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FRANCE.

REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1891

ON THE

TRADE OF SAIGON.

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FRANCE.

SAIGON.

Consul Tremlett to the Marquis of Salisbury.

My Lord,

Saigon, March 31, 1892.

I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship, enclosed herewith, my Annual Report on the Trade, Commerce, and Navigation of Saigon for the year 1891.

I have, &c.

(Signed) CHAS. F. TREMLETT.

*Report on the Trade and Commerce of Saigon and Indo-China
for the Year 1891.*

ABSTRACT of Contents.

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Tonkin.

It is frequently stated that the country is pacified, but the Political almost daily reports of collisions between natives and the police situation. and soldiery do not seem to bear this out.

A new feature in business has come to notice this season. Grain. The crop of Cochin-China being exhausted, Saigon and Singapore merchants have supplied themselves with grain from Haiphong through the medium of the former port.

(1318)

Annam.

As usual, there is not much to remark regarding this kingdom. It is away from the scene of difficulties, and so long as the court of Hue is submissive little will be heard of it.

Cambodia.

Affairs in this country are quiet enough for the present, but there remains to it but a shadow of independence. Si Votha, the King's brother, who has been at the head of sundry insurrectionary movements, is reported dead, but the report lacks confirmation so far.

Cochin-China.

A review of the trade of this colony shows no unusual feature beyond that the rice crop of 1890-91 was a short one, and business suddenly almost entirely ceased in October.

Regarding the crop now being harvested, nothing certain can be said of it as a whole as yet, the out-turn in the western districts being expected to be very heavy, while to the east and north it will be much the contrary.

This colony has not escaped the effects of the general depression experienced in all parts of the commercial world, but no financial disasters have ensued.

Exports:
Rice.

The export, as will appear from the following statement, amounted to 6,298,600 piculs, equal to 370,000 tons, being 2,218,200 piculs, or 130,500 tons, less than in 1890. The average price for "cargo" may be stated as 1 dol. 84 c. per picul, equal to 4s. 5½d. per cwt., first cost in gunnies, and the total value sums up as follows:—

	Quantity.	Per Picul.	Currency.	Per Picul.	Sterling.
	Piculs.	Dollars.	Dollars.	s. d.	£
White ..	1,686,381	2½	4,165,958	3 0	624,900
Cargo ..	3,260,980	1·84	6,000,166	3 0	900,000
Paddy ..	1,371,259	1·41	699,342	3 0	104,900
Total ..	6,298,600		10,865,461		1,629,800

STATEMENT of Exports of Rice from Saigon during 1891.

Countries.	Ports.	Quantity.		Total.
		Piculs.		Piculs.
China	Hong-Kong .. ..	..	..	3,988,500
Tonkin	Haiphong .. ..	..	..	7,500
Philippines ..	Manila	866,600	}	1,128,500
	Iloilo	178,300		
	Cebu	85,600		
Straits	Singapore .. ..	..	..	672,900
Java	Sourabaya .. ..	..	..	12,900
British Columbia ..	Victoria .. ..	..	..	21,900
Réunion .. ..	.. ..	..	..	18,800
Japan	Yokohama .. ..	..	..	14,700
Europe	For ord ers .. ..	..	..	490,100
Total .. ..	.. ..	..	..	6,298,600

Values remained at fairly high figures throughout the year, with much fluctuation, the lowest quotation for cargo rice being 1 dol. 53 c. in January, and the highest 2 dol. 25 c. in the following December; but the bulk of the season's business was done between March and September, at prices ranging from 1 dol. 65 c. to 1 dol. 95 c., equal to from 4s. 1d. to 4s. 11d. per cwt.

COMPARATIVE Statement of Rice Exports.

Year.	Quantity.		Value.	
	Piculs.	Tons.	Currency.	Sterling.
1886	7,895,800	470,000	Dollars. 13,352,000	£ 2,215,000
1887	7,936,000	474,000	10,174,000	1,611,000
1888	8,379,100	500,000	11,826,000	1,938,000
1889	4,691,500	280,000	8,195,000	1,442,000
1890	8,517,000	507,000	11,150,000	1,719,000
1891	6,298,600	370,000	10,865,000	1,630,000

Receipts from gambouge do not alter materially, and are un- Gambouge. important in any case—400 piculs, value 6,270 dol.

The cultivation of sugar by Europeans has been entirely Sugar. abandoned, and the production is limited to native qualities, of which little or none is sent out of the country.

The greater part of the export of silk is of that brought here Silk. from Annam and Cambodia; Europeans have dropped it—1,139 piculs, value 341,700 dol.

Cotton is always in demand for China and Japan, but the pro- Cotton. ducton remains stationary—29,000 piculs, value 145,000 dol.

In hides there is nothing unusual to report—11,400 piculs, Hides value 155,400 dol.

Horns.	In horns there is nothing unusual to report—3,211 piculs, value 80,000 dol.
Fish.	Fish continues to be a comparatively important item of export—201,000 piculs, value 1,200,000 dol.
Pepper.	Pepper remains, as always, a difficult matter to deal with successfully—9,500 piculs, value 162,000 dol.
Salt.	Less attention seems to have been given to salt latterly—62,245 piculs, value 10,000 dol.
Isinglass.	Isinglass is much as usual—export 362 piculs, value 55,000 dol.
Coprah.	In coprah business is steadily increasing—export 37,250 piculs, value 149,000 dol.
Cardamons.	Of cardamons the export is 210 piculs, value 20,000 dol.
Wood.	Of wood the export is 9,750 piculs, value 29,250 dol.
Rice flour.	Of rice flour the export is 490,975 piculs, value 245,000 dol.
Beans.	Of beans the export is 15,000 piculs, value 45,000 dol.
Pigs.	Of pigs the export is 4,800 piculs, value 48,000 dol.
Imports: Piece-goods.	The import of piece-goods has very seriously diminished again, owing, as fully advised in former reports, to the excessive duties levied upon foreign manufactures; nor has the deficit been supplied, except very partially, by French goods. No statistics can be had for months.
Coals.	The arrivals of coals to private hands were as follows:—

From—	Tons.	Selling Price per Ton.	
		Currency.	Sterling.
		Dollars.	£ s.
Cardiff	8,371	14	2 3
Japan	7,066	9	1 10

Wines and spirits.	The consumption of wines and spirits increases if anything, and this seems about the only branch of trade in the colony that does not show signs of depression.
Cement.	A fair quantity of cement has been imported, but the cessation of public works to a great extent has greatly diminished sales.
Petroleum.	The arrivals of petroleum have been heavy. The two towns of Saigon and Cholon continue to be lighted in this manner. Gas would not, in all probability, pay the projector, and several propositions to instal electric light have come to naught. 298,548 cases, value 686,660 dol. retail.
Exchange, banking, &c.	The feature to note in exchange is its continued downward tendency as regards sterling. Rates have ranged as under:—

		Rate.	
		From—	To—
London bank bills ..	d/d ..	3s. 5d.	3s. 1d.
" docty. " ..	3 months ..	3s. 6d.	3s. 1½d.
Hong-Kong bank bills	d/d ..	1% discount	1% premium
" docty. "	15 days ..	8% discount	1½% discount
Singapore bank bills	d/d ..	1% premium	Par
" docty. "	30 days ..	2% discount	1½% discount
Manila " "	30 day ..	5% premium	1% premium

The official dollar rate closes at 3 fr. 80 c.

Of banks are established here—the Banque de l'Indo-Chine, Banks. with branches at Pnumpenh and Haiphong, which issues notes of 100 dol., 20 dol., and 5 dol.; and agencies of the Hong-Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, Limited; the New Oriental Bank Corporation, Limited; the Chartered Bank of India, Australia, and China; the Chartered Mercantile Bank of India, London, and China.

The imports of coin were 3,802,750 dol.; exports, 558,717 dol. Specie.

By the following tables it will be seen that in all 322 trading Shipping and vessels, aggregating 315,445 tons, cleared from this port, of which navigation. number 147, of 159,321 tons register, were British, or about one-half the tonnage employed. Germany supplied the great majority of the remainder.

The steamers of the Messageries Maritimes should not be left out of count altogether, but the import and export by that line is by no means shown by the tonnage.

The Compagnie Nationale is for Government purposes chiefly, but considerable quantities of rice are exported by its steamers.

The one boat of the Compagnie Nantaise contributes little or nothing to the trade.

The following are the shipping totals up to 477 vessels, of 548,110 tons:—

Nationality.	Steam.		Sailing.		Total.	
	Number of Vessels.	Tons.	Number of Vessels.	Tons.	Number of Vessels.	Tons.
American ...	...	...	1	1,503	1	1,503
British ...	143	154,262	4	6,069	147	160,321
Dutch ...	10	13,065	...	...	10	13,065
French ...	1	471	3	2,359	4	2,830
German ...	131	120,889	1	623	132	121,512
Japanese ...	1	1,237	...	...	1	1,237
Norwegian ...	6	4,904	...	...	6	4,904
Spanish ...	21	11,083	...	...	21	11,083
Total ...	313	305,891	9	8,554	322	315,445
Mess. Maritimes ...	118	171,728	...	...	118	171,728
Cie. Nationale ...	20	58,244	...	...	20	58,244
" Nantaise ...	17	4,693	...	...	17	4,693
Grand total ...	468	538,568	9	8,554	477	548,110

STATEMENT of British Shipping Entered.

Vessels.	Number of Vessels.	Tonnage.	Crews.
Steam	143	154,252	5,707
Sailing	4	5,069	100.
Total	147	159,321	5,807

Freights.

As a whole, freights during the year were not over remunerative, say an average of 12 c. to Hong-Kong, 22 c. to Manila, and 10 c. to Singapore.

Year.	Steam.		Sailing.		Total.		Total Number of Crews.
	Number of Vessels.	Tons.	Number of Vessels.	Tons.	Number of Vessels.	Tons.	
1886	200	230,680	4	3,718	204	234,398	7,398
1887	190	230,062	2	2,349	192	232,411	7,028
1888	172	196,800	7	9,888	179	206,688	7,975
1889	105	120,918	9	11,749	114	132,667	4,303
1890	150	180,541	4	6,523	154	187,064	6,088
1891	143	154,252	4	5,069	147	159,321	5,807

General.

Population.

The city of Saigon is now said to contain 17,000 inhabitants, classed as under. There has been little change in the number of inhabitants during several years:—

DESIGNATION of Nationalities.

	Number.
Europeans—	
French	1,753
Foreign	207
Asiatics—	
Indo-French subjects	144
Annamites	6,663
Cambodians	18
Chinese	7,671
Japanese	21
Tagals	51
Malays	329
Indians	387
Total	17,235

Public Works.

New streets
Coral bank.
Post and
telegraph;

New streets are being opened in various quarters.
The coral bank has not yet been destroyed.

The new building of the "Post and Telegraph" is completed, and is a magnificent structure. It is not yet occupied, for some reason unexplained.

The stone quays in face of the city have been extended, and an iron pile wharf enables large steamers to discharge cargoes with despatch. For loading, however, it is inconvenient. Telephonic communication in the town and with Cholon is receiving more attention, but the cost is exorbitant.

POPULATION—COLONIAL.

	Number.
1888	1,844,970
1889	1,864,214
1890	1,864,214
1891	2,034,453

The out-turn from the Hongay mines has, up to the present, gone to Hong-Kong, except so far as it has been used by the steamers of the Messageries Maritimes that call at Haiphong. At the former port trials have been made and most favourable reports given. The coal has not yet appeared in this market.

Great attention is given to this region, and very flattering reports are given of its productiveness, both as regards agriculture and minerals, but these reports seem to lack foundation, and are in direct variance with the accounts given by actual travellers, who pronounce the country sterile and ill populated. The rapids of the Meikong, although reported practicable, have not yet been passed in a manner to be of any service to commerce, and land transit round them would be so costly as to absorb all chance of profit.

The subject of tariff has been thoroughly entered into in previous reports, and there is nothing new to say about it. Its requirements are an insupportable burden is not to be denied.

The duties upon foreign piece-goods are to be increased still again at the close of the year.

Petitions from the Chinese and Indian merchants, against the formalities exacted by the customs, were presented by the Chamber of Commerce to the Administration, to the effect that it is already too much to pay duties out of all proportion to the value of the merchandise imported, without being liable to fines for omissions or errors in formalities, often enough inevitable.

In 1888 this colony was obliged to pay toward the expenses of Tonkin 11,711,000 fr., reduced in 1891 to 8,000,000 fr., and for 1892 to 6,500,000 fr. In October, 1891, the Colonial Council, through its president, telegraphed to the colony's deputy at Paris that the tariff being prohibitive, the receipts of the customs were decreasing and smuggling increasing; that, in consequence, expenses were increasing, and demanded the reduction of the contingent to 5,000,000 fr. No satisfactory reply having been received, the Council resolved on November 23, followed by the Municipal Council, and ten days later by that of the Chamber of Commerce.

The Municipal Council was at once replaced by a Municipal Commission appointed by the Governor. The resigning members of the Colonial Council allowed themselves to be re-elected some months after, and the Chamber of Commerce will be reconstructed.

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