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THE SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL MAGAZINE.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE CROWN COLONY OF MAURITIUS.¹

By Sir CHARLES BRUCE, G.C.M.G.

(With Illustrations.)

SOME years ago Sir Hubert Jerningham, my predecessor in the Government of Mauritius, wrote of the colony in these words:—"Among the dependencies of the British Crown there is one which, inconsiderable in extent and almost shut out of notice by its distance from great commercial centres, and the absence within its territory of those mineral attractions which at once give prominence to a country, yet asserts its claim to attention in a manner peculiarly its own, and defies the history of the world to forget its existence in the development of race, in the stubbornness of man struggling against adverse odds, and in the remarkably recuperative powers with which it is endowed."

I propose to show how centuries of struggle have developed in Mauritius a population appropriate to its environment, as evidenced by the recuperative powers it has displayed, and have given such considerable importance to an area of territory rather smaller than the county of Surrey.

THE PORTUGUESE IN CERNÉ.—The island now called Mauritius was discovered and named Cerné by the Portuguese pilot Diego Fernandez Pereira on the 7th of February 1507, so that the task I have undertaken may be considered appropriate to the close of the fourth centenary year of the discovery. There is no record of any Portuguese settlement in the island. It served as a refuge in stress of weather, and as a point of call for fresh water and such original supplies as it afforded, supplemented by the natural but untended increase of introduced plants and animals, such as deer, goats, and pigs. From the first ships landed no

¹ An Address delivered before the Society in Edinburgh on January 16, 1908.

doubt the first rats. These rodents have proved to be the only really formidable enemies of the human race in the fauna of the island. They have devoured every green herb introduced for the service of man; the attempt to displace them has cost sums that must have aggregated hundreds of thousands of pounds; and they have been the chief carrying agents in the propagation of bubonic plague.

Beyond serving as a point of call, Cerné played no part in the enterprises which for a period raised Portugal to the first rank among maritime powers, and gave her a practical monopoly of sea-borne Indian commerce. It was the struggle of the nations of Europe for the key of the Indian Ocean when the power of Portugal had failed that was to determine its strategic and economic value.

THE DUTCH IN MAURITIUS.—When on the 18th of September 1598, the Dutch Admiral Wybrand van Warwyck found a convenient harbour on the south-east coast of the island known to him as Cerné, he entered it with caution, believing the Portuguese to be in possession. But landing and boating parties discovered no trace of human habitation, and after a few days he annexed the island to Holland, giving it the name of Mauritius, after the then Stadtholder, Count Maurice of Nassau. To the harbour he gave his own name.

In the SE. Harbour.—Prince Roland Bonaparte's work, *Le premier établissement des Néerlandais à Maurice*, preserves an interesting record

FIG. 1.—The Peak of Pieter Both.

of the occasion in two early engravings. However primitive may seem the art of these engravings, they are of singular historic value. The first gives a chart of the harbour which comparison with the latest admiralty chart shows to be remarkably correct. A small island with the trunk of a tree erected on it as a beacon, to the right of the channel, is the Ile de la Passe, destined to become famous in the history of the colony. The landscape, if rude in design, gives a general idea of the peaks, plateaux, and passes typical of the scenery of the island. The second engraving illustrates the earliest recorded stage of the racial, political, and economic evolution of the island. The arms of Holland, Zealand, and Amsterdam, with the legend "Christianos Réformados,"

and the pastor "returning thanks to Almighty God for having conducted them to so fair and secure a harbour," represent the spirit which has always associated Dutch enterprise with religion; while carpenters, blacksmiths, and coopers are seen carrying on the crafts

of the shipping trade. Of special interest is the representation of animal life—including the extinct bird, the Dodo, which has been the subject of much learned discussion, and the turtle.

In Fort Hendrik.—For forty years the Dutch continued to make use of Mauritius only as Cerné had been used by the Portuguese, as a point of call for repair and supply, adding to its economic resources by the introduction of useful plants and fruit trees and live stock.¹ It was not till the year 1638 that they decided to support the validity of their title by settlement. On the 7th of May they again took formal possession, “by planting an oar in the ground,” and commenced the construction of a fort, subsequently called Fort Hendrik. It was equipped with an armament of four 3-pounder guns, and the little community of twenty-five persons left within it contained the rudiments of a political system, under the central administration of the Dutch East India Company; military and civil Government were represented by the commander, three officers, and nine soldiers; religion by the pastor; in the general population of eleven working-men, science was represented by the barber, “provided with everything in the way of medicines and instruments.” Later in the year the community was strengthened by a reinforcement of thirty men landed from a man-of-war, but the Governor decided that it was never to exceed eighty residents. The duties assigned to it were to prevent any concurrent settlement by a foreign power, and to develop the resources of the island with a view, in the first place, to making it self-supporting, and then to enlarge the area of commerce, at the time limited to the export of ebony and a little ambergris. The difficulty of maintaining a monopoly of occupation soon made itself felt. The Dutch settlement had anticipated by only a few months English and French expeditions sent out with the same object, and these, while admitting the priority of the Dutch, easily accommodated themselves to it by the discovery of other landing-places, and in particular of a harbour much superior for their purposes on the north-west coast.

Struggle for Existence.—The correspondence published in Prince Roland Bonaparte's interesting monograph proves how soon the Dutch realised the inadequacy of their resources to defend the monopoly they claimed, and learned that the tenure of Mauritius is inseparable from the tenure of maritime supremacy in the Indian Ocean.² Within six years

¹ In January 1606, Admiral de Jonge reported: “Our people planted seven or eight orange trees and sowed grain all about. They also made a little garden near a stream, and planted cotton and fruit trees. If they are not devoured by the rats, which are very numerous, it may be hoped that they will succeed in this climate.”

² The French vessel, *Saint Alexis*, with a crew of eighty-five, and twenty-two guns, left Dieppe on 15th January 1638. The journal of a passenger, after recording the vessel's arrival with the intention of occupying the island, continues: “Having entered the harbour between the South and East, we found the place taken by the Dutch, who were building a fort, having long before given the island the name of Prince Maurice. . . . We left this harbour the next day and went to anchor at the other end of the island, to the north-west. This harbour was guarded by six Dutchmen, quartered in some neighbouring huts. There was an English ship at anchor carrying 23 guns. . . . The people on it offered to help us to drive out the Dutch, to which we refused to consent on account of our alliance with them.”

they abandoned the enterprise, but resumed possession in 1650, only again to abandon it in four years. In 1659, convinced that Mauritius commanded the sea-route of commerce between Europe and Asia, they once more undertook the work of colonisation, with a tenacity characteristic of their race and a scientific knowledge of agricultural methods at least equal to that of any other European power of the day.

The Labour Question.—But a new factor—the Labour Question—had now to be taken into account in their enterprise. At the outset of their occupation they had undertaken to provide a labouring population by the importation of natives of Madagascar under the system of slavery, then universally recognised as the only appropriate agency of tropical labour. This agency was now supplemented by the introduction of convicts from Batavia, and thus an uninhabited island was artificially provided with a population perhaps more hostile to the colonising power than any native population that has resisted European colonisation in any area of America or Asia. It was not long before the facility of escape, from the isolated stations where the Dutch had commenced a system of cultivation, into impenetrable forests, rendered even this labour supply precarious. In time the rapid multiplication of progeny and the licence of a community unfettered even by the restraint of tribal customs made the population of so-called Maroons not only useless for the purpose of agricultural enterprise, but a source of danger and terror. In these circumstances, it was impossible to realise from the development of the resources of the colony a revenue sufficient to yield a return on the capital of a trading company, and to provide for the exigencies of a naval station menaced by the struggle of European powers for the control of the sea-route to India. In 1710 the Dutch once more, and this time finally, abandoned Mauritius, transferring troops and colonists to the Cape of Good Hope. It has been constantly averred that the Dutch were driven out of Mauritius by the rats. It was not the rats but the labour question that proved too much for them.

Two Centuries of Occupation.—Thus closed the record of two centuries of European occupation with results that may briefly be summed up. In an island found uninhabited, there had been established a race of mixed, but mainly African origin, uncontrolled by any kind of political system, but united in violence of hostility to European civilisation. Economically, the resources of the island had been developed by the addition of useful trees and plants to its flora, and of live stock, especially cattle, to its fauna. On the other hand, the rats were left to increase and multiply exceedingly on the introduced flora.

THE FRENCH IN ISLE OF FRANCE.—In 1715 the white flag of Louis xv., King of France and Navarre, was hoisted in Mauritius, and the island annexed to his dominions under the name of Isle of France. In 1719 it was granted by charter to the French East India Company, and in 1723 it was provided with a political system. A Provincial Council, composed of six of the principal inhabitants, was created, and invested with legislative, judicial, and executive powers. The records of this period are meagre and conflicting, but what has been said of the period of Dutch

occupation and the causes which terminated it may suffice to indicate generally the difficulties which before long threatened the settlement. From a commercial point of view, the Company found the enterprise a heavy burden on their hands. The new colonists recruited from France and other areas of French activity had to be financed by the Company. They had no capital, and neither scientific knowledge nor experience of the requirements of tropical agriculture. To the difficulties that had discouraged the Dutch, there was thus added the experience of a financial crisis, an economic disturbance that has proved of frequent recurrence, and as formidable as the recurrent atmospheric disturbance known as a hurricane. It would certainly have wrecked the French occupation within twenty years but for the extraordinary genius of the man who was sent out to deal with it.

Mahé de La Bourdonnais.—It is difficult, within the compass of my address, to do justice to the administration of Mahé de La Bourdonnais. I must confine myself to a summary of his labours in developing the resources of the colony, and in securing it against internal disorder and external aggression. To make the colony self-supporting, he appreciated the necessity of a cheap and abundant food-supply, secure alike from destruction by hurricane, and from the risk of capture in transit inseparable from imported food-stuffs. Such a staple he found in manioc or cassava, which he introduced from Brazil. The expansion of agriculture he promoted by the introduction of products from every known region of the tropical world, and especially encouraged the cultivation of sugar. To facilitate transport, he taught the inhabitants to break in the wild cattle and substitute animal draught for carriage by slaves; he provided adequate roads to connect the harbours and districts of the island.

Turning his attention to the question of an adequate supply of labour—then, as now, the question of questions in climates where the manual labours of agriculture cannot be undertaken by European colonists—he engaged, at his own cost, in the introduction of natives from Africa under conditions repugnant to our modern sense, but at the time universally accepted by the civilised world. Against the internal danger of the Maroon population he was thus able to organise a force of kindred origin, illustrating the principle that the disorders of a turbulent community are best remedied by the educated and disciplined intelligence of its own race.

In undertaking the defence of the colony, La Bourdonnais, convinced of the superior advantages of the North-West Harbour, transferred to that quarter, to which he gave the name of Port Louis, the seat of civil and military government. With an enterprise and energy which admitted nothing to be impossible, he converted an encampment consisting mainly of straw huts, into a town equipped with public buildings and private residences, stores and shops, with barracks, fortifications, and arsenals. The exigencies of health were not overlooked. He constructed an aqueduct to supply fresh water, and a hospital for the service of the town and shipping. But it was to the harbour he devoted his chief efforts. His imperial mind had already appreciated the momentous bearing of sea power on the history of the

world, and he was perhaps the first to realise that, however formidable may be the strength of a nation in battle-ships, its commerce may be annihilated by the speedy cruisers and privateers of a rival power without a single battle-ship. He therefore determined to make Port Louis a station from which foreign trade could be crippled, as well as a strategic base for the operations of France in India. He equipped it for the reception of a fleet, and provided it with wet and dry docks. He not only undertook the work of shipbuilding with success, but in 1746 he made Port Louis the base of an operation seldom, if ever, paralleled in colonial history. "Without ships," says Colonel Malleon, "without sailors, without an army, the Indian Ocean covered by hostile cruisers,

FIG. 2.—Port Louis from the Sea.

with no resources but those he had made in the colony, he was asked to embark an army, to traverse the Indian Ocean, to avoid or encounter the trained fleet of the enemy, and to relieve the beleaguered capital of French India." The result of this expedition and the tragic fate of the heroic adventurer belong to another chapter of history.

His memory is held in equal honour by the representatives of England and of France in the colony, where in 1899 the bi-centenary of his birth was celebrated with appropriate ceremonies. Arrangements had been made for the fleets of England and France to take part in the celebration, but they were unfortunately prevented by a visitation of plague.

The Chartered Company and the French Nation.—La Bourdonnais finally left the Isle of France in 1746, and there followed a period of conflict between the commercial interests of a trading company and the

imperial interests of France in the only harbour of the Indian Ocean in which ships could ride with safety. It had been the aim of La Bourdonnais to reconcile these interests, but his schemes had involved a formidable expenditure, and the Company found itself in a position analogous to that of the Dutch East India when it abandoned the colony. The conflict was terminated in 1764 by the bankruptcy of the Company and the transfer of the administration to the Crown. It has been estimated that the transfer cost France 375 millions of livres, but whatever may have been the cost, we must accept the transfer as a declaration of the national faith that if the Isle of France were abandoned, the English would drive all other nations out of the Indian Ocean, and possess themselves of the wealth of Asia.

Isle of France a Crown Colony.—In 1766 the Isle of France received its first charter as a Crown Colony. The charter sought to reconcile the conflict of military and civil interests by the appointment of two administrators jointly responsible to the Crown. To the Governor was assigned the naval and military command, to the Intendant were assigned the judicial administration, finance, and the control of agriculture and commerce. The difficulties of this system of divided responsibility were not long in making themselves felt, but the selection of the first Intendant was almost as fortunate as had been the appointment of La Bourdonnais, and under M. Poivre the development of agriculture was pursued with energy and method. He reported at once to the Government of France that "coffee, cotton, indigo, sugar, pepper, cinnamon, tea, mulberries, cocoa and annatto had each had their turn, but that the knowledge and attention necessary to establish an experiment had always been wanting." To remedy this want of knowledge and method, he established in 1769 the Botanic Gardens attached to the Governor's country residence at Pamplemousses. They soon gained a world-wide fame, and have been, as they still are, a stay of the colony's fortunes and an ornament of which all Mauritians are justly proud.

Seat of Government-in-Chief.—In the meantime, the Crown Colony of the Isle of France rapidly grew in importance as a base of naval and commercial operations,¹ until in 1789 the seat of the government-in-chief of all the French establishments east of the Cape was transferred from Pondichery to Port Louis. But the time was now approaching when the Crown Colony, under the influence of the French Revolution, was to be raised to the status of a self-governing Colony in the fullest acceptance of the modern term.

Characteristics of Old France.—When the Prince of Wales returned from his Colonial tour, he declared with perfect felicity of phrase that Mauritius had preserved many charming characteristics of Old France. It was the period of the Revolution that fixed them, and at the same time dissociated them from other less charming characteristics of the old

¹ In 1785 the French East India Company was reconstructed as a trading concern under a Charter which gave the Isle of France concurrent privileges in a monopoly of trade between France, India and China, and exclusive privileges as an entrepôt for goods from Eastern ports carried by all French vessels.

régime. The following figures may serve as a guide to the population of the Isle of France during this period :

YEAR.	WHITES.	FREE COLOURED.	SLAVES.
1787	4372	2235	40,439
1797	6237	3703	59,020

Elements of Order.—The white population contained three powerful elements of order in the landed interest, in commerce, and in the Church. The land was mainly in the hands of retired servants of the Crown of military and maritime experience, drawn largely from the old *noblesse* but enjoying no feudal privileges. Commerce was dominated by a body of merchant venturers, who, to the profits of a great centre of trade in peace, added in war time the recognised and lucrative enterprise of privateering. The Church, unembarrassed by temporal privileges, exercised its spiritual influence in alliance with these forces.

Elements of Disorder.—At the same time there were three elements of disorder in the civil community, in the military, and in the Government of France. In the civil community elements of unrest were found in the generous enthusiasm of youth for liberty, equality, and fraternity ; in a spirit of independence and intolerance of restraint inseparable from colonial enterprise ; and in the meaner motives which in periods of national agitation prompt the idle, the dissipated, and the vicious, to turbulence. Among these elements of unrest the substitution of the tricolor for the white flag was followed by imitation of the revolutionary methods of France in the formation of Jacobin Clubs : La Chaumière, Rafrachisseurs, Chevaliers d'Industrie, Sans-culottes—and even in the erection of a guillotine, fortunately satisfied by the vicarious sacrifice of a sheep. To these elements of disorder was added a spirit of mutiny among the garrison, which, not unnaturally, associated itself with the revolutionary spirit of the army in France ; and the garrison was responsible for the only act of bloodshed committed, the murder of Count Macnamara, commandant of the French Marine in the Indian Ocean. But these elements of unrest proved less formidable than the action of the National Convention in France, which on the 4th of February 1794 decreed the immediate abolition of slavery without indemnity, and declared every man domiciled in the colonies without distinction of colour to be a citizen of France, with equal civil and political rights. Such were the influences that determined the evolution of the Isle of France into a self-governing colony.

Self-government.—By a decree of Louis XVI. of the 9th of April 1790, the colony was empowered to frame a Constitution for itself, and on the 21st of April 1791 a Constitution drafted, discussed, and adopted by the Colonial Assembly and ratified by the Government of France, came into force. By a resolution of the Assembly, it was subsequently decreed that no laws emanating from France should have force in the colony ; and in 1798 the Assembly decreed a revision of its Constitution. By the Constitution of 1791 the supreme executive power was placed provisionally in the hands of the Governor. The exercise of this power

presented grave difficulties, but they were overcome by the genius of the Governor, Count Malartic, who with admirable foresight placed himself in the position which the experience of subsequent generations has assigned to the Governor of a self-governing British colony.

The Colonial Assembly and Slavery.—As it was the policy of the colony in respect of slavery that determined the issue of the conflict between the forces of order and disorder, it is important to understand it. It was clearly defined in its aims and methods. Its end was the abolition of slavery, and its methods were the immediate abolition of the slave trade;¹ the amendment of the *Code Noir*, the organic slave law of France, by the abolition of all punishments of exceptional severity;² and the admission of free people of colour to equal rights with the white population.³ But to the immediate abolition of slavery as decreed by the National Convention the colony resolutely refused its assent.

Isle of France and Hayti.—The American philosopher Emerson declared that history reveals nothing more remarkable than the ease with which a benefactor may become a malefactor only by the continuation of his activity into an area where it is not due. And the truth of the aphorism has never been asserted with more tremendous energy than in the history of the abolition of slavery. It has afforded a lesson to all time in the contrast between the influence of the principles of the French Revolution in Hayti and in the Isle of France. In Hayti the racial antipathies of colour, generated by slavery, broke out into the most vindictive conflict on record—a conflict which exterminated the European community, destroyed capital in every shape, paralysed labour, and arrested the evolution of the forces which in the Isle of France, struggling now slowly, now rapidly, but on the whole continuously, have worked out the conditions necessary to political sobriety, equality of civil rights, and economic prosperity.

The interval of two years between the passing of the decree of the 4th of February 1794 and the attempt to enforce it, gave the cohesion of an united purpose to the forces of order in the colony and

FIG. 3.—The plateau of Plaines Wilhelms, showing the Military Camp at Vacoas.

¹ Laws of the Colonial Assembly, 26th February, 5th March, 20th September, 1794.

² Laws of 4th December 1790, 6th February 1794.

³ Laws of 22nd August 1792, 18th January 1793, 18th March 1794.

allied with them the sacred cause of wives, mothers and daughters, to whom the fate of their sisters in Hayti had revealed terrors worse than death.

The Crown of Self-government.—On the 18th of June 1796 a naval detachment brought to the colony the Commissaries of the French Republic, sent to proclaim the immediate emancipation of the slaves, and to terminate the political independence of the Isle of France as a self-governing colony. But the popular will had determined that the colony had no use for the agents of the Directory, and on the 22nd of June, after four days of a determined but bloodless conflict, they were forced to re-embark. In 1798 the colony rid itself of the turbulent element in the garrison, and before long the last elements of disorder were expelled.

Notwithstanding the desperate struggle for existence in which the self-governing colony was engaged, it found time to develop its internal resources, while its maritime activity was such that the prizes taken into Port Louis were numbered by thousands, and their value estimated at millions of pounds sterling.

The defence of the island and the proceedings adopted in the teeth of the revolutionary events that threatened its destruction at this time "belong," says the historian Pridham, "rather to the age of romance, were not romance set aside by reality. Seldom, perhaps, has history furnished an example on a parallel with this instance, an instance in which a single and inconsiderable island, denuded of nearly the whole of its military force, by the natural strength of its position and the bravery and patriotism of its inhabitants, singly and for a long time resisted the hostilities of the mightiest of nations. . . ."

End of Self-government.—In May 1802 the political independence of the Isle of France was terminated by its submission to a decree of Bonaparte as First Consul of the Republic suspending the Constitution, re-establishing the slave trade, and restoring the legal status of slavery under the Code Noir. A provisional government was now set up with absolute power vested in a Captain-General, a Colonial Prefect, and a Commissary of Justice.

General Decaen.—It is only just to recognise the eminent services in the civil administration of the colony of the illustrious officer, General Decaen, appointed Captain-General. The Code Decaen may be said to have been to the Isle of France what the Code Napoléon was to France, and in the *Lycée Colonial* he laid the foundation of an institution which, as the Royal College, has done more to remove prejudice arising from the accident of origin and convictions of consciences than all other influences put together.

A Unit of Empire.—But the Isle of France had now become a unit in a vast military system organised to establish, under the dictatorship of Napoleon, a universal Empire of which Europe was to be the head, America and Asia the arms, Africa the shoulders and trunk, the Atlantic and Indian Oceans the legs and feet. And it was the importance of the unit in this imperial enterprise that determined its destiny.

The Sea-route to Asia.—We have seen in the transfer of the Isle of

France to the Crown an expression of the national belief that if the colony were abandoned, England would make herself mistress of the wealth of Asia. In England, statesmen, generals, and admirals, in India, governors and councils, had been unanimous in declaring that possession of the Isle of France was essential to our commerce, to our reputation and national character, and to the maintenance of our province, India. It fell to Lord Minto, Governor-General of India, great-grandfather of the present Viceroy, to determine the question of possession by the *ultima ratio* of a force the most powerful in strength and equipment that had ever been afloat in the Indian Ocean.

Naval Achievements.—The operations of war which transferred the Isle of France to British rule are outside the scope of my address. The Prince of Wales on his visit referred in generous terms to the just pride of the colony in its great traditions and "in its association with naval achievements that shed equal glory on England and France." Among the most famous of these achievements was the action of the *Ile de la Passe* on the 23rd of August 1810. The French under Commodore Duperré were victorious, but a naval historian has declared that the noble behaviour of Captain Willoughby and the officers and crew of the *Néréide* "threw such a halo of glory round the defeat that the loss of four frigates was considered scarcely a misfortune." An obelisk has been erected in honour of all who fell on that memorable day; and the *Ile de la Passe* occupies in the annals of Mauritius much the same place as the Plains of Abraham in the annals of Canada.

Capitulation and Treaty.—On the 10th of December the Isle of France surrendered to the overwhelming force sent against it, the terms of capitulation securing to the inhabitants their religion, laws and customs, and property. By the Peace of Paris, 1814, the Isle of France was ceded to Great Britain in full sovereignty, and under the restored name of Mauritius remains the star and key of the Indian Ocean.

The Record of French Occupation.—Lest it be thought that I am exalting above measure

FIG. 4.—La Fenêtre.

the place of Mauritius in history, I will close this brief record of French occupation in Colonel Malleison's eloquent words:—

"Thus did the French lose, after an occupation of nearly a hundred years, the beautiful island upon which had been bestowed the name of their own bright land, and which in climate, in refinement of luxury, in the love of adventure of its children, had been, in very deed, the France

of the East. In the long struggle with England which had followed the Revolution, the Isle of France had inflicted upon the English trade a 'damage which might be computed by millions,' whilst she herself had remained uninjured,—for eighteen years indeed—unthreatened. She had proved herself to be that which the Emperor had declared that Cherbourg should become,—'an eye to see and an arm to strike.' Protected for long, partly by the storms of the ocean, partly by the daring spirit of her children, partly by the timid counsels of the British Government, she had been, for the privateers who preyed upon the commercial marine of the East India Company, at once a harbour of refuge and a secure base of operation. She had been the terror of British merchants, the spectre which haunted the counting-house, the one black spot in the clear blue of the Indian Ocean. The relief which was felt by the merchants of Calcutta was expressed in an address presented by them to Lord Minto, in which they offered their 'sincere congratulations on the capture of the only remaining French colony in the East, which has for so many years past been the source of devastation to the commerce of India, to a magnitude almost exceeding belief.'"

THE BRITISH IN MAURITIUS.—Although Mauritius, under British rule, has ceased to be associated with the romance of great naval achievements, the policy of government has of necessity continued to exercise itself in two areas of activity: the administration of a base of maritime operations, and the development of the resources of a tropical territory. In the term "maritime operations" I include the functions of the Royal Navy and the Merchant Service. The importance of Mauritius as a unit in any system of imperial defence constituted on the principle that the maintenance of peace depends on an adequate preparation for war, has never failed to be recognised. And the colony, dependent for its existence on its sea-borne commerce, has even in the darkest days of its fortunes cheerfully borne its share of the burden of defence at home and protection in transit, as a premium of insurance. This practical wisdom, associated with the sentiment of old traditions, has always secured for the British Navy as cordial and enthusiastic a welcome as it receives in any seaport or city of Scotland. Nor has the period of British dominion been without services rendered to the Empire in war-time of which the colony is proud: by the prompt despatch of troops to India in 1857 during the Mutiny; to South Africa in 1879 during the Zulu War; and to South Africa again in 1900 at a critical stage of the last war. In 1857 grave anxiety was entertained as to the internal security of the colony while denuded of a portion of its large garrison. It was the period of an *entente cordiale* following the Crimean War, and it is of interest to recall that the French Governor of Réunion wrote to the Governor of Mauritius offering him in case of need the support of the French troops in his command. In 1879 a detachment was sent with very little fear of internal difficulties. In 1899 the services of every white soldier in the garrison were placed at the disposal of the War Office without any apprehension at all. And it may be added that on this occasion the troops arrived at Durban within

six days of the hour of their receiving notice to hold themselves in readiness.

Great Trade-route to Asia.—We have seen that the protection of the British merchant service on the trade-route from Europe to Asia was a main determining cause of the transfer of Mauritius to British dominion. With the growth of eastern commerce and the introduction of steamers, Mauritius rapidly became a victualling, docking, and coaling station of unrivalled value in the Indian Ocean.

The Observatory.—At the same time, the constantly recurrent cyclones on the track of navigation between the Cape and Asia enforced the importance of the colony as a station for the study of the law of storms. In 1851 a Meteorological Society was formed, and in 1870 the foundation-stone of the Royal Alfred Observatory was laid by the Duke of Edinburgh. Since 1893 the telegraph has made it one of the most important units of the imperial system of meteorological, magnetic, and seismometric observations. For nearly half a century our countryman, Dr. Charles Meldrum, was the inspiring genius of the work. On his storm atlas, his synoptic charts, his theory of the law of storms, and his rules for avoiding the track of cyclones are based the sailing instructions issued to mariners for the navigation of the Indian Ocean. The observations he conducted have now determined all the factors of the climate, and are available for international use. From May to September the weather conditions at Mauritius are cabled every week to India for use in connection with the monsoon forecasts. Similar cablegrams go to Egypt in connection with the Nile flood forecasts. It only remains for an international system of wireless telegraphy to be established to complete the value of the Mauritius observatory for the uses of navigation. In its latest service to commerce, the observatory has entered on an unexpected area of activity in furnishing the means by which insurance on sugar crops and mills can be effected on a satisfactory basis. The observatory records have determined the relative effects of cyclones, rainfall, and temperature on the sugar crop, and have given a numerical value to each. It appears that popular opinion has considerably over-rated the first and under-rated the last factor. The figures now established furnish the only proper basis of calculation on which insurance companies can determine their premiums within very narrow limits.

The Suez Canal and dependence on internal resources.—The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which beggared the colony of St. Helena, dealt a serious blow to the local interests connected with shipping in Mauritius, but it has placed in striking relief the wisdom of the policy which has made it a chief aim of the administration to find an adequate and permanent source of prosperity in the development of the resources of the colony. In this area of activity the Botanic Gardens at Pamplemousses continued to be the centre of enterprise, and such was the success of the sugar industry that the export of sugar rose from 467 tons in 1812 to 131,000 tons in 1860. It was calculated that the small island was at that time producing about a tenth of the exported sugar of the whole world. I must not discuss the struggle for existence of the cane-sugar

industry against its rival, the beetroot, but I may say, that to meet this formidable competition in Mauritius all the secrets that science has wrested from Nature have been applied to practical uses alike in the field and in the factory.¹ Nor has the encouragement of subsidiary industries been neglected. As cultivation has gradually been extended from the seaboard to the highest cultivated areas, agronomic and botanic stations have been established at altitudes of 1000 feet and 1800 feet for scientific experiment in products appropriate to the conditions of the higher ranges, such as tea. And in this enterprise the colony has been materially assisted by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. At Kew has been carried on the work of collecting, identifying, and classifying the species of economic plants best adapted to the climatic and other conditions of all parts of the Empire, and the results of the vast mass of information thus acquired has been placed at the disposal of the colony. In this way the crowd of introduced products from all quarters of the globe has been such that they have replaced the original flora of Mauritius to an extent probably greater than in any part of the Empire.

Transport.—Meanwhile the work of providing facilities of transport, started by La Bourdonnais in the substitution of animal draught for slave carriage, has been steadily developed. Cattle were imported from Madagascar and India, horses from the Cape and Australia, ponies from Pegu and Timor, mules from France and South America. Railroads were introduced, and have of late been widely extended, while from reasons which will be presently explained the island has been covered with a network of surface and overhead tramways.

Malaria.—In 1866 the government was forced to extend its activity in a new area by an epidemic of malarial fever, which caused an enormous mortality, and a vast depreciation of property in Port Louis and the seaboard area first invaded. The epidemic subsequently resulted in the displacement of the homes of a large section of the community and a redistribution of the population in the more elevated districts. From that time the department of health and sanitation has been one of the first concerns of government, and in this department the colony has been able to avail itself of the world-wide experience collected in the British schools of tropical medicine and in France. Major Ronald Ross is at this moment in the colony on a mission of inquiry into the best means of combating malaria.

Abolition of Slavery and the Labour Question.—But after all, the application of science to practical uses in the processes of production, of transport and of sanitation, is in the development of territorial resources subsidiary to the essential condition of an appropriate population. In tropical and sub-tropical countries the first essential condition of an appropriate population is a sufficient labour supply for the elementary operations of industry which cannot be undertaken by the white man.

¹ My experience leads me to believe that the consumer of cane-sugar in this country has a very inadequate conception of the capital required to provide and keep up to date the equipment of a modern factory. I regret that the exigencies of time and space preclude me from giving a description of such a factory.

In Mauritius, as elsewhere prior to the abolition of slavery, these operations were performed by African negroes. It is certain that if the emancipated slaves could have been persuaded to carry on the elementary operations of agriculture, they would have learned in time that the cultivation of land leads to its acquisition, and they would have kept in their hands the natural wealth of the soil, which has in a large measure passed to a race which has supplanted them. The policy by which the British Government, and in particular Lord Grey, endeavoured to secure the adhesion of the emancipated slaves to the soil failed, but in other respects the British Government has successfully discharged the trust and function assigned to it as guardian of the African descendants in the colony. Lord Grey's policy was based on a theory, still advocated, that the pressure of a small tax would compel the negro to work in order to obtain the means of meeting it, and that the process would encourage a general disposition towards frugal industry.

Asiatic Labour.—Ever since the abolition of slavery, the substitution of Asiatic for African labour, with its consequences, has dominated the political history of Mauritius. Between 1834 and 1839 there were introduced about 24,000 Indian coolies under a free system of engagement for five years. In 1839, when this system was first legalised by ordinance, it was immediately suspended in consequence of an agitation in Parliament; but in 1842, after an inquiry undertaken by the Government of India, immigration under contract was resumed. In 1874 the system was again the subject of inquiry by a Royal Commission, and their report was the basis of the organic labour law of the colony. In 1894 a friendly inquiry into the working of the law was conducted by a commissioner appointed by the Government of India, with the result that some important modifications in the law and in the administration of the system have been effected. The law of Indian immigration under contract as it now stands may be said to embody legislation based on long experience, sanctioned by both political parties in Parliament and by the Government of India, and approved by both of his Majesty's present Ministers who have held the offices of Governor-General of India and Colonial Minister, the Marquess of Ripon and the Earl of Elgin.

Indian Immigration under Contract.—In appreciating the policy of protected Asiatic immigration, it must constantly be borne in mind that in view of the refusal of the African population to carry on the elementary labours of agriculture on the estates, there was practically no alternative but the abandonment of the island, which would certainly have reverted to France. It is possible that, at a time when the British Government was seriously contemplating the secession by consent of her colonies, such an alternative might have been admitted, but it is certain that, in the revival of colonial enterprise and the struggle for the control of the Tropics, we should, notwithstanding the modern trade-route of the Suez Canal, have found our imperial interests hardly less seriously compromised by such action at the close of the nineteenth century than they were at the close of the eighteenth. Coincidentally the same policy, controlled by the same methods, saved our West Indian

Islands, which but for the migration from India must have gone out of cultivation. They would, beyond all doubt, have passed into the hands of the United States, and carried with them undisputed supremacy in the Caribbean Sea.

The Indians in Agriculture and Commerce.—While the direct object of immigration from India was the supply of unskilled manual labour, it has had far-reaching consequences. The frugal industry of the Indian labourers, when they have ceased to enter into engagements by written contract under the labour law, has gradually enabled them to acquire a vast number of small holdings, to the great advantage of the colony. They have thus given a value to and kept in cultivation an extensive area of land which must otherwise have been abandoned; their canes have been a profitable source of supply to the sugar-mills of the large estates; and the cultivation of their small holdings has left them ample time to work as gardeners, carters, carriers, hawkers, and pedlars. In this way they have acquired almost a monopoly of the carrying business, and this has served as a link connecting them with agriculture on one side and trade on another. For in the meantime a consequence of the Asiatic immigration was the introduction of rice as the staple diet of the whole colony, while coincidentally the competition of beet-root sugar in Europe and other causes made India the chief market for Mauritius sugar. Thus the bulk of the export and import trade, including nearly all the commodities that enter into the constant consumption and use of the population, has been transferred from Europe to Asia, and has fallen into the hands of the Indian traders, mostly representatives of wealthy Bombay firms. They have naturally helped to find employment for their countrymen in the carrying and hawking trade as distributors of their commerce.

Population 1901.—This explanation seems necessary to an understanding of racial development in Mauritius, as indicated by a comparison of the population in 1830 before the abolition of slavery with the results of the last census:—

POPULATION OF MAURITIUS EXCLUSIVE OF MILITARY AND SHIPPING.			
1830 <i>Approximate.</i>			
Whites,	.	.	8,592
African Descendants:			
Slaves,	.	.	69,476
Free Coloured,	.	.	18,019
Indians and Chinese,	.	.	858
Total,	.	.	<u>96,945</u>
<i>Census 1901.</i>			
	MALE.	FEMALE.	TOTAL.
Europeans, white, mixed, and coloured,	53,038	55,377	108,415
Africans,	332	100	432
Indians,	144,957	116,023	260,980
Chinese,	3,451	58	3,509
Total,	<u>201,778</u>	<u>171,558</u>	<u>373,336</u>

A comparison of these returns shows a most remarkable racial development.

The General Community.—The population of 108,415 includes all persons with European blood in their veins, and with the 432 persons returned as Africans is known locally as the general community. The members of this community of pure European descent cannot exceed 5000. The English element is very small, and may be said to stand in much the same social relation to the French element as the corresponding elements of Canadian society. The predominant influence is that of the families who brought in and have maintained "the charming characteristics of old France." They enjoy the respect still entertained in England and even in republican France for a small circle of society where the traditions of birth are associated with personal virtues finding expression in the sentiment *noblesse oblige*. They cling to each other "in either fortune" with a brave tenacity of attachment. Their ladies represent the *grandes dames* of European society. But their influence is purely personal, as is the influence, of a different order, of the English representatives of English capital and enterprise. Otherwise there is no distinction of origin. There are, of course, social gradations as there are in Europe, and in the colonies that claim to be exclusively reserved for the use of the white man. But the State recognises no aristocracy but that of office; society none but that of merit and success. High office in the administration, the dignity of the Bench, the honours and emoluments of the learned professions, the influence of landed property, the profits of commerce are open to all. The general community supplies the staff of the government offices, including the Public Works, Railway and Harbour Departments, as well as the staff of all private enterprises except those undertaken by the Indian community. They also do practically all the skilled artisan and mechanical work of the colony. The small number of persons returned as Africans, which the Registrar thinks may be somewhat under-rated, includes an intrepid and skilful body of men engaged in the fishing and coasting trade. In the evolution of the general community the principal forces at work have been education and the Christian religion. Education has been a chief concern of the State, but its success has depended on the support and aid of the Churches; and if it is impossible for me to give an account of their methods of influence, I may at least do homage to their loyal co-operation with the civil government.

Indian Community.—On the subject of the Indian community I need only add to what has been said that, between the traders who have acquired estates and the proprietors of small holdings, it owns more than one-third of the whole cultivated area of the colony, nearly all of which would have been abandoned but for the enterprise and industry of these men. The Indian community includes over 200,000 Hindus, about 40,000 Mahomedans, and 3000 Buddhists. It also includes many Christians, who form a close bond of union with the general community.

The Chinese.—The Chinese are a peculiar people, and occupy a peculiar position in Mauritius, as elsewhere. They have served a useful purpose and have always loyally submitted themselves to the regulations

and wishes of the government. But they have acquired a monopoly of the retail provision trade by methods which I have always regretted. They have made this branch of trade subsidiary to the retail liquor trade, of which they have also acquired a monopoly, and the profits of the liquor trade enable them to undercut competition in the provision trade. If the profits of the retail liquor trade were transferred from the Chinese to the government for public purposes, it is probable that the Chinese immigration would cease, and the legitimate profits of the retail provision trade would be restored to the general community. I made a proposal in this sense before I left Mauritius, but I fear it has not met with encouragement. The Chinese perfectly understand that Mauritius affords a very limited area for their transactions, and that if they increased and multiplied, competition among themselves would reduce the small margin of profit with which they are satisfied, below a living wage. With rare exceptions, therefore, they never bring their womankind with them, and have no intention whatever of becoming permanent residents. They work "for all they are worth," to enable them to return home as soon as possible with what is to them a sufficient fortune. By arrangement among themselves—an arrangement with which the government has nothing to do—about 10 per cent. repatriate themselves every year, and make room for others. This will explain the small percentage of females in the census return.

The Constitution.—The political constitution of Mauritius has been frequently modified under British rule, but it was only in 1884 that the principle of election to the legislative body by popular suffrage was admitted. The head of the administration in the present system is the Governor, who is assisted by an Executive Council and a Council of Government. The Executive Council consists of five official heads of departments and two unofficial members appointed from among the members of the Council of Government by the Secretary of State. The Council of Government includes the Governor and eight official heads of departments, nine nominated members, and ten elected by popular suffrage on a moderate property qualification. The elected and nominated members together represent the popular will. The elected members represent, of course, majorities, and generally speaking a democratic spirit. The nominated members have a more conservative tendency, and exercise an important function in the representation of minorities and groups of interests not directly represented in the elected body, such as external capital and commerce. They include and will always include, I hope, a member of the Indian community, until that community secures direct representation by election. The Indian community are not keen politicians, and have been satisfied to leave themselves in the hands of the government rather than seek election to the Council of Government, from which there is nothing in the constitution to exclude them. The function of the Governor and heads of departments in the Council is to balance the elements of the popular will and to represent Imperial interests in matters of defence and foreign relations; to maintain the civil and political rights of all his Majesty's subjects in the colony; and to control the finances for which the Imperial Treasury

is in the last resort responsible. It will be seen that it is a form of constitutional government which includes the democratic spirit and its check in a single chamber. Long experience in nearly every colony which has been admitted to self-government since the secession of the American colonies has proved that it is a form of government that can only exist by virtue of a spirit of mutual forbearance and goodwill; because, when the two elements of the popular will form a *bloc*, the government responsible for the administration must always be in a minority. Nevertheless, the experience of Mauritius has proved that with such a spirit it may serve as a *modus vivendi* appropriate to a community of European, African, and Asiatic descent that has learnt to realise the letter and spirit of Queen Victoria's proclamation to the people of India in 1858, declaring that "no native, nor any resident natural-born subject of Her Majesty, should by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour, or any of them, be disabled from holding any place, office, or employment under the Government."

Local Government.—It should be added that in Mauritius the administrative system includes a scheme of Local Government. In Port Louis, the capital, a Municipal Corporation is elected by suffrage; in the districts there are Town Boards, members of which are nominated by the governor, whose duty it is to secure a fair representation of interests. These agencies exercise a material influence on the *modus vivendi*. It remains for me to illustrate the resistant and recuperative efficiency of the *modus vivendi* by a record of what was actually accomplished in Mauritius during a period of misfortune hardly paralleled in the history of our colonial Empire.

Hurricane and Fire.—Early in 1892 Mauritius was visited by a hurricane which in a few hours killed 1260 people, wounded 4000, rendered 50,000 homeless, knocked down twenty-four churches and chapels, and many public buildings. On the sugar estates it destroyed many mills, with their costly machinery, and reduced a promising crop by one-half. In order to appreciate the effects of this hurricane, it must be borne in mind that there are in Mauritius few accumulated fortunes; capital is almost exclusively domiciled in Europe, and, as regards the Indian traders, in India. The bulk of the community lives on the annual proceeds of the sugar crop. From this source are derived public and private salaries, professional emoluments, and the wages of the working community.

In 1893 a great fire lapped up what the hurricane had left in the principal business area of Port Louis.

Against these appalling disasters the general community struggled with a courage worthy of the great traditions of Mauritian history. In the Indian community the merchants exercised a generosity which earned the grateful acknowledgment of the colony and the thanks of the Imperial and Indian Governments. At the other end of the social scale, the indentured labourers on the estates volunteered to accept a reduction of their statutory wages.

Financial Crisis.—Misfortunes never come single-handed. There followed a short crop, an enhanced cost of supplies from India due to

famine and plague, and allied complications leading to a financial crisis. It had to be met by government assistance to the banks, a loan to planters (punctually repaid with a margin of profit), and the suspension of specie payments—measures of grave anxiety only justified by the peril they successfully averted.

Plague and Surra.—It was hardly averted when an epidemic of plague broke out. Apart from the fatality of the disease, which, so far at least as the Asiatic community is concerned, is perhaps the smallest of its terrors, it is attended by subsidiary difficulties and dangers arising largely out of the measures adopted to arrest its progress. These are now getting to be understood in this country by the records of experience in India. They affect smaller communities with even more acute severity, and they strained the courage and the resources of the colony in a way that can hardly be realised by those who have had no similar experience.

In 1901 the Prince and Princess of Wales visited Mauritius, and replied to the addresses of welcome presented to them in these gracious terms:—

“We deeply sympathise with you in that combination of adversities altogether beyond your control, under which you have suffered during the past ten years.

“Meanwhile the whole Empire has watched with sympathetic admiration the constancy and courage by which you overcame your difficulties and the spirit that prompted you to contribute generously—in spite of your own imperilled fortunes—to the relief of your suffering fellow-subjects in India, the West Indies, and in South Africa.”

In 1902 the epidemic of plague was followed by an epizooty of the disease known as *surra*, which attacked horses, mules, and cattle with cruel severity, and from an economic point of view was more disastrous than the plague. Such was the fatality of the disease, that within a year it dislocated the whole system of transport by animal draught throughout the colony, and it became necessary to substitute, at enormous cost, a mechanical system of transport by means of light railways, surface and overhead tramways, and automobiles. The consequences of the loss of animals affected not only the sugar industry, but every department of public and private activity, including the work of sanitation in both urban and rural districts.

An independent witness wrote of the courage with which this calamity was met in terms which I may well recite:—“When one knows the extraordinary courage with which planters, overseers, and labourers alike here have faced the plague, cattle disease, and torrential rains to which they have been exposed during the course of the last two years, and that planters have not shrunk from any sacrifice to maintain, and generally to maintain with intelligence, their estates; and when one knows and has seen the Indian labourers, owing to the dearth of draught animals, harnessing themselves to heavy carts and dragging them along the estate roads in the middle of the rains, willingly and cheerfully bearing all hardships to finish the crop, I cannot think that classes which show such spirit to maintain an industry, which is capable

of doing well in fair competition with the world, should be allowed to sink; and that no hand will be held out to them in their time of trial."

During this period of adversity the popular conscience was guided and controlled by the influence of the unofficial members of Council, aided by the leaders of the Indian community within their sphere of influence. And fortunately the colony had in its civil service a body of men steeped in the sympathy of common interests with the sentiments of the people. In the strain put on the departments every demand was met with patience and industry, many pressing emergencies with conspicuous ability and fertility of resource.

The Financial Strain.—It will easily be understood how gravely this series of untoward events affected the colony's finances. An account of the financial administration would be outside the scope of this address. But it is right to declare that the representatives of the community from first to last recognised that above all things it was necessary to maintain the colony's credit, and in its most straitened circumstances Mauritius never followed the example of other colonies by borrowing money to cover annual deficits in the public expenditure. The financial policy of the colony has been for many years controlled by the recurrence of hurricanes and their disastrous consequences. It has, therefore, steadily adhered to the sound system of meeting the ordinary expenditure of the year out of the revenue of the year, with a sufficient margin of surplus to form a fund available for a period of emergency or for public purposes, such as railway or harbour improvements. But, of course, exceptional measures had to be taken to meet the strain of a series of exceptional emergencies. The period of the financial year was changed to adapt it to the seasons of the sugar crop. The whole system of keeping, auditing, and rendering the colony accounts was recast, and a new procedure was adopted in submitting the estimates to the Council of Government, so that the unofficial members, a body including representatives of the principal mercantile firms well versed in accounts, might have more ample facilities for examining them.

Reorganisation.—Coincidentally, the principal departments of government, including the customs and the post-office, were the subject of inquiry by commission. On these committees the elected members of Council and other gentlemen outside of the official sphere gave their time and experience, so that the departments might at the same time be adapted to public exigencies and placed on a business footing. But above all, in view of the principal causes of the colony's misfortunes, the department of health and sanitation was made the subject of an exhaustive inquiry, having for its aim to adapt the department to the requirements of the new science of tropical medicine, and the demands made on it by the exigencies of malaria, plague, and *surra*.

An Appropriate Population.—I must count myself unfortunate if I have failed to show that the evolution of the Crown Colony of Mauritius has resulted in an appropriate population of European, African, and Asiatic descent, enjoying equal civil and political rights without distinction of origin or creed, appropriate to the development of the

resources of the soil, to the exigencies of commerce, to the high trust and function of administrative and legislative authority.

The Crown.—It was remarkable on how many occasions the influence of the Crown was manifested during the period of the colony's adversity. The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, her Majesty's demise, the accession and coronation of King Edward VII., revealed a sentiment of attachment to the Crown superior to all considerations of race or language.

Most opportune was the visit of their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales in uniting every section of the population in the sentiment of a common patriotism, and in confirming the constancy and courage of which their Royal Highnesses showed a generous appreciation. At the back of every man's mind in the Crown Colonies there is a sentiment of devotion to the Crown rooted in the faith that behind the things that are seen, heads of departments, judges and governors, there is an unseen power, the source of security of life, liberty of person, freedom of conscience, and absolute equality before the law for rich and poor of every race and creed. In Mauritius, as elsewhere, it was long known only by the name of Queen Victoria. The visit of their Royal Highnesses was accepted as a message of assurance that it had passed to King Edward VII., and the gracious sympathy with which the message was delivered will for ever associate it with the annual celebration of Empire Day, and all that Empire Day means, in the Crown Colony of Mauritius.

A VISIT TO BURMA.

By A. L. CROSS, F.R.C.I.

(*With Illustrations.*)

BURMA is now a very accessible country compared to what it was some years ago. The Bibby Line of steamers, starting from Liverpool and calling at Marseilles, make no stoppages except at Port Said and Colombo, and land their passengers at Rangoon within twenty-three days from Marseilles. There are of course other routes, such as by the P. and O. to Bombay, but this is the easiest and most comfortable, as there is no change of steamer.

After leaving Colombo, the capital of Ceylon, the route is along the western seaboard, and lovely views, especially in the winter season, when seas are calm, are obtained from the deck of the steamer. Such places as Point de Galle, Matura and Hambantota are distinctly visible with the aid of a good telescope. The southern highlands of Ceylon are also in view all day long. The lovely green of Ceylon is only surpassed by that of the Andaman Islands, which become visible on the third day out from Colombo. There are some six islands visible from the west, the principal being South Andaman, in which is Port Blair, the Indian Government convict settlement, Middle Andaman, and North