

HONG KONG.

ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT FOR 1926.

PREFACE.

The Colony of Hong Kong is situated off the south-eastern coast of China between latitude $22^{\circ} 9'$ and $22^{\circ} 17' N.$ and longitude $114^{\circ} 5'$ and $114^{\circ} 18' E.$ The island is about 11 miles long and 2 to 5 miles in breadth, its circumference being about 27 miles and its area $28\frac{3}{4}$ square miles. It consists of an irregular ridge of lofty hills rising to a height of nearly 2,000 feet above sea level, stretching nearly east and west, with few valleys of any extent and little ground available for cultivation.

The island, then desolate and sparsely inhabited by fishermen, was ceded to Great Britain in January, 1841, the cession being confirmed by the Treaty of Nankin in August, 1842; and the charter bears the date 5th April, 1843. All that part of Kowloon peninsula lying South of Kowloon Fort to the northernmost point of Stonecutter's Island together with that island was ceded to Great Britain under the Convention signed at Peking in October, 1860, and under the Convention signed at Peking in June, 1898, the area known as the New Territories including Mirs Bay and Deep Bay was leased to Great Britain by the Government of China for 99 years. The area of the New Territories and Islands is about 345 sq. miles.

Trade gradually developed as China became accustomed to foreign intercourse and it increased greatly owing to the opening of the Suez Canal. It now stands at about 200 million pounds sterling per annum.

Large local banking, dock, steamboat, and insurance companies were established between 1865 and 1872, and their numbers are being continually added to.

The Colony is the centre of an incessant flow of Chinese emigration and immigration.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

The boycott of British trade and shipping which began at the same time as the strike in June, 1925 did not, like the strike, collapse rapidly. It continued in full force throughout nearly the whole of 1926 by means of armed strike pickets, whose livelihood depended on it. Officially it was called off by the Canton authorities on 10th October, but intimidators managed to enforce its continuance for some time longer. The trade of the Colony consequently suffered severely, but despite all the difficulties in their way, the British merchants in South China managed to do a certain amount of business, and all confidently looked forward to the better times to come.

Generally there was a feeling of calm optimism ; the Colony had not got through the wood yet, but our enemies, though they had, under Bolshevik influence, striven their utmost, had failed to ruin the trade of Hong Kong.

The Rents Ordinance, which restricted the landlords' right to raise rents was allowed to lapse after having been in force for four years.

The New Year opened with the fire on New Year's day at the Hong Kong Hotel, a great part of which was completely gutted. The damage was estimated at nearly two million dollars. There was one casualty ; a bluejacket, who was assisting in fighting the fire, fell from a window and died of his injuries.

As a result of the fire a Committee was appointed to consider the fire fighting organisation of the Colony. Most of the recommendations of the Committee have been adopted by the Government.

Another calamity befell Hong Kong when on the night of 19th/20th July, a terrific thunder-storm exceeding in intensity any storm recorded within the last thirty-five years burst over the Colony. Several buildings were struck by lightning, one Indian soldier being killed in the barracks of the Punjabi Regiment in Kowloon. Nearly 20 inches of rain fell in the space of 8 hours. The damage, to Government works and property exclusive of Military, Naval and private losses ran into well over a million dollars, and will not be fully repaired under about twelve months. There were landslides, roads were washed out, and nullahs torn up. A huge boulder crashed into the pumping station at Pokfulum, killing 4 men, and seriously interfering with the water supply to the hill districts for some weeks. The lower levels of the City of Victoria were flooded to a depth of several feet and all the ordinary activities of the Colony were suspended for some days. The Peak tram service was totally suspended for a week. The rapidity with which essential communications were restored reflects the greatest credit on the officers of the Public Works Department.

The number of piracies on steamships was greater than it had been for many years. The most serious case was that of the S.S. "Sunning", which whilst on a voyage from Amoy to Hong Kong was captured on November 15th, by pirates who had travelled disguised as passengers. Resourceful and daring action, for which the Chief and Second Officers of the ship were mainly responsible, led to the re-capture of the bridge. The pirates endeavoured to dislodge the officers from the bridge, but were repulsed time after time. Finally they set fire to the vessel, but the fire though it greatly damaged the ship did not help the pirates, all of whom were, so far as can be ascertained, either killed, drowned or captured. Of those captured eight were convicted of piracy and hanged.

A Commission was appointed to enquire into and report on anti-piracy measures in general but its report had not been published by the end of the year.

Two large buildings were opened during the year, *viz.*, the Government Offices and Fire Station on Connaught Road opposite the Central Market, and the new Banque de l'Indo-Chine building on Queen's Road.

An investiture was held at Government House on 13th March, when H. R. H. Prince George, K.G., G.C.V.O., invested His Excellency the Governor, Sir Cecil Clementi as K.C.M.G., Knighted the Hon. Sir Shou-sou Chow and invested the Hon. Mr. E. R. Hallifax with the badge of C.M.G., Mr. George Duncan with the badge of M.B.E. and Mr. George White with the Royal Albert Medal.

At the 17th Congregation of the University of Hong Kong held on 12th January, the degree of Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa) was conferred on His Excellency the Governor, Sir Cecil Clementi, K.C.M.G., the Hon. Mr. R. H. Kotewall, Mr. R. Ponsoby Fane, and Sir R. E. Stubbs, K.C.M.G., (in absentia).

The news of the death in England on 25th May of the Hon. Mr. P. H. Holyoak came as a shock to the Colony. The late Mr. Holyoak had been an indefatigable worker both as an Unofficial member of the Legislative and Executive Councils, and as Chairman of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce.

Two days later on 27th May, there passed away in Hong Kong the Hon. Sir Paul Chater, C.M.G., the most prominent figure in the public and commercial life of modern Hong Kong. Sir Paul had spent over sixty years in the Colony, during which period he had devoted himself not only to business but also to the general welfare of the community. He was first appointed to the Legislative Council in 1886, and was an Unofficial Member of the Executive Council from 1896 to the time of his death.

On 29th August, Mr. Ho Fook, a scion of a well known Chinese family in Hong Kong, died. Mr. Ho Fook before his retirement from active participation in the affairs of the community had been an Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council, and had been a leading member of all the most important of the Chinese public bodies.

The Hon. Mr. A. G. M. Fletcher, C.M.G., C.B.E., Acting Colonial Secretary who had served as a Cadet Officer in Hong Kong for 24 years left on 9th January for Ceylon, of which Colony he had been appointed Colonial Secretary.

On 1st May, the Honourable Mr. W. T. Southorn of the Ceylon Civil Service arrived in Hong Kong and took up the duties of the post of Colonial Secretary.
