wood was sent to Liverpool by Mr. Ross, and was there classified as "bastard" teak, but valued at a rate which would make its export highly remunerative. Mr. Ross affirms, however, that it is in all respects the true teak wood, and that its deeper colour is due to the soil of the island. Amongst the various other timbers growing, there is one which appears to be impervious to the attack of the white ant, and of a very lasting nature. It is a dark coloured, aromatic wood of extremely bitter taste.

5. The principal value of the island will probably be found in its soil, which is very rich in phosphates. The average depth of soil above the coral formation is about 25 feet, all impregnated with guano. Experts in England have reported very favourably on samples sent home, and Mr. Sydney C. Ross, a trained chemist, is about to proceed to the island to make further analyses. Phosphates have been dug up in mineral form (*i.e.*, as crude salts of lime).

6. Mr. George C. Ross and Professor Murray of Edinburgh (formerly geologist in the "Challenger" Expedition) are joint proprietors of the island. Mr. Andrew Ross is about to take over a batch of coolies from Java, and will reside there in charge.

7. There are no snakes or earthworms, and no description of seaweed grows. The island appears to be very healthy, as there has been no sickness of any kind. The settlement consists of a few frame houses and store houses, some with galvanised iron roofs, at the head of Flying Fish Cove. Water, which contains a large proportion of lime salts, is obtained from three wells, 35 feet deep, near the plantation: at higher levels on the island no water has been found at a depth of 70 feet. The food of the residents consists principally of fruit, frigate birds, boobies, and pigeons. The young black frigate bird is said to be excellent eating: it is skinned before cooking, and, according to the Ross family, it is superior in flavour to grouse or pheasant. The residents are also of Dampier's opinion that the land crabs make "sweet meat," and from them they get a fine oil, suitable for gun-locks, &c. But little dependence is placed on fishing for food supply, probably owing to the fact that during the Westerly Monsoon no boat could safely be launched.

8. The Cocos Islands were reached on 26th June, and the ship remained, anchored in the inner bight of Port Refuge, until 1st July. The excellent reports which have frequently been made on these islands leave little more to be said. The people appear to be well off and contented—their homes, general manner and appearance, &c., are in marked contrast to the surroundings of the same class elsewhere. The young teacher, a Cocos-boy trained in Singapore, is said to be doing very well, and all children of suitable age attend school for instruction in the three R's.

9. Beri-beri has entirely disappeared, and no deaths have occurred during the past year, except from infantile complaints or old age.

10. The export from the island is now confined entirely to Copra, that is to say, the processes of extracting oil, making coir, &c., for which expensive machinery was erected, have been abandoned. The cocoa nuts are never plucked from the trees but taken after

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falling to the ground, and husked on the spot, the husks being left to rot and fertilize the soil. It is the work of the young men to nut the copra. After certain treatment it is sun-dried and stored to await shipment. The Cocos copra has a special quotation in the Market Reports, and commands from one to two pounds per ton more than any produced elsewhere.

11. Early in the present year the Italian barque "Lingi Raffo" arrived at the islands laden with copra from Java to Antwerp, and in a leaky and almost sinking condition. Whilst at anchor a north-east swell set in, and she drove on the reefs. The crew, 18 men of various nationalities, gave considerable trouble to Mr. Ross, and on the 29th February last he sent them away for Batavia in his Cocos-built schooner, the "J. G. C. Ross." This vessel, a well-found ship in all respects, has not been heard of since. The loss has been a heavy one for Mr. Ross, as although she was partly insured, a steamer had to be chartered at Batavia to convey the stores, rice, &c. to the islands, which the schooner would otherwise have brought back.

There is now but one island vessel, a small schooner named the "Tweed." Mr. Ross has also sustained serious losses by the recent failure of his agents, the whole of last year's shipment of copra having been sold for the benefit of the consignees' creditors.

No vessels other than the Italian barque before mentioned and vessels chartered by Mr. Ross have visited the islands during the past year. In former years the principal visitors were ships carrying horses from Australia to India, in want of water. This track had almost disappeared.

A new pier, 600 feet long and carrying a light steel tramway, has been built westward of New Selma Island from a point just southward of the Bantam village.

North Keeling Island was not visited. There are no people residing there.

During the past year 634 tons of copra were exported to Holland. A shipment of nuts was also made to Batavia.

I append a return showing the number of residents, also the number of births, &c., since the last visit of one of Her Majesty's ships.

I have &c.

LEWIS K. BELL,
Lieutenant and Commander.

Captain Charles S. Balfour, H.M.S. "Mercury,"
Senior Officer, Straits of Malacca Division, China.

KEELING-COCOS ISLANDS.

Census—August 1891 to June 1892.

	COCOS-BORN.						BANTAMESE.						
	August 1891. No.	Births.	Deaths.	Arrivals.	Departures.	June 1892. TOTAL.	August 1891. No.	Births.	Deaths.	Arrivals.	Departures.	June 1892. TOTAL.	June 1892. GRAND TOTAL.
Men	83	-	-	1	-	84	68	-	-	-	5	63	—
Women	83	-	*1	-	-	82	44	-	-	-	1	43	—
Boys	97	11	†5	-	1	102	39	5	1	-	2	41	—
Girls	115	10	‡2	-	2	121	33	5	-	-	-	38	—
						389						185	574

3 Marriages.

1 Marriage.

* Old age.

† Infants.

‡ 1 Infant and 1 adult.

|| Infant.

Enclosure 2 in No. 12.

The Acting COLONIAL SECRETARY to Mr. ROSS.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Singapore,

February 5, 1892.

SIR,

I AM directed by the Governor to inform you that, in reporting on his recent visit to the Cocos Islands, Mr. Egerton has drawn attention to the want of a metallic currency in the Islands; a want which he considers to be but imperfectly supplied by the paper or parchment currency now in use.

2. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, to whom His Excellency forwarded Mr. Egerton's report, has been struck by his remarks on this subject, and has expressed his opinion that if it is the wish of the people generally that a metallic currency should be introduced, the course should be adopted.

3. Before communicating further with His Lordship I shall be glad to be favoured with your views on the question. It is understood that your principal reason for preferring a note system to a metallic currency is that, if the latter were adopted, there would be a danger of gunpowder, poison, &c., being purchased and introduced into the Islands. In view, however, of the fact that you are willing to change the notes into silver for any person who wishes to go to Java or elsewhere, this ground of objection to a metallic currency does not appear to be a very strong one; and I am further to point out that as the Islands are very rarely visited by ships, the opportunities of making an improper use of money would very seldom occur. In the event of a metallic currency being adopted, His Excellency is of opinion that the coinage of this Colony would be the most suitable to the requirements of the people.

4. I am to add that His Lordship expresses his regret that, although your family has done so much good work in other respects, the leading members of it should have failed to promote the study of the English language, and that there should be even certain of your nephews and nieces who are growing up ignorant of it. The Governor desires me to request your careful attention to this important matter, and he would be glad to hear what you would propose to do in regard to it.

I have, &c.

A. P. TALBOT,

Acting Colonial Secretary, S. S.

G. C. Ross, Esq., Cocos Islands.

Enclosure 3 in No. 12.

Mr. ROSS to the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

Keeling-Cocos Islands.

June 28, 1892.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge receipts of yours of the 5th February 1892 and 19th May 1892.* These letters only to hand on the 27th May and 18th June. The long delay in acknowledging receipts of your favours was caused through the missing of my schooner, which sailed from here for Batavia on the 29th February last. Up to present date I have no news of her; therefore I have had no communication with other ports until the above dates of my receipts of your letters. I have given my full attention to the remarks in your communications, with regard to the introduction of metallic currency instead of my parchment currency at present in use in these Islands. I am decidedly against any alterations in this way; Cocos registered parchment currency has been in circulation since the year 1837, and I have found it to work very well. By its use we have suppressed cock-fighting, gambling, and stealing and other crimes, also we are able to trace up nearly all the irregularities. Mr. Egerton, on his visit here last year, did not open this subject to me; if he had done so I would have pointed out and explained to him why we are in favour of the present system of parchment currency. Since the receipts of your favours I have called my people and read to them your communications, and enclosed please find copy of their answer to me, signed by all the family men. I presume, Mr. Egerton only supposes by the introduction of metallic currency I would be afraid of gunpowder being imported into the Islands; this is quite a mistake,

* Not printed.

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and he has no foundation for the supposition; from first we settled in the Cocos gunpowder never was forbidden. The importation of poisons I do forbid, and it is a mistake to suppose gunpowder and poisons hindered me from the introduction of metallic currency. I feel certain, should my system be done away with, and metallic currency be introduced instead, the peace and content of the people at present in these islands would be a thing of the past; in its place gambling, stealing, and other crimes will follow. I am sure my people do not desire any alterations in our system.

I regret to note in the last paragraph of your favour touching the failings of the leading members of our family for neglect to our nephews and nieces. This is an entirely private and domestic affair. We have made it a rule ever since we settled on these islands never to interfere in any private and domestic affairs, as well as in religion. I have always been in favour of progress, particularly in the English side, and where I see my ways and means for this advancement, I have done so.

I have, &c.

J. CLUNIES ROSS.

The Honourable Colonial Secretary,
Straits Settlements, Singapore.

TRANSLATION.

From KOOMOON and FIFTY-FOUR OTHERS to Mr. CLUNIES ROSS.

WE the undersigned, the inhabitants of Keeling-Cocos Island, have heard from you that the Governor in Singapore wishes to change our parchment money which has been used from the year 1837 up to the present day, and wishes to alter it to into silver or copper coins as that used in Singapore. We have held a meeting to discuss Mr. Egerton's report in respect of that matter. It is suprising to us to learn his opinion, that it is our wish to exchange our parchment money for either silver or copper coins like the money of Singapore. The unanimous reply of all of us is that we do not hold this opinion, and that there is no reason for altering the currency to the use of which we are accustomed, and that if silver or copper coins be used in this place, people will be corrupted and gamble, and all our customs will be upset. Mr. Egerton states that you are afraid of gunpowder and poison being imported into this place, but as for gunpowder we can buy it at any time we require, and, moreover, you yourself have given us firearms. With respect to the prohibition of the importation of poisons into this place, this is quite right; we don't want them and will assist you in their exclusion as much as we can. We all beg to ask you to use your influence that no alteration shall be made either in the currency to which we are accustomed or in the other customs which are in practice in this place.

Enclosure 4 in No. 12.

Mr. RIDLEY to the GOVERNOR.

SIR,

Botanic Gardens, Singapore, 25 July 1892.

I HAVE the honour to state that I have read the report on Christmas and Cocos Islands by Commander L. K. Bell of H.M.S. "Plover," and would make the following criticisms upon it:

Paragraph 4. I still have doubts as to the occurrence of the teak tree upon Christmas Island. I never saw any myself. It is true that the plant is mentioned by Mr. Hemsley in his report on the plants collected by the officers of the "Egeria"; but he does not say he saw specimens, and I imagine incorporated it in his list from the statements of the officers, just as it is stated in the flora of British India to grow in Malacca quite erroneously. The other timber referred to, perhaps, is that of a big *Eugenia* which I saw there, and is, no doubt, a valuable wood.

Paragraph 5. The guano is quite similar to that of Fernando de Noronha in the Atlantic Ocean, which is being worked by a Brazilian who exports it to the United States. This guano was not considered of anything like the value of that of the dryer Peruvian and Chilian regions, because of the loss, especially of the ammonia, due to rain.

action. The value of it, however, was very considerable, and the expenses so light in digging and shipping that the profit was very great.

I have little doubt but that the Christmas Island guano will be very remunerative when worked. With respect to the timber, I would point out, first, that the amount of good wood on the island is necessarily not large, on account of the small area of the island, and that though a small quantity might be sold, it would be a most serious error to attempt to dispose of even a large part of the wood. Were the trees extensively destroyed two things would result: (1) The sea birds would all leave the place, as they have done at Fernando de Noronha from the same cause, and so no more guano would be produced. (2) The guano at present on the ground, when exposed to active denudation by the rain, by removal of the trees, would partly be washed into the sea and lost, and what remained would be seriously injured in value by the chemical action of the rain.

I would therefore recommend that the timber should be exported sparingly, and that care be taken to encourage the sea birds to remain on the island, which will thus be a source of profit for a long period of years.

Paragraph 7. It is not surprising that snakes and earthworms do not occur here. The former very rarely make their way to oceanic islands, and the latter, when they do appear in such places, are, I believe, invariably imported accidentally by man in the soil in which plants are brought to the island for cultivation.

The water surrounding the island being abysmal, or nearly so, up to the island itself would naturally prevent any growth of seaweed. It is probable, however, that if coral reef is still forming round any part of the island, calcareous seaweeds (Nullipores), usually mistaken for corals, will be found.

I can confirm the statement that the frigate-bird is excellent eating, but the booby is generally considered quite uneatable.

Paragraph 8. I regret to see the mortality of the infants in Cocos Island is still high, and much higher than at the time I visited the islands. The reason then given was that there was no milk supply, owing to the failure of fodder for cattle. I procured from India some quantity of grass seeds suitable for the soil and climate, and sent it to Cocos Island in hopes that it might be possible to raise sufficient grass to keep a few cattle; but I have never heard that it came up or was successful. I would suggest that every encouragement should be given to keep a supply of goats or cattle on these islands to supply milk for sickly or delicate children.

I have, &c.

HENRY N. RIDLEY,
Director of Gardens and Forests, S.S.

His Excellency Sir Cecil C. Smith, G.C.M.G.,
&c. &c. &c.

No. 13.

THE MARQUESS OF RIPON to SIR C. C. SMITH.

SIR,

Downing Street, 30 August 1892.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Despatch of the 23rd of July last,* enclosing a report by Lieutenant and Commander Bell upon his recent visit to the Cocos-Keeling and Christmas Islands, which I have read with much interest.

2. I have caused a copy of Mr. Ridley's remarks upon the report to be communicated to Professor Murray, the joint lessee of Christmas Island, with an intimation that it would be desirable, in the interests of the lessees themselves, that moderation should be exercised in cutting timber on that island.

3. I have caused the Board of Trade to be informed of the circumstances connected with the disappearance of Mr. Ross's schooner, although I fear that there is little probability that the Department will be able to obtain any information on the subject.

I have, &c.
RIPON.

* No. 12.

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No. 14.

SIR C. C. SMITH to the MARQUESS OF RIPON.

(Received 4th September 1893.)

Government House, Singapore,
August 9, 1893.

MY LORD,

I HAVE the honour to report to your Lordship that I deputed Mr. A. R. Venning, Treasurer in Selangor, to proceed to the Cocos-Keeling and Christmas Islands for the annual visit, which has this year been made by H.M.S. "Pigmy."

2. I enclose a copy of Mr. Venning's interesting Report, which will, I trust, be considered satisfactory.

3. Mr. Ross has been invited to alter the system hitherto adopted in compiling the Census Returns.

I have, &c.

CECIL C. SMITH.

Enclosure in No. 14.

REPORT of Mr. A. R. VENNING, deputed by His Excellency Sir CECIL CLEMENTI SMITH, G.C.M.G., Governor of the Straits Settlements, to visit Christmas Island and the Cocos-Keeling Islands, 1893.

1. IN accordance with instructions received from his Excellency the Governor, I left Kuala Lumpur for Singapore on the 7th ultimo, and embarked on the morning of the 10th on board H.M.S. "Pigmy," Lieutenant-Commander H. A. Phillipps, R.N.

2. Shortly after entering Banka Strait on the morning of the 12th we found S.S. "Celestial," of Singapore, stranded on the Brom-Brom Reef, where she had been since one o'clock on the morning of the 9th.

3. After handing over the mails she carried to the blue-funnel S.S. "Jason," which passed *en route* for Batavia, we lay by her and tried to tow her off at high water that evening, and again the following day, but it was not till the evening of the third day that, with the assistance of the S.S. "Giang Ann," we were successful in moving her into deep water.

4. We reached Batavia at 2 p.m. on Friday the 16th, and I proceeded with Captain Phillipps to call on the Acting British Consul, Mr. Fraser, of Messrs. MacLaine, Watson, & Co., and on Messrs. Knowles & Co., Messrs. Ross's agents.

5. We took in a supply of coal, and, after engaging a photographer to accompany us, started for Christmas Island at 9 a.m. on Sunday the 18th, arriving there at 2 p.m. on the 20th.

Christmas Island.

6. Mr. Andrew Ross came on board and pointed out the best place to anchor, and shortly afterwards Captain Phillipps and I proceeded on shore with him.

7. The island, which is about 9 miles square, rises precipitously from the sea in a series of cliffs which encircle it almost without a break, each cliff surmounted by a terrace overgrown with magnificent trees, the home of countless frigate birds, boobies, boatswain birds, terns, and pigeons. The continuous line of lower cliffs is said to be broken in only two places, of which Flying Fish Cove, where we anchored, is one, and here the lowest terrace descends to a few feet above sea-level, and on it are the dwelling and store houses and the small clearings which Mr. Ross has made for experimental purposes.

8. On climbing to the top (1,100 feet) the next morning we found that coral and water-worn limestone rocks crop up everywhere, whose appearance at this elevation shows that the island must have been formed by a succession of upheavals.

9. The limestone rock, which is said to extend over considerable area, is reported to contain 25 per cent. of phosphate of lime, but owing to an unfortunate mistake the samples which were sent to England to be analysed were delayed for some months in Batavia, and the report of the result has not yet been received.

10. Mr. Ross informed me that, so far as he had explored, the whole interior of the island was a plateau, and that he had not discovered water anywhere except on the coast, where good drinking water is obtained at a depth of 20 feet to 40 feet.

11. The soil from sea-level up to the top of the hill struck me as being exceedingly rich, and I feel sure that were coffee clearings opened on a large scale they would prove very remunerative.

12. The few hundred Liberian coffee trees which Mr. Ross has planted are uneven in growth, which is attributable to the fact that other trees of various kinds are growing among them, but so far as the majority are concerned their growth is most satisfactory, and would compare favourably with any that I have seen in the Malay Peninsula, and although I searched them carefully for signs of leaf disease (*Hemileia Vastatrix*) I was unable to find a trace of this pest. The orange and lime trees also are very luxuriant, while cocoa, tamarind, guava, mango, papaya, and other trees all appear to flourish.

13. The population of the island has increased since Captain Bell's visit last year in H.M.S. "Plover" from seven to 20 inhabitants, viz.: Mr. Andrew C. Ross, Mrs. Ross, a son, a nephew, two female servants, five Cocos-born men, and nine Bantamese men.

14. There has been no serious illness on the island since last year, but Mr. Ross had the misfortune to shoot himself through the hand about three months ago, which necessitated his amputating his first finger.

15. No ship has visited the island since H.M.S. "Plover" was there last year, with the exception of the local schooner, the "Tweed."

16. The principal food of the inhabitants is rice imported from Sumatra, frigate birds, boobies, pigeons, land crabs, and a few fish, but the sea is generally too rough for fishing to be carried on with success.

17. The Bantamese coolies appear to be contented and are well fed and muscular. They are steadily paying off the advances they received in Batavia, while Mr. Ross informed me that the Cocos men had lately been to Batavia, when they received an advance of Rs. 75 each, which was their only debt.

18. The vegetation indigenous to the island is very luxuriant, and although the teak trees which abound in parts have been pronounced to be "bastard," Mr. Ross informed me that he has received orders from his brother to prepare a quantity of planks from them, as he is going to use this wood for building a new yawl of 50 to 60 tons to run between Christmas and Cocos Islands.

19. I learn that the arrangements for the division of the Island between Mr. Geo. Ross and Professor Murray are still under consideration, and that until they are completed no extension of planting operations can take place.

20. There are at present no exports from the island.

21. Water taken from a well near the landing-place was roughly analysed by Mr. Lomas, of H.M.S. "Pigmy," with the following result:

Chlorine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A considerable amount.
Ammonia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A trace.
Nitric Acid	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Nil.
Nitrous Acid	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Nil.
Oxidisable matter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Nil.

He considers the chlorine to be due to the proximity of the well to the sea, and that the water is fairly good for drinking purposes.

22. We left Christmas Island at 4 p.m. on the 21st, and proceeded to the Cocos Atoll, where we arrived at 3 p.m. on Saturday, the 24th June. Mr. Wm. Ross, a cousin of the proprietor, came off with a Cocos-born pilot, Mr. Sidney Ross, the eldest son of Mr. George C. Ross, being absent on West Island, and Mr. Charles C. Ross, who is in charge of the islands, being slightly unwell from influenza.

The Cocos-Keeling Islands.

23. We steamed into the lagoon and anchored in Port Refuge, and the next morning Captain Phillipps and I proceeded in the steam cutter to the settlement on New Selima or Ross Island, where we were met by Mr. Sidney and Mr. Charles Ross, who conducted us to the house of the former, where we were most hospitably entertained during our stay.

24. I first visited the Bantamese village which lies on the north side of the landing-place, and consists of a wide roadway well raised above the sea-level, with detached

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houses in a row on one side with gardens behind them, and the kitchens on the opposite side near the sea, so as to minimise the danger from fire.

25. In the centre of the village is the school, of which I shall speak later on. I was much struck with the neatness of the village and the cleanliness of the houses and their surroundings.

26. The Bantamese do not appear to have the same dread of fresh air which most Eastern races have; their houses are roomy and well ventilated, the walls being constructed of a double row of the midribs of coconut leaves trimmed to an even segment and fixed close together, and the roofs thatched with unplaited coconut leaves cut into even lengths and laid point downwards. Every house has open barred windows on both sides. The houses are built by the men themselves, all material being supplied free by Mr. Ross, and land for a reasonable extent of garden is allowed at the back, in which are grown a few vegetables, and where fowls and ducks are kept. The Bantamese, however, owing to most of them being only temporary residents, do not devote even the amount of attention to their gardens that the Cocos men do, and Mr. Charles Ross informed me that he frequently had to supply them with both fruit and vegetables from his own garden.

27. From the pier a tramway used for the transport of nuts, copra, &c., leads along the road through part of the Cocos village to the jetty, where the now abandoned oil mill stands, close to the house of the Superintendent. The houses of the Cocos men, each standing in its own inclosed garden, partly hidden among luxuriant foliage and surrounded by roses, shoe-flowers, honeysuckle, and other flowering shrubs, look extremely picturesque; and although some attention seems to be paid to growing vegetables and fruit, they do not appear to have taken that interest in promoting their cultivation which one would expect to find in a place where change of diet is so difficult to procure as it is here.

POPULATION.

28. The population of the islands on the 27th June amounted to 604 souls, being an increase of 30 over the previous year, and the following table will show how the number of inhabitants is steadily increasing:—

YEAR.	Cocos-born.	Bantamese.	Total.
1874 - - - - -	292	198	490
1881 - - - - -	310	125	435
1885 - - - - -	377	139	516
1886 - - - - -	377	140	517
1887 - - - - -	386	134	520
1888 - - - - -	385	150	535
1889 - - - - -	385	141	526
1890 - - - - -	390	146	536
1891 - - - - -	378	184	562
1892 - - - - -	380	185	574
1893 - - - - -	394	210	604

29. Mr. Charles Ross supplied me with the following table, which is in the form hitherto used:—

30th June 1892 to 28th June 1893.

	COCOS-BORN.						BANTAMESE.						Total.
	1892.	Births.	Deaths.	Arrivals.	Departures.	Total.	1892.	Births.	Deaths.	Arrivals.	Departures.	Total.	
Men - - -	84	-	3	1	1	81	53	-	1	14	1	75	156
Women - -	82	-	2	-	-	80	43	-	2	7	1	47	127
Male Children -	102	14	11	-	1	104	41	7	1	2	-	49	153
Female Children	121	10	2	-	-	129	38	2	1	-	-	39	168
TOTAL - -	389	24	18	1	2	394	185	9	5	23	2	210	604

30. This table is very misleading, as it is carried on from year to year, and persons who once appear under the head of children are not removed to the list of adults when they grow up. According to the above returns there are 283 adults on the islands to 321 children, but probably from 100 to 150 should be deducted from the list of children and registered as adults. I would suggest that it would be advisable that a census of the population should be taken and the list adjusted accordingly.

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, DEATHS.

31. All births, marriages, and deaths which occur on the islands are registered. There have been seven marriages among the Cocos people, and four among the Bantamese. The distinction, however, between the races is not quite a true one, as Mr Charles Ross informed me that several inter-marriages have taken place, and that when these occur the people class themselves among the Cocos-born.

32. No divorces have taken place during the year.

33. The deaths amounted to 23 out of 604, or 38.8 per 1,000, too high a rate considering the healthiness of the islands and the absence of any infectious disease, but due to the heavy mortality among children, to which I allude later on.

34. On the 19th June, five days before the arrival of H.M.S. "Pigmy," Pa Basir, the oldest inhabitant, and the man referred to by Mr. Birch in paragraph 7 of his Report in 1885,* died, aged 88 years.

The other deaths were from the following causes :—

One man from Java fever.

One man drowned in the bay.

One man died at sea on board the schooner "Tweed."

One woman died on arrival from Batavia, of fever contracted at Tanjong Priok.

One woman died of old age.

One woman died after child-birth.

One woman died of Java fever.

35. The causes of the deaths of the 15 children are not stated, but are put down to infantile complaints. I made particular inquiry into the cause of the excessive mortality among the children, which appears to occur almost exclusively during the first two or three years of life. Mr. Charles Ross stated it to be his belief that it was due to the fact that they continue to derive nourishment almost exclusively from their mothers up to 18 months of age, and even longer, and that the absence of more sustaining and strengthening food so enfeebles their constitutions that they fall easy victims to complaints which would otherwise have no serious effects. He stated that he had used every endeavour to induce the women to bring up their children on condensed milk and farinaceous food, but without success. The matter is one on which I, of course, am unable to express an opinion, but it would, I consider, be well that a competent medical opinion should be taken, with the view to avert the continuance of the heavy death rate.

HEALTH.

36. The climate of the islands seems to be most salubrious, and one is struck by the remarkably sturdy, healthy, and contented look of the people.

37. Dr. Lomas, M.B., of H.M.S. "Pigmy," accompanied me to the villages, and made inquiries for any sick who required attention. There were only three cases, of which two were trivial. One case was of congested liver commencing cirrhosis, one of influenza, and one of a child who had slight fever from teething. They were prescribed for by Dr. Lomas, and the two latter were much better before we left the islands.

38. Mr. Charles Ross informed me that there was little or no illness on the islands at any time, except when the schooner arrived periodically from Batavia; but, that, after unloading her, cases of fever and influenza were very frequent, infection being brought from the pestilential swamps round the harbour at Tanjong Priok.

39. Beri-beri has completely disappeared, and Mr. Charles Ross attributes its disappearance to the raising of the main roadway which separates the villages from the sea, and to the making of the causeway at the south end of the village, to keep the sea at high water from flowing up to the backs of the houses. Since this improvement was effected the houses have been much drier, and no case of beri-beri has occurred.

40. Mr. C. Ross reports that he examined every house, outhouse, latrine, and well

* See page 3, and also page 40.

once a month, when defects are remedied and any insanitary conditions removed. The water appears to be very good, except for a want of iron, and this is counteracted as far as possible by placing iron scraps in the wells.

EDUCATION.

41. A capital school-house, of very neat construction and with a concrete floor, has been erected by Mr. Ross at the back of the Cocos village. It was opened in October last, prior to which time school was conducted in a private house.

42. The master, Rageli, is the Cocos-born lad who was educated at the Malay College in Singapore, and Mr. Charles Ross reports that he is doing excellent work, and takes great interest in the boys, encouraging them both in their work and their games. On the occasion when I inspected the school there were 46 boys present, of ages ranging from 7 to 18, all wearing neat uniform caps with black and red stripes.

43. Each boy has his books and his slate, and I was much struck with the facility and eagerness with which they read from their books and wrote from dictation, even the smallest boys writing with rapidity and correctness.

44. Out of school Rageli encourages them in running, jumping, and other competitions; and at the New Year, sports are held, which are eagerly looked forward to as the annual festival, not only by the competitors, but by the whole of the population, both Cocos-born and Bantamese, which turns out *en masse* on the occasion, and displays much interest in the winning of the different prizes.

45. The total number of boys available for attendance at this school was, I was informed, 65, so that the attendance was fairly good. There are no fees charged, the expenses of the school, including the salary of the master, being borne by Mr. Ross.

46. In addition to this school, there is one, to which I have already alluded, in the Bantamese village. The master, a very intelligent, modest-looking young man, named Jahya, came to the islands seven years ago, when he informed Mr. Ross that he did not intend to settle, but wanted to learn carpentering. He told me that he still adhered to his intention, and that he thought in two or three years he would be proficient, and would return to Bantam.

47. Mr. Charles Ross reports that he is an excellent carpenter and boat-builder, and is of the greatest use to him in helping to maintain order among his compatriots, most of their petty disputes being referred to him for settlement. He built the school-house, a nice building with a boarded floor, himself, the material only being supplied by Mr. Ross, and he holds school every evening from 7 till 9 or 10 p.m., when he teaches pupils, most of whom have attended the other school in the daytime, to write and to read the Koran.

48. The average attendance is about 12, and he receives no pay or fee for the excellent work he does in his leisure time after his day's work is done.

CRIME.

49. No crime has been reported in the islands during the past year. Night watches are carried out, as reported by Mr. Birch in his paragraph 24,* one of the members of the Ross family being in charge of the watch every night in turn.

The objects of these watches are:—

- I. Protection from fire.
- II. Safety of boats.
- III. Prevention of brawls and gambling.

The absence of all crimes among a population of over 600 persons, half of whom are imported labourers temporarily employed under agreements, reflects considerable credit on the administration of the islands by the Ross family.

LABOUR.

50. A new gang of coolies from Bantam arrived during the year, consisting of men, women, and children, in all 23 persons. They had been previously to Queensland and to Deli in search of permanent employment, and Mr. C. Ross states that he believes they intend to settle and remain in the islands. The men received advances of £50 each, and the women £45, which they are repaying month by month.

* See page 9.

51. The Bantamense receive 50 *f* cents pay per working day, and Mr. Ross informs me that their living expenses are on an average as follows:—

Rice	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.75
Tea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.13
Flour	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.25
Tobacco	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.37
Sugar	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.25

* *f* 1.75 per week.

52. Cocoa-nuts, firewood, and medicine are given free, and the people supply themselves with fish and vegetables, so that they have a very good margin for paying off their advances and for laying by money when out of debt. The total indebtedness at present amounts to *f* 1,600, the greater part of which is due by the newly-imported coolies.

53. The Cocos-born men earn from *f* 3 to *f* 10 per week, according to ability, the highest wages being earned at nutting, at which the more expert earn high wages. Those employed in the shops as carpenters, blacksmiths, &c., are paid at from *f* 3 to *f* 7.50 per week. I found from an inspection of the check-roll which Mr. Charles Ross kindly placed at my disposal, taking one page by chance, that the weekly wages earned by nutting men averaged *f* 5.50, which should allow of their putting by a considerable sum in a few years.

54. Mr. C. Ross told me, however, that they seldom do this, but spend their savings by remitting money by the schooner "Tweed" for the purchase in Batavia of silk cloths, gold trinkets, &c. They are also greatly given to feasting, one man having, shortly before our arrival, given a feast on the occasion of the circumcision of his son, on which he spent all his savings, amounting to *f* 175.

55. The women are employed principally in shelling nuts, which is done by chopping off the shell with a heavy knife, the kernels being divided into three or four pieces and wheeled in trucks to the sheds to be dried. Each woman can easily earn at this work 25 *f* cents before the middle of the day; in fact, on the day when I watched them at work, one woman shelled 1,600 nuts, for which she would receive *f* 1. This work is not, of course, continuous all the year round, as it cannot be carried on in wet weather, but at other times they can easily earn by making mats, extracting oil, making soap, and by washing, &c., on an average *f* 1 per week, besides attending to their household work.

CURRENCY.

56. The system in force for payment of wages is as follows:—

Wages are paid every week by means of bills or pay-notes made out in the name of the person to whom the money is due, and these can be replaced, if lost.

57. These bills are exchangeable on demand for currency notes, which are stamped notes of parchment bearing the values *f* 5, *f* 3, *f* 2, *f* 1, *f* $\frac{1}{2}$, and *f* $\frac{1}{4}$; and signed by Mr. George C. Ross. When any man wishes to remit to Batavia, he exchanges his currency for a bill of exchange at a discount of one-sixth. There does not seem to exist any adequate reason for deducting 16.66 per cent. from the men's savings when they wish to realise them, and although it seems to be acquiesced in by the coolies, it might easily lead to friction and discontent.

58. It has been suggested that metallic coins should be used, but I understand that Mr. Ross is strongly opposed to its introduction, chiefly on the ground that it would afford strong temptation to theft by coolies from one another, and might lead to organised attempts at robbery, which might end in bloodshed. In fact, the whole condition of life would be changed, and the present peaceable, well-ordered community would be disorganised. In any case it would be necessary in a place like the Cocos Islands, where outside aid is not obtainable, to institute an armed force for the protection of the bank.

59. It does not seem to me that any such course is either necessary or advisable, and I suggested to Mr. Charles Ross, and the plan appeared to meet with his approval, that it would be good policy if, after a certain time, say after the expiration of present agreements, currency were to be payable at par in Batavia. To avoid any loss to the proprietor the rates of pay might be reduced to a corresponding extent, and I do not think such a reduction would affect the labour market, for wages are certainly very much higher here than in the neighbouring Dutch Colonies.

* *f* stands for the Dutch florin or guilder, containing 100 cents and = 1*s.* 8*d.* But see foot note on p. 30 and also see par. 13 on pp. 83-4.

EXPORTS.

60. The only product exported from the islands is copra, of which 1,211 tons were shipped during the past year, valued by Mr. Charles Ross at 11*l.* per ton, which gives an export value of 13,321*l.*, or *f* 159,852. From inquiries I made in Batavia I am inclined to think that this valuation is too low, and that it should be put at 13*l.*, equal to 15,743*l.*, or *f* 188,916. The price of copra is rising, and none of last year's crop has yet been sold.

61. No bêche-de-mer has been exported. There appear to be large quantities available, and Mr. Ross is awaiting replies to letters as to the best means of curing it.

IMPORTS.

62. The following is an approximate list of imports, the figures having been kindly furnished by Mr. Charles C. Ross:—

Rice	-	-	pkls. 1,600	-	-	-	<i>f.</i> valued at 11,200
Tea	-	-	cases 4	-	-	-	" 100
Flour	-	-	lbs. 4,000	-	-	-	" 540
Tobacco	-	-	baskets 30	-	-	-	" 840
Sugar	-	-	lbs. 5,000	-	-	-	" 1,000
Medicines	-	-	-	-	-	-	" 500
Sundries	-	-	-	-	-	-	" 10,000
							<i>f.</i> 24,180

SHIPPING.

63. No ships have called at the Cocos Islands since the visit of H. M. S. "Plover," with the exception of two vessels chartered to carry away produce.

64. The S. S. "Rosalie," Swedish ship, chartered from Macassar to carry copra to Lisbon, there to await orders from the London agent, arrived in September 1892. She put into the Cape of Good Hope leaky, and discharged her cargo, consisting of 642 tons of copra, which is still at the Cape undisposed of.

65. The S. S. "Windermere," chartered from East London in South Africa to carry copra to Cadiz to await orders, arrived in April 1893, and took away 569 tons copra.

METEOROLOGY.

66. I subjoin a list of maximum and minimum readings of barometer and thermometer. The readings are taken once a day, at 6.30 a.m.

	Barometer.		Thermometer.	
	Maximum.	Minimum.	Maximum.	Minimum.
July - - - 1892	30.08	29.78	79	74
August - - - "	30.05	29.86	79	72
September - - - "	30.06	29.87	79	74
October - - - "	30.04	29.88	79	75
November - - - "	30.03	29.73	81	75
December - - - "	30.02	29.74	81	74
January - - - 1893	29.95	29.82	80	75
February - - - "	30.00	29.82	80	75
March - - - "	30.02	29.83	81	74
April - - - "	30.01	29.80	80	74
May - - - "	30.03	29.84	79	76
June - - - "	29.99	29.71	79	73

No record of rainfall has been kept.

67. Mr. Charles Ross reports that a cyclone occurred in December last which did much damage to the coconut trees, and that since then the weather has been

almost continuously rainy and squally, so that he has been unable to cure his copra, and the prospects for this year's crop are therefore unfavourable.

COMPLAINTS.

68. Soon after my arrival I caused notice to be given in both villages that I was prepared to listen to any complaints, and would lay any grievances they wished to relate to me before his Excellency the Governor. I was constantly among the men and through the villages during my stay, and no complaints were communicated to me, while those men whom I addressed appeared contented, and, indeed, well-to-do. I consider that the condition of these people will bear favourable comparison with that of the coolie class of any Eastern race with which I am acquainted; and that the way in which the administration of these islands is carried on, as evidenced by the thriving appearance of the inhabitants, the absence of crime, and even of complaint, and the excellent work turned out from the shops in iron and brass, in cask-making, and in boat and house-building, by men who have been trained entirely on the spot, reflects the greatest credit on the Ross family.

NORTH KEELING ISLAND.

69. On the evening of the 29th June, after having spent four days in inquiring fully into the condition of the people and the general progress of the Cocos Islands, we started for North Keeling Island, which is usually considered one of the group, although it is a separate atoll and is 15 miles away.

70. This island has not been previously reported on; indeed, I was informed that it had not been visited by any ship within the memory of the present inhabitants of the Cocos Islands.

71. I believe, however, that H.M.S. "Egeria," while surveying in these seas, must have visited it some four or five years ago, though whether a landing was effected, or only soundings taken, I am unable to say.

72. As we approached a heavy surf was visible, breaking on the south-east end of the island, but, the "Pigmy" having anchored close in shore on the west side, I was able to land with the aid of a surf boat and its Cocos Island crew which we had brought with us.

73. The island is like a flattened horse shoe in shape, the opening being, however, barred by a reef, over which the rollers break into the lagoon.

74. The land surrounding the lagoon appears to be everywhere about a quarter of a mile wide, and is covered with coconut trees. There is a fairly good house and some other buildings, all in a state of disrepair, and as the island has not been visited by the Cocos Islanders for over two years, the nuts which have fallen have sprouted and are growing into trees, and the undergrowth has sprung up thickly. There are two wells, the water of one of which is said to contain medicinal properties.

75. The lagoon is about one mile long and half-a-mile wide. It is described by Darwin, who visited it, I believe in 1827, as being dry, except at high tide, and the bottom as composed of soft mud.

76. It was low tide when I saw it, the water was up to within a few yards of the coconut trees, and the bottom was hard smooth rock, so smooth as to appear almost as if laid with a trowel.

77. It would seem, therefore, that the truth of Darwin's theory of coral islands being formed by subsidence of the land on which they are based is here exemplified, for the interior of North Keeling must have sunk about 18 inches in the last 66 years, although the coral reef has probably continued to enlarge, and the calcareous mud must have become hardened by the action of the sun through shallow water.

78. The shores of the lagoon are inhabited by thousands of sea birds, principally frigate birds, boobies, and terns, which are so tame that they do not move from the branches of the trees till one is quite close to them, and to obtain specimens of their eggs from the nests, which literally cover the low shrubs at each end of the lagoon, we had to push them off with our sticks.

79. Leaving this beautiful spot at 4 p.m. we entered the Cocos lagoon soon after 6, and, dropping Mr. Wm. Ross and his surf boat there, proceeded to Batavia, where we arrived on the evening of the 4th July, after touching at Anjer en route. After staying there two days to coal, during which I visited the fine gardens at Buitenzorg, we left for Singapore, where we arrived on the morning of the 10th instant, after an absence of 30 days.

80. In conclusion, I desire to express my appreciation of the willing co-operation I received from Messrs. Charles, Sidney, and William Clunies-Ross in carrying on inquiries, and of the courtesy and kindness with which they received and entertained me during my visit.

81. I wish also to tender my thanks to Captain Phillipps and the officers of H.M.S. "Pigmy" for the hospitality which they showed me, and the assistance afforded me in carrying out the objects of the expedition.

ALFRED R. VENNING,
Treasurer,
Selangor.

Kuala Lumpur, 21 July, 1893.

No. 15.

The MARQUESS OF RIPON to ACTING GOVERNOR MAXWELL.

SIR, Downing Street, September 18, 1893.
I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Sir C. Smith's Despatch of the 9th ultimo,* forwarding a report by Mr. Venning upon his visit to the Cocos, Keeling, and Christmas Islands.

In conveying to you an expression of the interest with which I have read this report, I would add that the suggestion made in paragraph 59, that Mr. Ross should allow his paper currency to be payable at par in Batavia, is one which should not be lost sight of.

I have, &c.
RIPON.

No. 16.

SIR C. B. H. MITCHELL to the MARQUESS OF RIPON.
(Received January 7, 1895.)

MY LORD, Government House, Singapore,
December 11, 1894.
I HAVE the honour to transmit, for your Lordship's information, copies of the report of Mr. Hugh Clifford, who was deputed by me to visit the Cocos-Keeling Islands in June last.

2. The report is an interesting one, and Mr. Clifford carried out his duty in an entirely satisfactory manner.

3. The long delay that has taken place in sending in this report is accounted for by the incessant employment of Mr. Clifford's time caused by the recent raid and its consequences.

I have, &c.
C. B. H. MITCHELL.

Enclosure in No. 16.

REPORT of Mr. HUGH CLIFFORD, Acting British Resident of Pahang, deputed by His Excellency Sir CHARLES BULLEN HUGH MITCHELL, K.C.M.G., Governor of the Straits Settlements, to Visit the Cocos-Keeling Islands, 1894.

1. IN accordance with the instructions contained in your letter of June 6th last, I embarked on board H.M.S. "Peacock," Lieutenant Commander H. J. D. Laxton, R.N., at eight o'clock on the morning of Thursday, June 7th, and left Singapore Harbour at 10 a.m. on the same day.

2. On the morning of June 10th we reached Tanjong Priuk, and Captain Laxton and myself landed and proceeded by train to Batavia, where we called upon the Acting British Consul, Mr. McLachlan.

3. At 3.15 a.m. on June 12th we left Batavia, and sighted the Cocos-Keeling Islands at 1.30 p.m. on June 15th, and anchored in the Lagoon at about 3.30 p.m. Mr Charles Clunies-Ross, a younger brother of Mr. George Clunies-Ross, the present proprietor, came on board and informed me that his brother was absent from Settlement Island inspecting some planting of new trees across the Lagoon, but that he had been informed of our arrival and would come on board early next morning.

4. Mr. George Clunies-Ross came on board the "Peacock" on the morning of the 16th June, and accompanied Captain Laxton, Dr. D'Arcy Hervey, and myself ashore, where we lunched with Mr. Ross. During the remainder of our stay on the islands Captain Laxton and myself were lodged in the Bachelors' Bungalow, which is situated at a short distance from Mr. Ross's own house, and here we were most hospitably entertained until our visit came to an end.

5. After lunch Captain Laxton, Dr. Hervey, and myself, accompanied by Mr. Ross, visited the villages to the south of Mr. Ross's house, which are inhabited by the Cocos-born Malays. It being Saturday afternoon, which is a half-holiday on the islands, most of the male population was absent fishing on the Lagoon, and the women were deeply engaged with their weekly washing, the institution of a Saturday wash being one of the excellent European practices which the Ross family has been instrumental in introducing among the Cocos Malays.

6. On the morning of Sunday, 17th June, I again visited the Cocos village, and in the afternoon I inspected the Bantamese village.

7. On the morning of the 18th I inspected the Malay school, and went over the stores and workshops. Late in the afternoon Captain Laxton and I returned on board the "Peacock," and we weighed anchor at 9 a.m. on the 19th June. I very much regretted that I was unable to prolong my stay in these most interesting islands, but owing to the instructions which I had received to avoid prolonging my absence from Pahang more than was absolutely necessary, I had no alternative but to cut my visit much shorter than I should have wished to do had I been bound by nothing but my own inclination in the matter.

THE COCOS-BORN NATIVES.

8. A visitor to these people, who has hitherto been accustomed to see the Malay in his natural state, cannot fail to be greatly struck by the extraordinary change in their habits which has been brought about among the Malays of the Cocos Islands by intimate contact with Europeans to the exclusion of all other extraneous influences during several successive generations. The Malay, as one has been accustomed to see him in the villages of the Peninsula, though fairly cleanly in his person, is far too indolent and careless to extend this quality to his surroundings. The interstices of the flooring of a Malay house present a series of natural vent-holes through which any rubbish and offal of which the owner may wish to rid himself can be conveniently discharged, and the space beneath the house and between the poles which support the flooring is thus speedily transformed into a rubbish heap, which is often disagreeable to more than one organ of sense. The same lack of cleanliness and order is in a lesser degree observable in the compound which surrounds most Malay houses, leaves, fronds of cocoa-nuts, and other rubbish being left to wither or rot uncleanly where they fall, without any effort being made to give an air of neatness and tidiness to the place. The Javanese are far more neat than the Malays of the Peninsula, but the Cocos-born Malays far excel their neighbours in Java in this respect. Their houses are built on posts, but the flooring is usually only raised a couple of feet above the level of the ground, and these floors are invariably made of plank, which in itself shows that the inhabitants no longer regard the space below as a legitimate receptacle for rubbish. The houses are scrubbed every Saturday, and are scrupulously clean throughout, and though they are somewhat smaller than are the Malay houses in the Peninsula, they are infinitely better ventilated. This habit of cleanliness extends not only to the persons and dwellings, but also to the garments of these islanders, and on the occasion of my first visit, the day being Saturday, all the women of the village were busily engaged washing, starching, and ironing their own and their husbands' clothes, the methods employed plainly showing that the art is one which has been learned from Europeans.

9. The costume worn by the Cocos Malay is also quite unlike that in use among the natives of the Peninsula and Archipelago. The sarong, without which few self-respecting Malays will appear in public, has been discarded, and a semi-European costume is now adopted, consisting of a bright-coloured cotton shirt, and a pair of white duck trousers bound round the waist with a sash. The feet are bare, but the head is

covered by a large straw hat similar to those in use among the natives of South America. The whole costume, which is not unpicturesque, presents a strong contrast to the dress usually worn by the Malays, and is yet one more unmistakeable evidence of the influence which the European settlers have had upon the Malays who accompanied them to these islands.

10. The costume worn by the women consists of a bodice slightly open at the neck, and a skirt which closely resembles a *sarong* both in cut and in the manner in which it is fastened round the waist. They wear no head-covering, and their feet are bare like those of the men. Again the influence of European custom is noticeable, the women not only going about unveiled, but showing no signs of that affected bashfulness which usually cloaks the very indifferent morals of the average Malay woman, but which it is a point of honour among them to assume when in the presence of men or strangers. In the Cocos Islands the women wait at table, converse freely with strangers, and are generally more *en evidence* than is customary in Malay countries, and yet I am assured by Mr. Ross that their morality is far above the average, and that anything resembling prostitution is altogether unknown.

11. Mr. Ross told me that when he first succeeded to the charge of the islands the husbands made a practice of beating their wives, and that he was forced to take somewhat harsh steps before he succeeded in forcing them to abandon this custom. Now, he says, he is often tempted to regret that he interfered, since the women, being secure from all fear of corporal punishment, have completely subdued the men-folk, hardly any of whom can be really said to be the head of his own household.

12. The manner in which the Cocos Malays live is wholly unlike that of any other Malays with whom I am acquainted. Even in places where the Malay has come so constantly into contact with Europeans that he can with comfort adopt their manner of eating when in their company, he almost invariably eats in the usual native way when the restraint imposed upon him by their presence is removed, a Malay curry, like a Chinese dinner, never being really appreciated nor easily digested unless it is eaten after the native fashion. Among the Cocos Malays, however, the use of a table, stools, and knives and forks when at meals is as indispensable as it is to the European, and the Bantamese, who still sit on the ground and eat after the native fashion, are regarded with contempt by the Cocos-born islanders. It must have been the work of some generations to teach these people to sit with comfort on chairs, since the average Malay finds the position as cramped and as uncomfortable as sitting cross-legged is to the European who is unaccustomed to assume that attitude.

13. From the Europeans on the islands the Cocos-born Malays have acquired some idea of ornamenting their houses, the walls being covered with pictures from the illustrated newspapers, and vases containing flowers being noticeable in several of the rooms I entered.

14. It is not, however, in merely superficial matters that the influence of Mr. Ross and his family is to be seen. The Cocos-born Malay, like the majority of his race, is a Mohammedan, and Mr. Ross informs me that he always avoids, as far as possible, any interference in their religious matters. Nevertheless, by means of the influence exerted by himself and his family, the marriage laws, which to most Malays represent the alpha and omega of Mohammedan law, have been entirely superceded by the English marriage customs. Polygamy is unknown on the island, at any rate among the Cocos-born Malays, and public opinion on the subject is sufficiently strong to induce any Bantamese who has more than one wife to dispense with this superfluity. That such a revolution should have been voluntarily made by a Mohammedan people is sufficiently remarkable, and is a striking instance of the immense personal influence which Mr. George Ross possesses among the people of his island; but allowance must, to some extent, be made for the fact that no great preponderance of women exists on the Cocos Islands, as is usually the case in other more thickly inhabited regions, and that the temptation to polygamy and anything resembling a necessity for it is thus greatly minimized.

15. With regard to divorce, however, this is not the case, and the mere fact that the Mohammedan law of *Talak* should, among a Mohammedan people, have been replaced by the English custom is in itself very extraordinary, and speaks volumes for the marvellous influence which Mr. Ross wields, and which, to his credit be it said, is always directed towards what he believes to be for the good of his people. I am informed that divorces among the Cocos-born islanders are most uncommon, and are only permitted on adultery being proved. This no doubt accounts, to some extent, for the independent attitude which the women assume towards the men.

16. In other matters the Cocos-born Malays appear to follow the practice of their

religion after the usual manner of Mohammedans. A neat, but rather small, mosque is situated next door to the school-house, and here the usual Friday prayers are recited. Though the hours of prayer do not appear to be very strictly observed, and though it would be imagined that no very strong religious feeling prevailed among the islanders, yet it is worthy of remark that religion is made the pretext among the Cocos Malays for the division of the community into three separate sects or factions, each of which is headed by its own Imam. So far as I could learn, no very clear idea seemed to prevail as to the actual points at issue, but Mr. Ross informed me that he was inclined to encourage the existence of these factions, as he found the opposition each made to the remaining two useful in managing the affairs of the island.

17. It was curious to notice that the Cocos-born Malay is almost entirely ignorant of his religious phraseology, and that even so common a word as *Khatam* (the Arabic word which is used by the Malays to express that the Koran has been read through from end to end) is not understood among these Islanders, the Malay word *Timbis* (through) being used in its stead. Many similar instances might be given without difficulty.

18. To his interesting report on the islands, which, indeed, leaves little for those who have since visited them to tell, Mr. E. W. Birch appends a vocabulary of the dialect of Malay here spoken, or rather a list of words which he maintains are only known to the Cocos-Keeling Malays. An examination of this list of words, however, shows that no word there given is in any way peculiar to the island, such words as "*Bâbu*" (بابو), a nursemaid, a serving girl, and "*Bebek*" (بيك), a duck, being simply good Batavian Malay. "*Bisa*," which means skilful, clever, adroit, is also good Batavian, and is probably a contracted form of "*Biâsa*" (بياسا), accustomed, familiar with; while "*Rela*" is simply a common corrupt form of the Arabic (رعا), and is universally employed by the Malays. My own stay at the Cocos Islands was too short to enable me to attempt any real study of the dialect, but I failed to find any new word not known in Batavia or elsewhere (unless *Tumba*, a fish spear, is a local word), and I was chiefly struck by the fact that though most of the words in use among the Cocos Islanders are well known to me, a very large number of words in use in the Peninsula are not understood by the Malays inhabiting these islands, whose dialect, though closely analogous to that spoken in Batavia, is poorer, apparently and less pure. It is worthy of remark that the proper names adopted by these people are usually names which have been borrowed from the Europeans.

19. The work which these people do, the manner in which it is done, and the wages which they receive, have already been fully dealt with in former Reports, and I have nothing to add to what my predecessors have written on these subjects. The system in force was fully explained by Mr. Venning in his report for 1893, paragraphs 56 and 57,* and the discount of one-sixth on the parchment currency when realised is still in force. I agree in thinking that there does not appear to be any sufficient reason for this deduction from the men's savings, but that all the paper currency is subject to this deduction is evidently well understood by the natives; and no complaint reached me on the subject. Mr. Ross states that the deduction in question is made by him as an off-set against the risk he runs in bringing articles required for the natives of the island from Batavia in his own cutters, and the natives fully recognise this as a legitimate drawback on their earnings to which he is entitled by custom.

THE BANTAMESE.

20. I visited the Bantamese village on Sunday, 17th June, and saw all the coolies, no work being done on Sunday. Their houses, which are built on much the same plan as those of the Cocos-born Islanders, were clean and well ventilated, and the general sanitary condition of the people appeared to me to be excellent. Dr. D'Arcy Hervey, who accompanied me, was of opinion that no change was necessary in existing arrangements. Though neat and clean, however, the Bantamese village does not present the same scrupulously tidy appearance as the habitations of the Cocos-born islanders, and the manner of living, the costume, and the manner of these people show that little change has as yet been effected by the influence of the Europeans and the Cocos-born Malays. The *sarong* is still universally worn, and mats and fingers take the place of tables and chairs, and knives and forks. The people, however, appeared to be healthy and contented. I called them all together and asked them if they had any complaints to make, but they one and all assured me that they were perfectly contented, and had no grievance which they wished to bring to my notice.

* See page 61.

21. I had some conversation with their Imam (priest) on the subject of the toddy which they extract from the coco-nut trees, and which they consume, I am informed, in considerable quantities; but he maintained that the law of the Korân merely forbade inebriation, and did not prohibit the moderate use of fermented liquor. This contention is, of course, quite untenable, and I am informed by Mr. Ross that drunkenness is by no means unknown on the island, and is most common among the Bantamese coolies.

22. In Mr. Venning's Report he has explained at length the conditions on which the Bantamese coolies engage to work, and I am assured that they are rapidly working off their advances. Some are already free to leave the island, some have already gone, but most of them continue to live on, though they have not the love for the place which is strongly felt by the Cocos-born Malays, and most of them cherish an intention of returning to their own country to end their days. In the meantime they earn a high rate of wage, receive medicine, coco-nuts, and fire-wood free of all charge, and are probably in a more prosperous condition than any body of coolies in the Straits Settlements or Native States.

POPULATION.

23. I am indebted to Mr. Ross for the following figures, which show the present population of these islands, and which are for the first time drawn up in a form showing the number of boys and girls separately, not massing them with the adults, as has been done in former years:—

Nationality.	Men.	Women.	Boys.	Girls.	TOTAL.
Cocos-born	107	108	73	99	387
Bantamese	63	47	47	35	192
TOTAL	170	155	120	134	579

BIRTHS.

Nationality.	Boys.	Girls.	TOTAL.
Cocos-born	7	11	18
Bantamese	6	3	9
TOTAL	13	14	27

DEATHS.

Nationality.	Men.	Women.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
Cocos-born	5	4	6	7	23
Bantamese	1	—	4	1	6
Total	7	4	10	8	29

Excess of Deaths over Births - - - - - 2

233

ARRIVALS.

Nationality.	Men.	Women.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
Europeans - - - - -	3	-	-	-	3
Total - - - - -	3	-	-	-	3

DEPARTURES.

Nationality.	Men.	Women.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
Bantamese - - - - -	7	3	2	1	13
Total - - - - -	7	3	2	1	13

Excess of Departures over Arrivals - - - - - 10

24. The crew of the "J. G. Ross," which disappeared between the Cocos Islands and Batavia, do not figure in this return. The crew consisted of nine Cocos-born Malays. The total decrease of the population since last return is therefore 21. As a matter of fact, the present returns show a decrease of 25 on the returns published in Mr. Venning's Report, but I am informed that this is due to an error in the returns furnished to him by Mr. Sydney Ross.

25. The age of all the people on the island has been entered in the register, all those below the age of 16 being classed as children, all above that age being classed as adults. It must be remembered in this connection that natives develop earlier than Europeans, and that a youth or girl of 16 has reached a marriageable age in the East, and may fairly be classed as an adult.

26. One divorce among the Bantamese is registered as having taken place during the past year.

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS.

27. The following is the list of the chief articles imported into the island during the past year:—

Rice	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,560 pikuls.
Flour	-	-	-	-	-	-	40 bags.
Sugar	-	-	-	-	-	-	200 25-lb. tins.
Tea	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 cases.
Tobacco	-	-	-	-	-	-	40 baskets.

These articles include all the supplies which are procured by Mr. Ross for the natives. Any extras which the natives may require, such as clothes, &c., are imported according to order, and no exact list is kept of articles so imported. The total value of the imports during the year is stated to be approximately \$25,000.

28. The only export from the Cocos Islands during the past year was 582 tons 13 cwt. of copra, which is valued at 13*l.* a ton—a higher price, I am informed, than is fetched by copra from any other part of the world. The total value of the copra exported is thus about 7,573*l.* The quantity shipped during the year is considerably less than usual, but another shipment is now ready. Nevertheless, when the expenses necessary for its production have been deducted, and when the nature of the life which Mr. Ross is called upon to live is considered, the annual profits which accrue to him cannot be regarded as excessive.

29. As stated in former reports, a quantity of *beche-de-mer* is available for export, but nothing has been done with regard to it, Mr. Ross stating that the preparation of the

year's shipment of copra keeps all on the island fully employed, and leaves no time for other enterprises at present. He hopes, however, in the future to add this commodity to his list of exports.

HEALTH.

30. The island, situated as it is in mid-ocean, and in the very course of a persistent trade wind, cannot be otherwise than healthy, while its isolated position is a protection from contagion. The arrival of the cutters which ply between the Cocos and Batavia, however, are often followed by an outbreak of epidemic disease, and thus many on the island have suffered severely from influenza during the last twelve months. In the case of a few people this proved fatal, but the island was nearly free from the disease when I visited it.

31. The natives look extraordinarily healthy, and the regular lives they lead, together with the hard physical work which all perform daily must indeed be conducive to health. Dr. D'Arcy Hervey accompanied me on my visits to both the Cocos and Bantamese villages, but in neither place did he find any serious cases needing his aid.

32. Mr. Ross supplies medicine free to all his people, and his brother Mr. Charles Ross, who has acted as medical man for the island for many years, has acquired the experience necessary to deal with almost all the cases that arise.

33. Mr. Ross informed me that venereal disease is almost unknown on the island, and that anyone known to be suffering from it would at once be sent to Java, and would not be again permitted to set foot on the island.

34. The sanitary condition of the villages was excellent, as I have already remarked, and this is aided by Mr. Ross's custom of holding a weekly inspection of the houses on his island.

EDUCATION.

35. On Monday, June 18th, I visited the school which has been opened by the Cocos-born Malay, Rajeli, who was educated in Singapore, and examined the boys. There were present 27 boys in all, varying in age from 6 or 7 to 14 and 15. I examined them in reading, writing from dictation (both in the vernacular), and in arithmetic, and was greatly surprised at the proficiency they showed. They read with ease, fluency, and correct emphasis, and their writing from dictation was most accurate.

They evidently all possessed the imitative faculty to a considerable degree, for they one and all wrote the same handwriting, which I afterwards discovered to be a close copy of Rajeli's own caligraphy.

36. The arithmetic was also well done, these small boys adding, multiplying, and dividing long rows of pounds, shillings, and pence with really astonishing accuracy, though I cannot but think that this complicated coinage must convey little idea to them, and that a knowledge of it is never likely to be of any great practical use to them in after life. Simple forms of coinage, such as they are likely to have to do with later on, might, I think, be substituted with advantage.

37. The excellent education which these boys receive does the greatest credit to Mr. Ross, and compares very favourably with that obtained in the vernacular schools of the Native States, for all these boys receive technical education in addition to the mere knowledge of reading and writing. Every boy by the time he has reached a marriageable age, not only knows how to read and write, but has also passed through the shops, so that every man on the island may be said to be a good carpenter and blacksmith, and all know how to make use of drawings, plans, and scales. No Cocos-born Malay need find difficulty in earning his bread in any part of the Archipelago or Peninsula. It is difficult to over-estimate the advantage which Mr. Ross has thus conferred upon his people.

38. The Bantamese schoolmaster, who did such good work by opening a night-school during his spare hours, has unfortunately left the island, but the Bantamese boys, as well as the children of the Cocos Malays, attend Rajeli's school.

39. The school-building itself, which is near the mosque, is a clean neat house with a plank floor well ventilated, and fitted with forms, desks, and black-board. The boys all wear a uniform cap, and were very clean and neat.

METEOROLOGY.

40. I append a list furnished to me by Mr. Charles Ross, showing the maximum and minimum readings of the barometer and thermometer for each month since the last official visit to the island. The readings are taken daily at 6 a.m.

BAROMETER.

	Maximum.	Minimum.
1893.		
July - - - - -	29.99	29.77
August - - - - -	30.04	29.91
September - - - - -	30.06	29.91
October - - - - -	30.06	29.93
November - - - - -	30.01	29.82
December - - - - -	30.00	29.87
1894.		
January - - - - -	29.93	29.8
February - - - - -	29.98	29.4
March - - - - -	30.00	29.70
April - - - - -	30.04	29.85
May - - - - -	30.01	29.87

THERMOMETER.

	Maximum.	Minimum.
1893.		
July - - - - -	79	70
August - - - - -	79	73
September - - - - -	78	74
October - - - - -	78	76
November - - - - -	80	74
December - - - - -	78	75
1894.		
January - - - - -	81	76
February - - - - -	81	75
March - - - - -	86	72
April - - - - -	81	76
May - - - - -	81	75

41. The extreme annual range of the barometer is, therefore, from 30.06 to 29.45, and of the thermometer from 86° to 70°. It will be noticed that the climate in these islands is cooler than in most places in the Archipelago.

42. On February 4th, 1893, a cyclone burst upon the island, uprooting no less than 30,905 coco-nut trees, and doing much miscellaneous damage. The readings from the barometer and thermometer from 6 a.m. on February 4th to 6 a.m. on February 6th, were as follows:—

Time.	Barometer.	Thermometer.	Wind.
February 4th, 6 a.m.	29.82	78	N.W.
Ditto - 6.15 a.m.	29.73	77	W.
Ditto - 1 p.m.	29.65	76	W.N.W.
Ditto - 2 p.m.	29.61	76	N.W.
Ditto - 2.25 p.m.	29.58	—	N.W.
Ditto - 3.23 p.m.	29.50	—	N.W.
Ditto - 3.55 p.m.	29.53	—	N.W.
Ditto - 5 p.m.	29.45	—	W.N.W.
Ditto - 6.30 p.m.	29.55	—	N.S.W.
Ditto - 9 p.m.	29.56	—	W.N.W.
February 5th, 12.5	29.49	—	N.E. to E.
Ditto - 4.10 a.m.	29.56	—	S.E.
Ditto - 6 a.m.	29.50	70	S.S.E.
Ditto - 9 a.m.	29.59	81	—
Ditto - 11.45 a.m.	29.57	80	—
Ditto - 1.30 p.m.	29.63	81	—
Ditto - 3.35 p.m.	29.60	81	N.W.
Ditto - 5 p.m.	29.48	80	S. to S.S.W.
February 6th, 1 a.m.	29.60	—	N.W.
Ditto - 3.30 a.m.	29.48	—	W. to N.W.
Ditto - 6 a.m.	29.62	78	N.W.

43. As I have already said, the damage done was very great, but so thickly are the islands planted with coco nuts that the damage is not readily observable. This cyclone, however, has caused a severe loss to Mr. Ross.

MISCELLANEOUS.

44. The past year has been one of misfortunes for Mr. Ross. In the first place the schooner "F. G. Ross," which had been built by Mr. Ross at the Cocos Islands, and of which so much has been written in former reports, disappeared, and has never since been heard of. The schooner in question left the islands for Batavia with a Norwegian captain and a crew of eight Cocos-born Malays. She also had on board a number of Italian sailors, a very unruly crowd, who had been shipwrecked on the island, and who were being sent to Batavia by Mr. Ross. The pilot on his return reported that the Italians showed signs of mutiny before the ship was clear of the Lagoon, and it is supposed that on the voyage to Batavia they either mutinied and obtained possession of the schooner, or that she was lost. Anyhow the vessel never reached Batavia, and the inquiries which were set on foot by Mr. Ross, owing to the isolated position of his island, and the delays consequent thereon, came so late that it was only to be anticipated that they should have no result.

45. The next misfortune which befell Mr. Ross was the failure of his agents, Messrs. Knowles & Co. of Batavia, and the consequent loss of moneys lying to Mr. Ross's credit with them. The news of this failure reached the Cocos Islands so late that all efforts to recover any of this loss proved unavailing.

46. In February, as I have already mentioned, a cyclone did an immense amount of damage to Mr. Ross's property, and completed a tale of unmerited disaster which might well have discouraged a less strong man than the present owner of the island. Mr. Ross, however, wastes little time in lamenting the losses which he has sustained through no fault of his own, and as soon as the storm had abated he at once set to work to remedy the evil it had done, a task on which he was still employed when we visited the island.

47. Another source of trouble is the rats, which were originally brought to the island in a ship which was wrecked there, and which rapidly increased and multiplied. Mr. Ross keeps a number of terriers, with men to look after them, whose only duty it is to hunt for rats, and about a score are accounted for daily. Mr. Ross reckons, however, that the rats are kept down by this means, but that nothing like extermination is to be hoped for. The very considerable expense incurred annually in rat-hunting must, therefore, be regarded as a permanent item in Mr. Ross's accounts.

48. In writing this report, I have experienced considerable difficulty in selecting my material, most of the points on which I should have been tempted to touch having already been repeatedly dealt with by former visitors to the island. I have thus avoided any description of the island itself, and have confined my remarks almost entirely to the subjects on which my predecessors have laid the least stress, but which, in my opinion, are none the less deserving of notice. Specially have I endeavoured to express my admiration of the extraordinary power of dealing with the natives which Mr. Ross displays. He is at once firm, just, and kind with the islanders, and the fact that he rules a population of some 600 souls with no sort of force at his back, that no serious crime has been committed for years, and that he has succeeded in earning and keeping the regard as well as the respect of his people, speaks for itself. The work he is doing is a good work, and it is done in a manner that few could emulate, and to one who, like myself, has himself lived among and attempted to manage Malays for a considerable time, the methods which Mr. Ross adopts in the management of his island, and the results thereby obtained, were at once the most interesting and the most instructive thing to be witnessed in this interesting and curious place.

49. I must take this opportunity of recording my thanks to Captain Laxton, R.N., and to the officers of H.M.S. "Peacock" for the kindness and hospitality shown to me by them during the voyage to and from the Cocos-Keeling Islands.

HUGH CLIFFORD.

British Residency, Pahang, November 17, 1894.

No. 17.

SIR C. B. H. MITCHELL to Mr. CHAMBERLAIN.
(Received September 28, 1896.)

EXTRACT.

Government House, Singapore,
September 1, 1896.

I HAVE the honour to transmit herewith six copies of a report by Mr. Arthur Keyser (Collector and Magistrate of Jelebu in the Negri Sembilan) on the Cocos-Keeling and Christmas Island dependencies of this Colony, which Mr. Keyser was specially deputed by me to visit this year.

It will be within your recollection that no special visit was paid to these islands last year owing to difficulties experienced by the Admiral in furnishing a vessel for the voyage.

From the report it will be seen that the islanders are in a fairly prosperous condition, notwithstanding an excessive storm of rain from which the Cocos-Keeling Islands have suffered this year.

Mr. Keyser's report on these islands furnishes an interesting object lesson on the actual internal working of a State where all the industry is, as it were, nationalised (Mr. Ross representing the State in this case). The results indicate a high rate of wages accompanied by a very low standard of industry on the part of the workers (paragraph 11).

The nationalisation of the land (paragraph 14) appears to have curtailed the demand for land in a great degree.

Mr. Keyser also noticed a deplorable want of care for very young children in the islands. This may have no necessary connection with the political conditions which have obtained there, but I may say that I have noticed an equal want of care for the rising generation in Fiji, where curiously enough, as regards the native population, a system of State Socialism of a primitive kind also prevails, the State land being cultivated by the community and the product sold to defray the cost of the State, any balance being dealt with communistically by the particular division of the community that has earned it. It may be that the diminution of incentive to individual effort produces the same effect in both Fiji and the Cocos.

With reference to paragraph 18, I am sending to the Keeling Islands a good map of the world with a globe and an atlas.

The vegetable samples from Christmas Island have been sent to the Superintendent of the Botanic Garden here, whose report thereon I enclose.

I have applied to Mr. Ross for the products indicated by the Superintendent.

Mr. Clunies-Ross left for England by last French mail; his address in London will, I believe, be known to the Borneo Company, Limited. I should be glad if you could find an opportunity of seeing Mr. Ross, whose unique personality would, I think, interest you.

10 August,
1896.

Enclosure 1 in No. 17.

REPORT of Mr. A. KEYSER, deputed by His Excellency the GOVERNOR of the STRAITS SETTLEMENTS to visit the Christmas and Keeling-Cocos Islands.

CHRISTMAS ISLAND.

1. According to instructions, on Wednesday June 16th, I embarked on board Her Majesty's Ship "Æolus," the guest of Captain Groome, R.N., in order to visit and report upon Christmas Island and the Keeling-Cocos Islands.

2. After a short stay in Java, and travelling at slow speed, we arrived off Christmas Island at 7 a.m. on June 22nd. As has been described, this island appeared to rise high out of the sea with scarcely any beach.

There is no anchorage, the water being too deep, and Captain Groome proposed to lie on and off during the time it was necessary for me to be ashore. There was some little delay before our arrival was noticed by those on the island. We subsequently heard from Mr. Andrew Clunies-Ross, who is in charge there for his brother, Mr. George

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Clunies-Ross, that it was not till about 10.30 that natives had called him from his work with the information that "a man-of-war, as big as an island, had arrived." Mr. Ross immediately came off to the ship, and after expressing his pleasure at receiving this visit, stated that all was well on the island.

After lunch, Captain Groome and I accompanied him on shore, together with Dr. Shand, whose services Mr. Andrew Ross had asked for on behalf of his wife.

3. On the shore, within close distance of the sea, is a small settlement. Here Mr. Andrew Ross had built himself a house. The house is of wood, painted green, and the floor cement. Mr. Andrew Ross, who for the sake of brevity I will continue to call Mr. Ross, is himself both carpenter and architect, and the various evidences of his work served to show the many sides to his practical knowledge.

Immediately at the back of the small group of buildings rise cliffs, with such an abrupt ascent that they seem to form a wall which almost oppressively limits and shuts in the small plateau by the sea. With the jungle so close upon the houses, one's thoughts naturally turned to wild beasts, who could, from this vantage ground, conveniently prey upon the goats, dogs, fowls, turkeys, and all other live stock which seemed to abound. But on this fortunate island, we learnt there are no wild animals, snakes, or other creatures inimical to man.

After accepting the hospitality of Mr. Ross and his wife (a Keeling-Cocos-born lady), we went for a walk, wishing to see as much as we were able during our stay.

4. As we passed along the sea-shore, the path led us through a small orchard which, originally planted by Mr. Ross to supply the immediate necessities of himself and fellow-settlers, has been ample proof of the fertility of the soil. Owing to the assistance of birds in carrying and distributing seeds, the fruit trees have considerably multiplied. Notably is this the case in the papaya trees (called *katis*) a kind which produces unusually large fruit. These trees seem to grow everywhere like a weed. The small bird's eye chillies (*lombok rawit*) have spread even more conspicuously.

Pomegranates, guavas, and other fruits were also seen on all sides, apparently little inconvenienced by the mass of weeds which threatened to choke them or the neighbouring trees which overshadowed and crowded them.

The first quarter of a mile of our walk lay through a perfect marvel of luxuriant growth, run wild.

As we approached the incline of the hill, we were shown trees of Liberian coffee of five years. These, though showing similar signs of want of care, were extremely fine, and the sight of them produced regret that they should be so few. If these trees are true specimens of what coffee can do in this soil, there is little doubt that in this direction alone the island may have a future.

5. Beyond this tiny coffee garden we saw the first piece of timber—teak-wood—about which so much has already been written. This teak, though classed as "bastard," is held by some to be the real teak-wood, and its peculiar reddish tint to be due only to the nature of the soil.

This wood is extremely durable, and is used here and in the Keeling-Cocos for building boats. A sample sent to England fetched 7*l.* per ton *ex* dock expenses. I understood from Mr. Ross that it was not yet decided what this wood actually is. A boat of this wood, now used by Mr. Ross, was built in 1873. I obtained, and brought back with me, some of the leaves and flower of the tree. I also asked Mr. Ross for a sample of a peculiar kind of scented wood which he had shown me.

6. Commencing to climb the hill which led to the mainland of the island, as it were—having hitherto walked along a little shelf which projected like a foot from the body to which it belongs—we followed a rough path recently made at the cost of much labour by Mr. Ross. The surface of the ground is rough and everywhere covered with phosphate stone. This path continued for some distance, and enabled us to form a good idea of the kind of land through which we passed.

A Malay jungle has undergrowth so thick that it is often difficult to form any correct opinion of the extent of the valleys or their formation from merely passing through them; here, in Christmas Island, the surroundings were clear and defined, while the entire absence of ratans and creepers enabled us to look above and around. Around were fine trees standing out unhidden, as they do in an English forest, and above us birds sat placidly in the branches undisturbed in the slightest degree by the approach of human beings. The majority of these were huge pigeons which never even attempted to fly away, while first their companions, and then themselves, were being shot by sportsmen who had consented to waive their scruples and take this opportunity for supplying fresh

food for the ship. So tame are these birds that Mr. Ross's little boy (a fine, manly child, soon going home to school), daily secures as many as the family require either with his catapult or a noose. Ground thrushes also came and perched close to us equally unscared by our presence or the noise of guns.

7. Occasionally the path was overgrown, but such growth presented nothing more formidable than tall bushes resembling the wild raspberry, while now and then some treacherous nettles and one insinuating species of thorn showed us the worst obstacles of this jungle. Beyond a lookout for these, there was little, so far as I could judge, to prevent any one walking at the rate of three miles an hour. However there are, possibly, more difficulties than were here apparent, since Mr. Ross informed us that he has only once penetrated to the further side of the island, and that journey took three days. On this expedition he had to carry water, as, until quite recently, the only water known was that in wells by the settlement. Within the last few months, however, so lately indeed that we were able to inform the proprietor of the Keeling-Cocos Islands of it as news, Mr. Andrew Ross discovered a waterfall falling into the sea at the further side of the island, whither he had gone in his boat. Thus obviously the island possesses one source of good water and very possibly more.

Mr. Ross has lived on the island for seven years. Little more need be said to show how small a portion of the island has been explored.

8. Though the size of the island has been variously described, the correct measurement is about 12 miles long and 7 miles broad.

Half-way up the hill Mr. Ross pointed out where he intended to make a coffee plantation, and some commencement towards a clearing could be seen.

Alongside the path at intervals some Liberian coffee had been planted. These plants, overshadowed by the jungle trees and left apparently to take care of themselves, were of all conditions, good, indifferent and bad, according as their surroundings were favourable or the reverse. It was evident that no serious or systematic attempt to cultivate coffee had yet been made. There were no labourers or nurseries, neither were there any signs of that attention which it is usual to bestow on a garden of this nature.

9. No quantity of timber appeared to have been cut, though a wire hawser had been stretched up the hill preparatory to procuring it, a work which, considering the small amount of labour available, must have been one of no small difficulty.

In some places Mr. Ross pointed out plants which he informed me were wild coffee bushes indigenous to the island.

* * * * *

14. The present population of the Island numbers 22, made up as follows:—

14 working men (3 Bantamese and 11 Keeling-Cocos Islanders).

2—Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Ross.

1—Son of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Ross.

5—Mrs. Lindsay (mother of Mrs. Ross), her daughter and 3 children.

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Mr. Andrew Ross is the only European.

The Bantamese are time-expired men who are waiting passage to Batavia.

Their wages are 12 guilders a month each.

15. After paying off the advances made them, these three men are taking with them savings of 168 guilders, 115 guilders, and 59 guilders respectively.

All labourers are allowed to take as many birds and as much firewood, fruit and coconuts as they require, free. Very little fish is caught, as the sea is too rough.

It was explained that people here can save more than in the Keeling-Cocos Islands where men inclined to be idle expend their money in purchasing fish from more industrious friends. Clothes can be obtained from Mr. Ross's store. Those worn by the native boatmen, however, were old and marvellously patched.

16. During my short stay there was little opportunity for conversing with the natives, but I gathered that they were happy and had no complaints, except that they disliked living there, as they had no wives, and also they wanted more clothes.

With regard to the first, I presume that the transport and accommodation of women is one of those extra expenses which Mr. Ross is disinclined to incur until matters are more settled between Professor Murray and himself.

K 2

The latter complaint was the only one in the Keeling-Cocos Islands, and there it was universal. This, however, scarcely means that the people want clothes in the ordinary sense of the word; it rather shows that natives who love to expend their spare money on finery and garments of colour are here deterred from doing so, and the possession of more money than others is productive of none of that immediate satisfaction to be derived from the admiration and envy of their fellows.

17. The general health is good, though fever is brought to the island whenever ships come from Java.

18. The birds of the island are terns, frigate birds, boobies, pigeons, green ground pigeons, ground thrush, banyan tree birds, weaver birds, two kinds of hawk, and the tropical bird. Mr. Ross gave us some interesting particulars about the peculiar habits of the terns and frigate birds. These we had already read with some scepticism. It appears these birds actually do lay their eggs on a leaf, or the fork framed by the junction of two leaves, and so judge the time that as the leaf falls to open the bird is hatched, and thus obtains a clear space to fly away. In no instance have these birds been known to make a mistake, or select a tree which succumbed to the storm or fell before its time through weakness or wet.

In the Keeling-Cocos Islands more was told us about these birds, and I did my utmost to obtain specimens of the leaves and eggs, but though some of the natives made several expeditions to procure them, owing to the rough weather their efforts were unsuccessful. The searchers were much disappointed, as they showed a great desire to confound the disbelief which I had simulated to obtain their interest.

In addition to the peculiar position of the egg on the leaf, Mr. Andrew Ross informed us that the young were always hatched tail to head and head to tail alternately, no two birds side by side ever facing the same way. Also that when the parent birds fed their young they laid the fish caught for them, each arranged in the same orderly manner; yet more, that these thoughtful parents never gave their offspring the same kind of fish on two consecutive days. As we only remained one day at Christmas Island, this last sign of such fastidious taste could not then be verified.

19. Cocoa-nuts, oranges, limes, guavas, in fact all tropical fruits which have been planted, do well in this soil.

I noticed there was no Indian corn growing, and suggested to Mr. Ross that this might be cultivated, as there is plenty of land and little fear of exhausting it. In case of accident, which might delay the import of rice, this would be an excellent substitute. Unfortunately Mr. Ross had no seeds, but requested that I should ask his brother to send some.

20. The houses are thatched with what is known as *duan pandan*, a kind of reed used in Jebeu for making mats.

21. Mr. Ross had goats, pigs, turkeys, Manila ducks and fowls. All these domestic animals appeared to thrive.

The settlement is much troubled by rats, which are getting to be almost as great a pest as they are in the Keeling-Cocos Islands.

22. The principal food of the people is land crabs, pigeons, and frigate birds.

23. There seem to be no wild animals of any kind, though a large species of bat, called here *kompret*, was seen in large numbers during our walk through the orchard.

There are scarcely any butterflies on the island.

24. Formerly Christmas Island used to be a favourite place of call for whalers. Now they do not come. Last December a school of whales was seen off the island.

25. Steamers are sometimes observed passing the island, evidently making it to take their bearings.

26. The drawback to the island is, of course, its want of anchorage.

The first Mr. Clunies Ross had intended to settle there, but on account of this difficulty went on to the Keeling-Cocos instead.

27. Mr. Ross informed me that the Keeling-Cocos yawl had called at the island about three months ago, and maintains regular communication, but, with this exception, no ship had visited them since the last man-of-war with Mr. Venning on board in 1893.

28. There had been one death amongst the small community. This man died of a kind of swelling of the chest, supposed to be hereditary, since he was the son of the man

stated by Mr. Ross to have been mentioned by Mr. Birch as having succumbed to a similar disease.

29. The language spoken by the few people on the island is largely composed of Javanese words. A Malay who accompanied me, though knowing Javanese, stated that he could not understand the children when they spoke together, but the pronunciation and manner of speaking sounded to his ear like the speech of Eurasians in Malacca.

In addition to the short vocabulary given by Mr. Birch, some of the common words used, such as "somor," a well; "jerok," an orange; "katis," papaya; "kopeng," ear; "kiong," a shell, are evidence of how Javanese expressions are gradually taking place of the original Malay.

30. Having heard much of the civilisation and intelligence of the Keeling-Cocos islanders, I was disappointed at this my first sight of them in Christmas Island. The men, though finely built, appeared dull and heavy, showing indifference to what went on around them. My first impression was that they were of a lower type than the same class of people in the peninsula.

31. I remained on shore till 6 o'clock in the afternoon, when I went on board, accompanied by Mr. Andrew Ross, who came to say good-bye, and take back his son, who had been-enjoying a long visit to the ship.

Our boat was loaded with pigeons and fruits. Captain Groome sent ashore a present of stuffs and stores. These thoughtfully included fresh elastic for the little boy's catapult, which had hopelessly broken on his last shooting expedition. We also left a large quantity of newspapers. Mr. Ross was eager for all the latest news. As he had received none for many months, and had not yet heard of the Transvaal troubles, it required some consideration to bring his information up to date.

I regretted that it was not in my power to undertake any more troublesome task to show my appreciation of Mr. Ross's friendly kindness in readily combining with his hospitable welcome facilities for learning so much that I wanted to know.

32. As H.M.S. "Æolus" steamed away from the island, at 7 p.m., the electric light played on the islanders' departing boat, obtaining an unexpectedly picturesque effect from the scarlet costumes of the crew, all of whom were seen to be dressed as marines, in tunics given them by their late hosts on board the ship.

Thus, half the male population, at least, had their longings for fine clothes most blissfully gratified.

ARTHUR KEYSER.

July 18; 1896.

THE KEELING-COCOS ISLANDS.

1. His Excellency is already in possession of much detailed information concerning these islands. It will not, therefore, be necessary for me to touch on some matters to which his attention has already been directed.

Mr. Birch, and those gentlemen who have followed him, compiled interesting reports which, dealing with all subjects of importance, leave little for their successors to add.

Therefore, though what I am about to write concerning my recent visit may thereby appear patchy or incomplete, it will be more convenient if I purposely omit much that has already received notice, and confine myself to the task of bringing former statistics up to date, together with the mention of matters which, for some reasons, may bear repetition. In addition to this, it may, perhaps, be of interest to his Excellency if I set aside all that I have heard or read of these islands, and attempt to give some of the impressions conveyed to me on visiting the Keeling-Cocos for the first time. This I will now proceed to do, since I believe that much which I shall presently write will be more readily understood after some introduction to the circumstances peculiar to these islands. For it is fair that these should remain constantly in the mind of anyone reading of work and progress in a place so far beyond those influences which, taught by long custom to accept as part of the routine of his life, he may, therefore, unconsciously under-rate.

2. H.M.S. "Æolus" reached the Keeling-Cocos Islands at daybreak on Friday, June 26th. The appearance of these islands, their reefs and the difficulties presented to navigation, have all been elsewhere described, but nowhere more happily than by Forbes, who, in his book, "A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago," calls them "an island-speckled ring of coral holding its own against the waves."

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To quote further from the same work: "These islands were discovered by Captain Keeling in 1609, and visited by Darwin in 1836." Soon after we had anchored, Mr. George Clunies Ross, the proprietor of the islands, and the third in succession from his grandfather, came off to the ship.

After expressing surprise that a ship drawing so much water should have so quickly found an anchorage, Mr. Clunies Ross informed Captain Groome that sometimes rollers came in at that particular place. It was decided to move further in, and, Mr. Ross assisting as pilot, the ship finally anchored in the lagoon about a mile and a half from the shore.

3. I accepted Mr. Ross's kind invitation to accompany him on shore, and remain his guest during the four days it was the intention of Captain Groome to remain at the islands. This hospitality was of that sincere nature which left me free to dispose of my own time. During my stay, therefore, I took every available opportunity for conversing with the natives, visiting their houses, and endeavouring to obtain their confidence, in order that I might then better study their manners, and, if possible, gain some further insight into their character than would ordinarily be presented to the casual view of a stranger. My time was, of course, too short to admit of coming to any definite conclusions, or obtaining any but superficial information, but the main impression was, that it would be a wrong basis on which to start did I endeavour to compare these people with any Malays of the peninsula with whom I am acquainted.

They differ in so many essential particulars that comparisons between them would be useless.

I have never been to Africa, but, from what I have read, it may be that the Keeling-Cocos islanders more nearly resemble Malays at the Cape than those in this peninsula.

Mr. Clifford has already given a clear picture of how these islanders live in houses cleaned scrupulously and kept in constant order. Also how they use knives and forks, and sit at a table, on which is a white cloth, when they take their food. In the evening the family sit round in chairs, the father and elder children reading, while the wife and daughters sew. This is one side of the domestic life. The women have grown to look upon themselves as superior to the men, and may be seen walking about the villages gossiping with their neighbours, and altogether comporting themselves differently to what is usual amongst Malays. Mothers do not show much love for their children, and neglect them shamefully when they are young; neither have the children affection or respect for their parents. The people are Mohammedans, but I saw no place of worship, and learnt that they usually content themselves with prayers said once a year. Having no actual property of their own, the islanders lack that characteristic of a Malay, love for the lands of their fathers; nor do they seem to cherish bonds of relationship, or those almost equally strong ones which impel Malays from the same locality or village to make almost any sacrifice for mutual assistance or hospitality. Though mostly educated up to a certain point, further perhaps than is usual among people of the peninsula, they do not give the stranger an idea that they are equally intelligent. Indeed, the majority appear dull and heavy, as though oppressed with the monotony of a life which presents no interest beyond the accomplishment of sufficient work for the obtaining of sufficient food. For it must be borne in mind that the Keeling-Cocos Islands bear less resemblance to a country than to an estate whereon all must work.

There are no grades amongst the people; all work alike, and all do the same work. All live in houses of the same shape and size. Though wages are high, all must continue to earn them, since did individuals pick and choose their time for toil, Mr. Ross could no longer rely upon their labour, and would be obliged to import other from outside. Thus the whole conditions of society are different to those of any Malay country, where there are people of various classes and many occupations. These islanders know little of rivalry and still less of ambition.

They look upon Mr. Ross as their protector and friend (which he certainly is), until they seem to cease to think for themselves, and live on, placidly content that they should have the least possible trouble in the ordering of their lives. One picture, and a pleasant one, may serve to illustrate the difference between these people and Malays.

On the last night of our stay Mr. Ross entertained the captain and officers of H.M.S. "Æolus" at dinner.

In the evening the natives came to the house in large numbers. Their own musicians played, and they danced native dances. The dances were reels and old Scotch figures. These were performed with much solemnity and grace by men and women together. The latter wore no veils, and behaved exactly as Europeans would do, the former discarded their caps and danced bare-headed. Groups of spectators sat about on the

floor, unheeding the numerous dogs which wandered about among them. All partook of whisky as refreshment. The scene was more English than Malay.

It will be seen that in many important features the Keeling-Cocos islanders differ greatly from Malays in the peninsula, and as time goes on such points of resemblance as they still possess will tend to disappear, even as their language, mixed as it now is with Javanese and English words, is gradually becoming a speech peculiarly their own.

4. A few words should also be said about the chief figure in the islands, Mr. George Clunies Ross. He is in every way a remarkable man, possessed of great force of character. As yet there has been no published description of one to whose personal influence the present condition of the islands is due. It is impossible to consider this condition, or form any estimate of what future lies in store for these islands, without having some knowledge of the character of the gentleman who has so long controlled its destinies, and towards whom all inhabitants look as to their ruler and friend.

Though there may be various opinions as to the peculiar problems presented by some developments caused by the higher education of the natives, without at the same time providing them with any of the usual outlets for this expansion of their minds, there can be no doubt concerning the motives or ability of the man who has worked single-handed and single-minded to deal justly with, and gradually elevate, the people committed to his care. There have never been any police on the island. In former days Mr. Ross lived with his life in his hand, and though disdaining to have watchmen or guards, lest such protection should be ascribed to fear, he was himself ever on the alert, and compelled to sleep in short snatches only. This habit remained, so that even now, when circumstances have greatly changed, he is unable to rest for more than an hour or two at a time. In former days the population was largely composed of fugitives from justice, as well as every class of bad character from the neighbouring island of Java. That Mr. Ross could control these lawless people was due to the fact that he excelled in all their pursuits, and had never been known to show fear. Even now, though he is approaching 60 years, no man on the islands can successfully compete with Mr. Ross in spearing fish, sailing, shooting, boat-building, or any other test of endurance or skill. On the death of his father, 35 years ago, the present proprietor called together all the people and asked if it was their wish that he should take charge of the islands. It was agreed unanimously that he should do so. From that time until now he has lived constantly amongst them, and was once for a period of 18 years without ever using or hearing the English tongue. Mr. Ross gives this as the reason why now he is unable to speak it fluently. But in addressing his people in their own language he can arrest their attention at once. It has been told me that on these occasions Mr. Ross could, at his will, control their moods and move them to enthusiasm or tears. I had an opportunity of hearing him once address them, and certainly his audience seemed held by no ordinary tie of interest. He is in earnest in whatever he does and whatever he says, and therein lies the secret of success amongst a people like those with whom he has to deal.

Mr. Ross is the first of his family who has only had the islands to look to, for both his grandfather and father were independent of what they produced. Yet wages remain unaltered, and, although Mr. Ross lives in comfort, all signs of ostentation or luxury are absent. His life has been one of constant adventure. On one occasion an attempt was made to kill him while asleep. Mr. Ross awoke, and caught the would-be murderer red-handed. Though the man expected death, after endeavouring to bring him to a due sense of his crime, his captor let him go. When, again, the secret society amongst the Javanese made another attempt to take his life Mr. Ross owed escape to a timely warning made by this man whom he had spared.

While still quite young Mr. Ross distinguished himself by capturing a native who had run *amok* and for many months successfully eluded his pursuers. For years the proprietor of these islands has risen at four o'clock, and even now continues to do so, paying visits to the other islands, and personally superintending the work of the day. Besides excelling in physical pursuits, Mr. Ross is also an architect and engineer. The best proof of this is in his boats and the handsome two-storied house which is in course of construction, built with bricks from England. As will have been gathered, the subject of this sketch leads a simple life, and shows no desire to adopt the rôle of chief, or pose as other than he is, the friend of his people. Indeed, he is rather inclined to throw down any barriers that may exist, and, while he and his brothers marry ladies born in the islands, he desires that they and the daughters of his family shall wear dresses made of the same material as that supplied to the people from the store.

K 4

Perhaps the most useful side of Mr. Ross's knowledge, for strangers, is that he knows every rock and channel along the Island coasts far more accurately than any of the natives or members of his own family, and as others have not made this a study, he himself expresses fear lest in the future such valuable information may be lost. That Mr. Ross has had experience of seamanship is shown by the fact that some years ago he sailed round the world in his own schooner built at the Islands, during the whole voyage his brother and himself keeping watch and watch. Enough has been said to enable some estimate to be formed of the life and character of the present proprietor of Keeling-Cocos Islands. Though it is, perhaps, unusual to treat such a subject in a Report of this nature, yet, if one is needed, there will be ample excuse in the fact that His Excellency may now find it easier to consider such information as I can lay before him.

5. Below will be found Tables giving the present population of the Islands. By these it will be seen that the total number of inhabitants is 594, while in 1894 it was 579.

POPULATION.

June 14, 1894.

Nationality.	Men.	Women.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
Cocos-born - - - - -	107	108	73	99	387
Bantamese - - - - -	63	47	47	35	192
	170	155	120	134	579
June 30, 1890.					
Cocos-born - - - - -	101	109	85	108	403
Bantamese - - - - -	54	44	52	41	191
	155	153	137	149	594

Births.

Nationality.	Men.	Women.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
Cocos - - - - -	—	—	27	23	50
Bantamese - - - - -	—	—	11	10	21
	—	—	38	33	71
Deaths.					
Cocos - - - - -	4	2	15	12	33
Bantamese - - - - -	5	—	3	3	11
	9	2	18	15	44
Marriages.					
Cocos - - - - -	18	—	—	—	*18
Bantamese - - - - -	5	—	—	—	5
	23	—	—	—	23

* Five of these inter-marriage—Cocos and Bantamese.

All births, marriages, and deaths are strictly registered.

Mr. William Ross, who kindly supplied me with these figures, assured me that the recommendations made by Mr. Venning for more accurately obtaining the census had been carefully followed.

These returns are in the form given by Mr. W. Ross. Amongst the deaths none were due to accident, several were caused by apthæ.

I also give below Mr. William Ross's list of the arrivals and departures to and from the Islands during the last two years:—

Arrivals.

Nationality.	Men.	Women.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
European - - - - -	1	5	—	—	—
<i>Departures.</i>					
European and Cocos-born - -	3	2	—	2	7
Bantuinese - - - - -	4	3	3	1	11
	7	5	3	3	18

The members of the Clunies-Ross family now at the Keeling-Cocos are—I write from memory only—Mr. George Clunies-Ross (proprietor); Mrs. George Clunies-Ross; Mr. Sidney Clunies-Ross, the son; and Misses Mildred, May, and Gertrude, daughters; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Clunies-Ross and six daughters; Mrs. Edwin Clunies-Ross (widow), two sons and a daughter; Mr. William Clunies-Ross; Mrs. Baynton, sister of Mr. George Clunies-Ross.

With the exception of the last-mentioned and the three daughters of Mr. George Clunies-Ross, none of these ladies speak English.

7. The first information given to me by Mr. Ross was an account of recent severe storms of rain which had occurred about three months before the date of our visit. After days of incessant rain, the water in the lagoon became affected and gradually turned to fresh, so that the vegetable growth near the shore became decomposed, fish died in thousands, and the waters, usually perfectly clear, turned milky white and emitted a most offensive odour. Notwithstanding the lapse of time we could then see occasional patches of white water thick with decaying fish. In such numbers were the fish destroyed that it was necessary for all other work to cease till they were buried, lest the presence of such vast quantities of decaying matter lying exposed on the shores might cause sickness. On some of the Islands this sanitary work was still going on. As the principal food of the people is fish, the misfortune was no light one.

The rains were accompanied by severe storms, and during one of these Mr. Ross's yawl was struck by lightning, but fortunately little harm was done. On shore everything bore traces of the recent trouble, and especially was it noticeable in Mr. Ross's garden, where for days water had lain two feet deep. The fig trees, grape-vines, and other fruits, on the successful rearing of which the owner had taken pride, were all so ruined that they will want considerable time and care to recover. The only trees which appeared to have speedily revived were the bananas, and these, loaded with fruit, presented a strange contrast to all the signs of destruction which surrounded them. Beyond this misfortune no other event of importance had recently occurred to interrupt the even existence of the Islanders.

In July, 1895, a German ship, chartered by Mr. Ross, called at the Islands, but with this exception no ship of any sort had visited them since the visit of Mr. Clifford in 1894. Mr. Ross's yawl, however, made regular trips to Batavia about once in every three months.

8. There is only one export from the Islands—copra. Since the visit of Mr. Clifford there has only been one export, namely, 871 tons, 18 cwt., valued at 12*l.* a ton. There are at this moment in store 569 tons. The annual out-put is estimated to be from 500 to 600 tons a year.

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9. The imports do not alter, and have for several years been almost identical in quantity, since the numbers of the inhabitants scarcely vary.

These imports consist of rice, flour, sugar, tea, and tobacco, the approximate annual value being £25,000 (guilders).

No account is kept of the clothes, &c.

10. The general health of the people would compare favourably with that of any community in the world. Occasionally, however, sickness is brought by winds from Java. Of this Mr. Ross quoted a curious instance. One day his attention was called to the banian tree in the court-yard. Its leaves were dropping off, and appeared as though scalded. A few moments afterwards the pigeons, whose cots were close by, seemed also strangely affected. Their droppings were constant and of a watery nature, till finally the birds died in large numbers. Then ducks, which were kept in the same court yard, were similarly attacked and died. A few hours later it was reported to Mr. Ross that some of the people had dysentery, his own son amongst the number. For three days this illness made head, and 16 deaths were recorded, when the wind changed and the sickness disappeared as suddenly as it had arrived. When talking with some of the Bantamese in the village, they also told me that occasionally illness was brought by the winds, and that also fever always came in ships from Java.

There have never been any cases of venereal disease. Vaccination is regularly insisted on, and the people have no objection to it.

All Keeling-Cocos islanders appear healthy and strong, but I learnt from Mr. Ross that when they leave for other countries they readily succumb to illness. This he attributes to the fact that in the islands it is the habit of the people to wear flannel clothes, to protect them from the constant wet weather to which they are daily exposed on the sea. In other countries they discard flannel for lighter clothing, and thus prove more susceptible to cold from morning dew—to them a novel experience, since in the islands there is none. In all cases of illness where infection is feared, Mr. Ross insists on a strict quarantine, and in this the people follow his orders with exact punctuality. Mr. Ross spoke to me at length on the subject of beri-beri, formerly such a scourge on the islands. At present there are no cases of this disease, excepting a suspected one in the person of the Norwegian captain of the yawl, who has recently shown some of the usual symptoms.

Mr. Ross, who holds many new theories concerning this malady, believes this case may be due to the presence of the large numbers of decaying fish killed by the late storms. That beri-beri is contagious Mr. Ross is firmly convinced, and he is able to quote numerous cases in support of this opinion. These are so circumstantial and within Mr. Ross's own personal experience, that they carry conviction to the ordinary lay hearer. Seeing the gravity of the issues involved, these might be worthy the attention of those whose knowledge would enable them to judge of their scientific value. Mr. Ross acts on the belief which he holds, and after a case of beri-beri causes the clothes and the house of the patient to be burnt. It is from having taken these strict precautions that Mr. Ross attributes their present immunity from the disease.

Dr. Shand, of H.M.S. "Æolus," placed his services at the disposal of Mr. Ross, who was extremely grateful for his advice and assistance. There was a case where a young man named Arie had met with an accident while felling a tree in Christmas Island. He had been brought home here, and was supposed to be suffering from hopeless paralysis. I visited him in company with Dr. Shand, who, after careful examination, expressed a belief that the injury was not so severe as had been imagined, and held out hopes of recovery if the instructions he gave could be followed. I saw the sufferer each day afterwards. He passed the time making combs from tortoiseshell. This hopeful prospect seemed to have already given him new life.

11. The work of the people has been fully described in previous reports. There is ample work for all, and the wages to be earned are high. The people prefer to work only when it suits them, make enough to live on for a week or two, and then spend their time in idleness.

Naturally, for the due performance of what has to be done, Mr. Ross requires continuous work, and when people wish to take such inconvenient vacation he is obliged to threaten that it will be necessary for him to import labour from outside. This would, of course, deprive the islanders of employment when they required it. Thus is presented the curious spectacle of an indolent people obliged, through force of circumstances, of their own free will, to engage in labour which requires sustained and punctual work. There are at present sufficient numbers to perform the necessary nutting. If Mr. Ross decides to work the bêche-de-mer, he will want more men, but this he hesitates to commence

until the fate of Christmas Island is settled. He would then obtain coolies from Java with proper agreements, and train them at the Keeling-Cocos Islands before sending them on to Christmas.

There are now only 40 Bantamese workers left on the islands. These are mostly time-expired men, who have married and remain from choice. A few are returning to Java by the first opportunity. These men have no written agreements, some working voluntarily at the end of former terms, and others, being strangers, recently come to seek employment. All these men save money, and seeing that, in addition to good wages, they receive firewood and cocoa-nuts free, together with the right to fish, it is not surprising that they can do so.

As stated above, I had various opportunities for talking with these people, and all seemed contented and happy. The only complaint was, that they wanted more clothes. This I have already alluded to in my report on Christmas Island.

The Keeling-Cocos islanders, who receive a practical education as carpenters, blacksmiths, boat-builders, &c, have no difficulty in earning their living when in other countries.

This is a result which might cause such a system of education to be adopted elsewhere.

12. I might here mention that, at my request, Mr. Ross called the people together in order that I might be formally introduced to them. He arranged that this should be done on Sunday, as on that day people working on other islands would have returned home. They assembled outside the office, and in the presence of Mr. Ross, Mr. Charles Ross, and Mr. William Ross, I addressed them, and explained that I had been sent by His Excellency the Governor to inquire as to the welfare of Mr. Ross, his family, and all the people in the islands. I informed them that I would convey to His Excellency any message they might wish to send, or any complaint or request they might desire to make to him. If they did not care to speak now, I told them I would listen to what they had to say at any time they came to me during my visit. The elders assured me that all was well with them, and then repeated to the people that those who wished could speak now or at some future time. There was an unanimous chorus that they had no complaints to make, and they hoped I would so inform His Excellency. After some further conversation, they dispersed, each man shaking hands and thanking me for having come to visit them.

13. The parchment notes issued by Mr. Ross, exchangeable on demand for money in Batavia at a discount of one-sixth, have been described by each official who has visited the islands. This deduction from the earnings of the people has formed subject for much comment. It has been explained that Mr. Ross required it against the risk he incurs in bringing goods in his own boats from Batavia. This explanation has appeared insufficient to each writer in turn, since there seemed no reason why it should apply to the savings of the men who wish to realise them in Batavia.

It seemed to me, however, that, in the first instance also, the deduction would be unnecessary, unless, of course, the goods sold were at cost price. I therefore took an opportunity of speaking to Mr. Ross on the subject, and asking him whether there was any point concerning this matter which had been omitted or whether the explanation hitherto accepted was correct. Mr. Ross, after listening to what I had to say with a patience which scarcely veiled the effect of my words, expressed some indignation that what he termed an error should not only have found credence, but have been perpetuated until the present time. The key-note of Mr. Ross's remarks may be given in his own words, so earnestly spoken that they carried conviction of sincerity, and remained impressed on my memory. Mr. Ross said he would "disdain to make profits" out of his people. He sells them goods at a cost to cover his expenses only, and relies solely on what he can make out of the cocoa-nuts for a living. That he should be thought capable of taking a discount from the earnings of the men or their savings appeared to give him real pain.

He complained that he had no means of knowing what was written about himself, or the islands under his charge, and thus there might often arise grave misunderstandings which he was powerless to set right.

Mr. Ross then explained to me the system of his payments to the men. This I wrote down at the time and read over to him in order to be quite sure that I had grasped his meaning. Thus, Mr. Ross informed me that there is no charge made for the risk of bringing goods, beyond the fact that he sells at a price sufficient to cover expenses. The deduction formerly believed to have been made for this reason is simply in consequence of the exchange between Dutch money and that circulating in the islands. The Dutch currency has altered a little in the last 50 years, while in the islands it has

never altered. In the time of Mr. Ross's grandfather the people were paid in copper coin. Copper coin was subsequently called in by the Dutch Government, and silver substituted. This made a difference of 20 cents between the old money and the new, one hundred and twenty (120) cents copper money making a rupee (guilder), while now it is 100.

Mr. Ross has much money in circulation in Java to meet his trade expenses.

He was formerly anxious to simplify matters by altering the money standard in the islands, and reduce it to 100 cents a rupee. The people were called together at that time, and again at subsequent periods, but the islanders disliking change, either could not or would not understand what it was proposed to do, and Mr. Ross decided to let things be and continue to adjust the exchange as before.

Mr. Venning, who devoted some paragraphs of his report to this question, described wages in the islands as being higher than in the neighbouring Dutch colonies. Thus, taking into consideration the things coolies receive free of cost, there seems little ground for complaint.

Mr. Ross is averse to any change in the present money system, and stated that he would consider it his duty to oppose any suggestion to introduce metallic coinage into the islands. On this subject, Mr. Ross appears to hold strong views, and seeing that they are based on an experience gained during 35 years of managing the affairs of his people, equally strong arguments would be necessary to support any proposals for change.

I learnt that the present system is so carefully arranged that up till the present moment no man has ever been robbed of one cent of his money.

It would be impossible for any one to profit by dishonest appropriation of another man's note, as the amount of the money and name of the owner are both registered. A coolie leaving the island brings his paper money to the office, counts it and obtains a cheque, payable in Batavia. This cheque can only be cashed at Mr. Ross's agents. Thus, as Mr. Ross explained, on board the ship a man can sleep at his ease without any fear of losing his money. It was suggested that a man might rob him and personate him, but Mr. Ross replied that the names were sent in full to the agents, who carefully guarded against any attempts at fraud, and besides this, the captain of the ship was an agent, and always present to identify the people. The result is that no man has ever yet been robbed or defrauded. Mr. Ross asked: "Could this be said after a long period of years had the coolies lived with money in their possession, or travelled continually to Java, taking with them considerable sums in cash?" Former reports on the island have ascribed Mr. Ross's aversion to the introduction of money as based on the fact that there would not only exist temptation to steal, but, among other inevitable results, there would have to be a Bank and an armed force to protect it, indeed the whole circumstance of the islands would be changed.

But Mr. Ross informed me that, though these were objections, they were not those which he considered greatest. His chief point was that, at present, there is neither gambling nor immorality. Had the people money to spend, it is easy to believe this would not always be the case, and for this reason alone, Mr. Ross holds that he would be justified in opposing the introduction of coined currency. Recently, hearing that suggestions had been made for some such scheme, Mr. Ross called the people together and placed the matter before them, when they unanimously decided that any change from the present system would be detrimental to their interests. The population of the Islands is small. All the land is owned by Mr. Ross. All the people are in his employ. There is almost no communication with the outside world, except when Mr. Ross's own schooner goes to and from the islands to Batavia. There is no crime and no want. These facts should be borne in mind when reading the above paragraphs.

14. *Marriage*.—Mr. Clifford related how the Malay marriage laws have been superseded by English customs. More than one wife is unknown, and divorce, which is uncommon, depends upon proof of adultery.

There appear to be no laws against inter-marriage, and considering the smallness of the population, this seems a serious matter. That there is now too much intermarriage has not, I found, escaped the attention of Mr. Ross and his brother, Mr. Charles Ross, and the latter gentleman expressed his belief that the present generation showed some signs of deterioration in consequence. More Islanders marry with the Bantamese women than was formerly the case, but when they do so, the children of the union become Keeling-Cocos Islanders in name, and refuse to acknowledge any relationship with their mother's family—indeed, to allude to it is by them considered an insult. To any one accustomed to live amongst Mohammedans it is strange to notice how the women appear to have obtained an ascendancy over the men. If I recollect rightly, Mr. Clifford ascribed this

to the fact that divorce was rare. Mr. Ross believes it to be in consequence of the entire cessation of the custom of wife-beating, which he himself put down with a strong hand many years ago. Illustrative of this position of the women, Mr. Ross informed me that if a man's wife was disinclined to cook for him on any day, she would send him and the children to the house of a neighbour for food. Should that neighbour refuse to prepare their meal, she would thereby incur popular displeasure and be boycotted by all for several days.

There are at present many young men waiting to marry, and I suggested to Mr. Ross, that it would be well if he could allow these men to go to Java or elsewhere to select their wives. When a man marries he is given 3 acres of land, on the understanding that he will plant it with fruit trees. There is no title given with the land, which remains the property of Mr. Ross. The house and the trees descend from father to son, if the son wants them, but when the father dies the son generally has another house, and, therefore, some other member of the family, possibly a son, living with his parents, can obtain the property. There could surely be no more graphic description of the conditions of life in these islands than this—a man not caring to claim more property because he already has enough.

15. *Infant Mortality.*—The high death-rate amongst infants in these Islands has received attention in all previous reports. It has been assumed that much of this mortality was due to the fact that, there being no grass on the Islands, no cows could be kept, and thus no milk was available as food for infants. Also, that children are never weaned till a considerable period beyond that which is usual amongst other peoples.

The first of these reasons is based on a misconception, since, as will appear presently, there is grass and there have been cows on the Islands, but the latter is a very probable cause of ultimate weakness and death.

Indeed, Mr. Ross informed me that children, old enough to go out spearing fish with him, return home and expect nourishment from their mothers. He added that women have no regular hours for feeding their children, but even sleep at night with them at their breast. Also mothers do not cease to give nourishment to their children when they are *enceinte*.

But though the above may, in some measure, explain this mortality amongst the young, Mr. Ross considers that many deaths are due to neglect, and perhaps even more than neglect, since healthy children sometimes die suddenly in one night without any apparent cause.

Mr. Ross has never obtained sufficient evidence to take action regarding these suspicions, but is convinced in his own mind that there exists a deplorable want of care for children amongst the islanders. This he believes to be one of the evil results of education. The children learn to be too independent of their parents, and cast them off at the age of 12, never recognising that they can have any claim on them, or that they should, in their turn, render care or service to father and mother. Thus, where parental affection is small, there exists little inducement for people to bring up children.

However, though infant mortality is high, there is no fear lest the race should die out, since, to a visitor to the Islands, the population appears to boast a remarkably large proportion of children.

16. *Animals.*—The grass seeds formerly sent to Mr. Ross for planting, in order that cows might be kept on the islands, have been reserved for Christmas Island in case it is decided not to cultivate coffee there.

All the Keeling-Cocos have a fair amount of feed for cattle, and formerly Mr. Ross had cows, but as these often fell victims to the spite of Bantamese coolies, it was too expensive to replace them. At one time also Mr. Ross possessed some hundreds of sheep, which did extremely well and increased. In order to improve the breed rams were imported from Australia. Through these, sheep rot was introduced, and large numbers died. Those sheep which remained were so frequently destroyed by the natives, or, meeting with suspicious accidents, had to be killed, that at last Mr. Ross divided them amongst the people who should look after them, and, when required, themselves sell them for food. But this generous arrangement led to troubles. The sheep wandered about amongst the houses of neighbours, annoying by such trespass, and occasionally doing damage. Quarrels ensued, and the sheep were gradually done away with.

There was, too, a herd of deer on one of the islands. These animals came to an untimely end. Some officers from a man-of-war when out shooting wounded a stag. The next day they hunted it with dogs, and though this hunt was successful the rest of

the herd took fright and dashed into the sea, probably in an attempt to reach one of the neighbouring islands. But all of them were devoured by sharks.

Undeterred by the results of former experiments, Mr. Ross has lately introduced some goats.

17. *Rats*.—The great curse of the islands is rats. With the exception of poison and “mongoose,” almost every known method of killing these pests has been tried. Mr. Ross is averse to using poison, and fears the services of “mongoose,” lest they, too, should multiply and overrun the islands. Some headway is made against the rats by dogs of the terrier tribe, bred for size and strength, since it requires a dog of some weight to turn the heavy copra when searching for its prey. Cats were introduced in large numbers to kill the rats, but they have become almost as great a trouble in themselves, and the islands are full of them.

With strange perversity these cats leave the rats alone, and confine their hunting to the destruction of birds. Thus all the land-rail and other ground birds decrease, as well as the black tern, and it is feared they will soon become extinct. As most of these birds were brought to the islands for the purpose of destroying the cocoa-nut beetle, that creature is able to increase and flourish.

18. *Education*.—I availed myself of Mr. Ross’s permission to examine the school. This school, conducted by Rajeli, the Keeling-Cocos Islander, educated at Raffles School, Singapore, has been previously described.

At the time of my visit there were 14 scholars, and this, I was told, was the average number of attendance.

Rajeli informed me that it was difficult to induce children to come to school, for the parents opposed it, since they preferred they should be out catching fish.

The scholars all read well and wrote from dictation. Their handwriting was generally good. They had some knowledge of arithmetic, and had been taught the value of Dutch, Straits, and English monies. Each child has to bring his own slate, provided by his parents, but there were only three boys who had one. Rajeli informed me that geography was taught, but there is no map in the school.

As this teacher devotes a considerable amount of his time as well as some of his money to this praiseworthy voluntary work, it might be possible to present him with a good map of the world, a globe and an atlas.

No English is taught. The school is open on Fridays, but closed on Sundays.

I learnt from Mr. Ross that this opposition on the part of the parents to the education of their children does not extend to the practical teaching given in the workshops. For such instruction, both parents and children are eager.

19. *Administration of Justice*.—There is no crime beyond occasional petty thefts. Of these cases no record is kept. For such offences, when proved, a small fine is inflicted.

In the event of a serious crime, the procedure followed was to select a jury of elders, with Mr. Ross as President of the Court, and also watching the interests of the prisoner. The prisoner could object to any member of the jury. There has been no serious crime for many years. On one occasion, a case of murder, the culprit, a Javanese, was handed over to the Dutch authorities, and the transport of witnesses and contingent expenses of the trial cost Mr. Ross a considerable sum of money.

Once, when two men were convicted of an attempted murder, they were sentenced to two years’ labour within the confines of Mr. Ross’s house and office. At the latter place they obtained their food. A line was drawn beyond which they could not go, and the people instructed that they should cut them down if they did so. For the full time of their sentence these men performed their work under those conditions, and at the expiration of this term returned to their village and eventually turned out well-behaved members of the community.

At the present time should any serious crime be committed, Mr. Ross would detain the suspected persons until he could communicate with the authorities in Singapore.

20. *General*.—With the exception of subjects treated at length in former reports, I believe I have now touched on all those points on which His Excellency could desire detailed information. The following matters, briefly mentioned, may be found of interest.

There is no hospital. Sick people are treated in their own homes, and all medicines and medical comforts are supplied free by Mr. Ross. There is no gaol, but a lock-up room is kept in case of emergency.

There is no organised police force, but a regular watch is kept at night as a safeguard

against fire and the loss of boats. There are no shops on the islands. Mr. Ross keeps a stock of all necessaries.

There are no Chinese in the islands. The people do not like them, and those who have visited them have not been well treated. Natives out after dark must keep to the roads. They are challenged on passing the guard house.

On seeing unusual lights in a house or lights too near a wall the night watch on its round would order these to be extinguished.

All people are allowed to possess and wear knives. Many possess pistols and guns. There is no system of latrines. The sea is used for this purpose.

While drinking, it is necessary to place something over the top of the glass otherwise flies—cantharides—may poison the contents. There is good fresh water, but it is necessary to improve it by keeping iron in the wells.

It is compulsory for all kitchens to be built some distance away from the houses.

The people have no debts amongst each other. No one has ever been known to mortgage his interest in houses or garden.

There is no gambling except amongst the Bantamese, and this only on feast days by special permission.

A day's work consists in husking and carrying 500 nuts.

When ships call, natives have free communication with them, and no restriction is placed upon their trading with the people on board. This trade consists in exchanging fowls, eggs, fruit and fish for clothes.

Fowls and eggs are scarce; fish is the only other food, and with this exception vessels cannot rely upon obtaining supplies.

Fish is unusually plentiful and sufficient, and can always be procured with hooks and lines or casting nets.

The waters are dangerous with shoals of sharks and devil-fish. The people are expert in boat-building, and one man can build himself a good boat in about seven months, working in his spare time only.

No restrictions are placed upon the correspondence of natives with their relations and friends in other countries.

Mr. Ross is now building himself a lifeboat.

Mr. Ross is also building a very large two-storied house with bricks from home.

There are occasionally mosquitos, and sometimes great inconvenience is caused by the swarms of common house flies attracted by the copra.

There are no snakes or wild animals.

No opium is allowed on the islands.

Mr. Ross states that the people are ready volunteers for special duty in time of danger, and are constitutionally brave.

Many of the people possess handsome gold ornaments. At the time of the death of Mr. Ross's father these were brought together and their united value estimated at 10,000 guilders. Some years ago the people had many old weapons and jewellery, but gradually sold them in Batavia notwithstanding the remonstrances of Mr. Ross. Though anxious to purchase them himself in order to keep them in the islands, his principles would not allow him to do so, and thus these relics of the past have been separated and lost.

Mr. Ross stated that frequently large steamers could be seen passing the islands. They came so close that it was possible to distinguish their passengers standing about on deck. He believed these to be ships of the Orient line.

Correspondence has taken place with the Admiralty concerning the utility of these islands for a coaling station. This question has the attention of the Admiral in Australia, since the Keeling-Cocos are in the limits of his command.

None of the people are Christians, with the exception of two or three who accompanied Mr. Ross home and were converted there. Nothing has yet been heard of the schooner lent to the *soi-disant* shipwrecked Italians in 1892. The incident alluded to may be remembered. A former report states:—"An Italian barque 'Luigi Raffo' with cargo from Java to Antwerp arrived in a leaky condition. In a N. E. swell she drove on the reefs. The crew of 18 men of various nationalities gave considerable trouble to Mr. Ross, and on February 29th he sent them away to Batavia in his schooner, the 'F. G. C. Ross.'" Inquiries discovered that a ship called the "Luigi Raffo" was lying at Genoa at the time, and the inference, therefore, is that the wrecked ship bore a false name and was stolen. The schooner was built by Mr. Ross in the islands and was classed A1 at "Lloyds."

21. *Tales*.—As may be understood, there were many interesting tales connected with the islands. From these I will select the following. One day before it was quite dawn,

Mr. Charles Ross was standing beneath a tree on one of the islands waiting to shoot booby birds. Suddenly he was startled by hearing terrible shouts and cries in the darkness close to him. The cries were in English. Straining his eyes in the direction whence they came, he managed to distinguish a sailing ship, which he believed to be English, almost on the reef. The crew had suddenly awakened to their danger, let everything go, and just missed being carried on the barrier. A nearer escape could scarcely be imagined. In a moment the ship was out of sight and nothing more was seen of her.

Mr. Ross related how he had watched a fight between two huge sharks (the water in the lagoon is absolutely clear), and this is worth mention, since from Mr. Ross's description it disproves the belief that a shark must necessarily turn on its back to attack. In this instance the creatures faced each other and dodged warily, while each made fierce attempts to reach the base of his antagonist's tail. As each parried the attack in turn, their jaws locked and remained so for a space, until they mutually disengaged. This fight continued for some considerable time, till at length, avoiding the jaws of his adversary, one seized the other by the vulnerable spot at which he aimed, killing him instantly with one crunch of his teeth.

Not long since some natives informed Mr. Ross that there was a strange animal on shore at one of the islands. He proceeded to the spot and found a large crocodile. It then made its escape, and was not shot till some time afterwards. This crocodile was a different species to any found in the Malay Islands, and Mr. Ross believes it must have been carried on some drift wood from Australia.

22. *Weather and Western Island.*—Mr. Ross and his family live on one of the small islands. The great majority of the people also live there, the other islands being practically uninhabited. The weather during our stay was windy and boisterous, so that I was able to visit one other island only. This, Western Island, is some eight or ten miles distant, and is of considerable size. Here I saw several people. These had no complaints to make except the usual one—they wanted clothes—which being interpreted means materials for finery or holiday garb.

Mr. Ross expressed surprise that Her Majesty's ships should always select what he considers the rough time of the year for their visits. The best months, according to his experience, are August, September, and October. Though it was objected that in these months cyclones might be met, Mr. Ross declared that the chances were not more than one in every ten years.

23. Some of the old people still recollect the visit of H.M.S. "Juno" in 1857.

H.M.S. "Æolus."—It is certain that the present generation will long remember the visit of H.M.S. "Æolus." This was the largest ship they had seen, and it is probable, from the difficulties of anchorage, that they will not be visited by such a ship again. During the whole of the stay of the ship, Captain Groome and his officers did their utmost to show hospitality and render our stay a pleasant break in the lives of those on the islands. The ship was open to all, and those who came on board were shown everything of interest.

On the night of our arrival Captain Groome gave a dinner for all the gentlemen of the Ross family, and on Sunday a large party came off to the ship to church, and were afterwards entertained at lunch by the captain and officers. In the morning of Monday, some 120 men were landed with the band, and a sham fight took place on the golf links, a spectacle watched with evident interest by the people. In the evening Captain Groome and the officers gave a dinner on the poop, which was decorated with flags and lit with electric light, at which 18 members of Mr. Ross's family were present. After dinner some of the ship's company gave a most enjoyable concert, and the evening closed with an impromptu dance.

During the whole of our stay, Mr. and Mrs. Ross kept open house for any who wished to avail themselves of their hospitality, and on the evening before we left they entertained Captain Groome and officers at dinner in their picturesque old-fashioned house.

H.M.S. "Æolus" left the Islands on Wednesday morning, the 1st July, at 11 a.m., Mr. Ross assisting to pilot her from her anchorage.

Before leaving, I wrote to Mr. Ross to express my thanks for his tactful assistance, which had rendered easy the somewhat delicate task of prosecuting inquiries while a guest under his roof.

I also received much information and help from Messrs. Charles, Sidney, and William Ross. I can do no more than record here my appreciation of the welcome and hospitality which I found on the Keeling-Cocos Islands.

24. Return.—Captain Groome returned to Singapore at “economical speed,” and reached that port on July the 8th at daybreak. We had been away exactly a month, all too short a time, it seemed to me, for the performance of an agreeable duty: this will be understood by those who have had the good fortune to be the guest of Captain Groome, or been made welcome on board by the officers of H.M.S. “Æolus.”

25. When in Mr. Ross's office, I made a careful copy of the meteorological returns since the visit of Mr. Clifford, two years ago. I regret to have to write that through some accident this copy is missing, and I am unable to give the returns. I have left mention of this till the last, in the hope that this mislaid paper might be forthcoming. Should it be found, I will forward the returns under separate cover.

Lieutenant Nelson-Ward, R.N., has promised to send me tracings of Christmas Island and the Keeling-Cocos Islands taken from the Admiralty Chart. When these arrive, I will forward them to be placed with this report.

Meantime, for the better illustration of the text, I attach a tracing of these latter Islands taken from the map given in Mr. Forbes's book already mentioned.

20th July, 1896.

ARTHUR KEYSER.

Enclosure 2 in No. 17.

Botanic Gardens, Singapore,

August 10, 1896.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of the specimen of Bastard Teak in fruit and leaf and the scented wood of Christmas Island from Mr. Keyser.

The Bastard Teak is closely allied if not identical with *Berrya Ammonilla*, the Trincomalee Wood of Southern India; the leaves, however, are much smaller. Trincomalee Wood is considered a high class wood, and I have plenty of young plants of it here, but it grows slowly, and the climate seems hardly to suit it.

I should be very glad to get a piece of the wood of the Bastard Teak to compare its value with that of real Teak.

The scented wood is very interesting, both from the odour and from its curious structure. It seems to be a good timber for house work, and shows signs of a good figure. It would be most important to get specimens of the fruit, flowers, and leaves of this timber tree, and if possible seed for cultivation.

Thanks are due to Mr. Keyser for collecting and bringing the specimens.

I have, &c.

HENRY N. RIDLEY,
Director of Gardens.

The Honourable
The Colonial Secretary, S. S.

No. 18.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN to SIR C. B. H. MITCHELL.

SIR,

Downing Street, October 26, 1896.

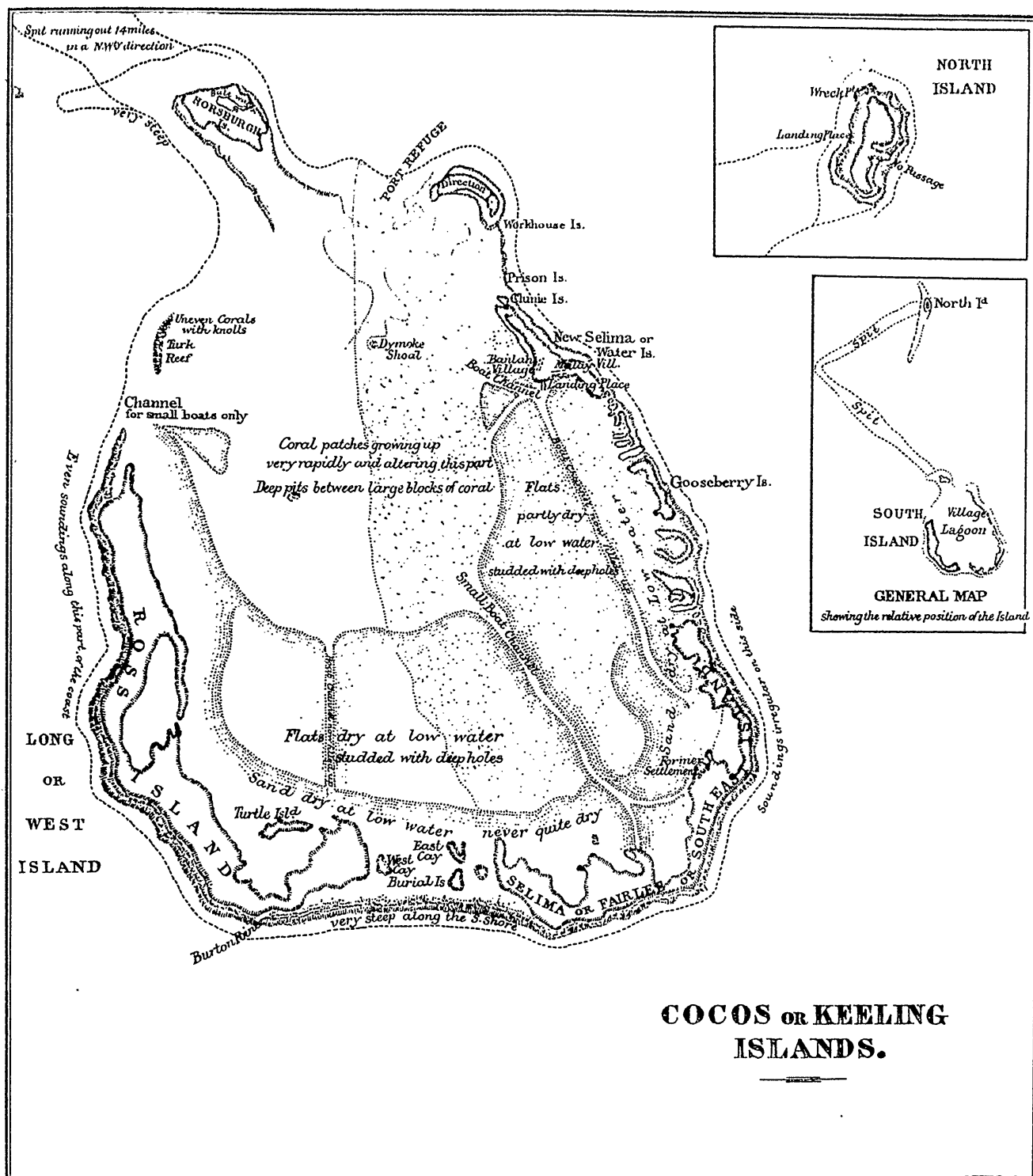
I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your despatch of the 1st ultimo*, forwarding copies of a report by Mr. Arthur Keyser on the Cocos-Keeling and Christmas Islands.

I have read this report with much interest.

I have, &c.

J. CHAMBERLAIN.

* No. 17.



I.D.W.O. No. 1209.

Heliozincographed at the Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton, 1896.
From a Zincograph executed at the Colonial Engineer's Office, Singapore.

