

"THE UNION MESSENGER"

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VIOLENT STORM.

NEVIS severely hit.

THURSDAY and Friday, 28th and 29th, ultimo, will be well remembered by the inhabitants of St. Kitts-Nevis as days of losses in property and goods, devastation in town and country districts, a complete stoppage of vehicular traffic in some sections, wholesale destruction to the telephone, accompanied by anxiety and a sudden arrest of the water supply. There are not many alive who have witnessed a greater flow of water passing over the ghauts and ravines, at Basseterre, Old Road and Gingerland, in particular, where the volume of water has been exceeded only by the flood of 1880. No lives have been lost at St. Kitts, but at Nevis, the casualty was four.

From Wednesday evening, the downpour of rain was marked. During the early hours of Thursday, the wind had reached storm velocity, numerous fences were razed to the ground, large trees uprooted, destroying walls and smaller houses in their wake. In consequence, all business was suspended, as offices and business places were compelled to keep their doors closed. During the late hours of Thursday and the early ones of Friday, the islands

witnessed the heaviest downpour of rain for the past forty years.

* * *

Basseterre reports the loss of many small houses, several others damaged from falling trees and mud and sand, several feet deep in cellars and on first floors of dwelling houses and business premises. The residents of College Street and the adjacent Ghauts have had an awful experience, in many instances these people having to take refuge elsewhere after the water had entered their top floors. The chapel of the Plymouth Brethren was actually lifted off its pillars and rested about one hundred yards away in Central Street. The sidewalks cannot be distinguished from the streets, the sand, in some places, reaching several feet above the original level. The Bay Front has become a mass of sand, debris and wreckage, the water front receding many yards to accommodate these. In the "Circle" and "Pit" of the London Electric Theatre on the Bay Front, all the chairs and seats were completely covered by water. The Basseterre Sugar Factory lost an engine house and their floors have been covered with mud and sand. The Willys-Knight from "Alfred Garage" abandoned in College Street, was found a total wreck on the Bay Front, while of its passengers, Mr. Birch, Cashier at the Colonial Bank, was rescued from College Street in a helpless condition. Nearly all the lighters have been destroyed. The St. Martin "Surprise" was driven ashore opposite the Botanical Gardens. The Dutch Schooner, "Robert C. Harris" broke from its moorings, and succeeded in reaching St. Martin only to become a wreck; all the passengers and crew were, however saved. The sloop "Edith Amy" of Anguilla sank after drifting to sea, with the loss of five of its crew of eight. Nothing has been heard of the "Good Hope" the Anguilla mail, which had just arrived in port and the "Cedar Branch," also belonging to Anguilla is reported lost with four men, the Captain alone, who was ashore, being saved.

We concur in the general opinion that the damage, loss and anxiety occasioned by College Street Ghaut in particular, are the result of past neglect by the Government. College Street Wall, originally built about ten feet above street level, just prior

to this catastrophe was, in some parts, less than four feet high. In the days of Mr. Plageman as Superintendent of Public Works, no amount of sand was allowed to accumulate in this street. In fact, every year, before the "Hurricane Season," College Street was cleared of all sand. We do not know what excuse the Government will offer for this negligence, but we are sure they will find one. In the meantime, who will compensate the residents of Basseterre and particularly the property-owners of College Street for the losses sustained through this negligence. It is certain that if the street was not partly filled up with sand, there would have been room for the volume of water to pass without the damage which it caused to properties and the anxiety to residents. Many thousands of pounds will have to be spent to clean Basseterre of sand and debris alone and after this is done, if the same amount of rain should fall, the damage, anxiety and expense may all be repeated and the danger will still remain. Probably, only when the results of such neglect fall on the ones responsible, will the right attitude and care be observed. In 1880, the Government were given a fair demonstration of this danger, and in 1924, forty-four years hence, the same drama was nearly repeated, were it not for a merciful Providence calling a halt to the elements. The Government, as is its custom, will set about treating the *effect*, and, of course, this must be done in this instance, but we are prepared to give odds that no effort will be made to ascertain the *cause* of this volume of water. The officials concerned with this rotten state of affairs should bend their knees and pray to the gods for Crown Colony Rule which makes them *responsible* only to themselves and to officials thousands of miles away, who, by reason of distance *do not know* the condition and suffering of those who must suffer.

While dealing with Basseterre, we would draw the attention of the Government and the people to the number of trees, particularly coco-nut trees, in the town. We need not say a word about the danger of these trees, with the experience of the recent disturbance fresh in the minds of so many. Immediate steps should be taken to remove those which are likely to prove a menace to life and

property in case of a repetition of such weather.

One of the results of the disturbance was the breaking of the main pipe from the reservoir and the wasting of the water in store. Owing to several landslides and falling trees in the mountain, the main pipe track from the Old Road source has been broken in at least six places and in consequence, no water is being brought to refill the reservoir in Basseterre. The result is that Basseterre is without water and probably will be for another fortnight. The Basseterre Sugar Factory saved us from dire distress by connecting its private supply from Green Hill to the town water main. Our thanks and that of the Government are due to the Factory for this timely relief. During the interval of "no water", the people betook themselves to the use of *any* supply on which they could draw and the fountains in "The Square" and "The Circus" were dried in a few moments. We hope we will not be visited by an epidemic, such as dysentery.

Situate in Market Street, the monument in memory of Queen Victoria, The Good, was blown to the ground and telephone communication has been extensively interrupted.

* * *

Sandy Point, Old Road, Dieppe Bay—in fact all the out-districts—report losses of and damages to properties. At Sandy Point, the main wall to the bridge caved in exposing properties to the ravages of the water. Crab Hill and Fig Tree sections of the town suffered heaviest, small houses in particular becoming totally demolished. The streets also have been badly damaged, in some places, making it difficult and even impossible to pass or foot. At Old Road, the houses of Mary Liburd and Sophia Taylor were washed to the sea, while several others were landed in the main road, blocking traffic. Landslides occurred along Old Road Bay, making it impassable for vehicular traffic. All except foot communication, from beyond Old Road to Basseterre have to the present, had to be by way of the Dieppe Bay-Cayon route.

* * *

Nevis reports four persons killed, three by falling houses and one by drowning, eleven injured, ten of whom are in hospital and 315 dwelling houses destroyed. Police Stations, Churches and School-houses are being used for

refugees. The sailing boats "Renown", "Empress", the Government-owned "Venene" and the French schooner "Verdun", have been reported missing, while the "Crown" and "Nella" have been destroyed at New Castle. The telephone service has suffered and the roads have been badly damaged, in some places, blocking vehicle traffic around the island.

RELIEF WORK.

As soon as the rains had sufficiently abated, several officials, notably Dr. The Honourable C. H. Durrant, Chief Medical Officer and Inspector of Public Health; The Honourable G. C. Johnson, Treasurer; His Honour Mr. Justice Wigley; The Hon. D. H. Semper, Magistrate District "D"; Mr. George H. King, Postmaster; Mr. E. B. Blanchette, Chief Sanitary Officer; Station Sergeant A. A. Marsh; and later His Honour the Administrator accompanied by Mrs. Burdon, visited various sections of the town in an effort to ascertain the amount of damage done. On Saturday, gangs were employed to work on the principal streets. The Prison Authorities also assisted with several gangs, including one of untried prisoners, who volunteered for work. The work in Basseterre is being continued and in the other centres similar operations are being carried on. On Sunday, through the kindness of Captain Turner, the S/s "Chaudiere" of the R. M. S. P. Company took a party including His Honour the Administrator and several other officials to Nevis. Provisions & clothing were taken across to relieve the stricken people there.

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To the time of going to press, we have had no reports from Anguilla and the neighbouring Dutch and French islands, but from rumours, it seems as though the full force of the storm did not pass over them and that the damage was slight in comparison.

A Committee on Relief under the Chairmanship of His Honour Mr. Justice Wigley, has been formed.

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or BROKEN LENSES

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