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PORT DEFECTS.

Like the sailor's parrot, many of Penang's business men are doubtless perfect terrors to think, but it would be an advantage if they more frequently became articulate where their remarks could be recorded, and, emulating the example of Mr. Miles, whose able letter we published yesterday, gave the public the benefit of their thoughts. Opinion regarding the port's affairs appears to be unanimous that there is "something rotten in the state of Denmark," and it behoves anyone who has ideas that may help in the solution of our difficulties to give expression to them. We are glad to find one of our citizens with the courage of his convictions, and have not the least doubt that his candid criticisms will produce salutary results. Mr. Miles rightly protests against our Harbour Board being placed under the yoke of Mr. Nicholson; but that is a danger which our local members ineffectually tried to ward off when the Bill was before the Legislative Council. Mr Miles may be correct in his estimate of Mr. Nicholson's abilities. Of that others are more competent than ourselves to judge. But we know that he will be more than human if he can approach Penang's problems uninfluenced by Singaporean prepossessions. From all we have









heard there is a good deal of ordinary humanity about Mr. Nicholson. Mr. Miles points out faults of personnel, organization and equipment that will have to be remedied if the port is to cope properly with the business that is pouring in upon us.




The congestion of the past few weeks has been of an acute character, and it was contributed to by causes of a special nature, for which, by the bye, the merchants themselves are not free of blame. But it is an error to imagine that matters had been proceeding smoothly before the blockade of colliers brought things to a climax and glaringly exposed the deficiencies of the present system. For the last two or three years, mine and estate managers and others in the F.M.S. have had cause to complain of the irritating delays in the transit of coal, machinery and supplies via Prai. The starting of a night service of coal trains has served to provide the mines with fuel sufficient for their immediate requirements; but, from all we can hear, heavy traffic is likely to continue over the line. At least half a dozen big tin dredges are coming out for the Kinta mines and when the promised new rolling stock arrives it will not be kept idle. We understand a very satisfactory reply has been received by the Kinta Chamber of Mines from the General Manager of the F.M.S. Railways respecting the provision of more rolling stock. And in this connection we are glad to exculpate Mr. Anthony from blame for the present paucity of trucks, &c. But for the parsimonious and ill-judged interference of high

Government officials who, unfortunately, had power to vary his orders, we understand, that the necessary rolling stock would




long ago have arrived in this country. As an expert and practical railway man Mr. Anthony looked ahead and in good time advised the placing of orders sufficient to keep pace with the estimate he had formed of the country's trade expansion. He was over-ruled, and the blame for what has since happened ought to be put on the right shoulders. Strikes at home and the archaic methods of the Crown Agents account for some of the difficulties that have cropped up to delay the delivery of rolling stock now on order. But if Mr. Anthony's advice had been adopted in the first place and his requisitions had not been emasculated, the dearth of rolling stock would not have been so serious a factor in producing the present unhappy situation.

In any event, we have not the slightest doubt the Railway Department, if given a fair chance, will work out their own deliverance in a more rapid and satisfactory fashion than will the Penang port authorities in dealing with their own particular troubles. No one can avoid perceiving that an early improvement is needed in the methods and system of dealing with cargo destined for the F. M. S. Common sense would suggest that a piece of machinery, say, intended for Ipoh would be transferred from the steamer with all possible convenience and speed direct across to the train at Prai. Not so. It is unnecessary to go into details at the present moment. Another time we may be inclined to devote a few columns to a full descriptive account of a piece of merchandise's vicissitudes and travels in the harbour, relating how it was lightered and lifted, checked and warehoused, dragged and dumped hither and thither, telephoned and telegraphed about, and finally towed across to Prai there to undergo more exasperating delays. Without indulging in any exaggeration, we are assured that it is possible to load goods at Liverpool and land them in New York in a shorter time and with less handling than frequently occurs in the case of F.M.S. freight arriving in this port. Such a state of affairs cannot be tolerated, and




in view of the rapid expansion of trade which will come with the development of our northern hinterland, it is imperative that radical changes should be made without delay. The Chamber of Commerce, it is gratifying to know, has awakened to a realization that something should be done and that a policy of drift must end. This afternoon its Committee, together with a number of prominent citizens invited to meet them, will deliberate on what steps they consider ought to be taken to improve matters. We await with some interest the result of their deliberations.



Mr. C. B. Mills, Revenue Auditor, Perak, has returned from leave. He was in town on Friday.


Mr. J. Brown, Superintendent, F.M.S., Government Printing Office, is proceeding on furlough on 14th instant.

2,198 coolies arrived by the s.s. *Elavana* to-day. 517 go to Pulau Jerejak for quarantine. The balance go on to Port Swettenham.



The Port Swettenham Recreation Club has received a grant of \$1,000 from the Selangor Government. The Club is established for the benefit of the Government clerks in the Railway, Marine and Customs Departments.

Mr. William Hay of Kuala Kubu, the well known sportsman, has again been awarded a large sum of money by the Selangor Government. As reported three weeks ago, Mr. Hay saved many rubber estates in the Kuala Selangor District from the ravages caused by a herd of elephants. He has destroyed altogether 10 full-grown elephants.



Mr. R. L. Cuscaden, Assistant Superintendent of Police, prosecuted a Kling named Nur Mohamed, before Mr. G. Muller this morning, for cruelty to a sheep. Giving evidence Mr. Cuscaden said he was in his quarters yesterday afternoon and he saw the defendant driving a flock of some fifty sheep which had been landed from a vessel in the harbour. One of these which was in the rear had one leg broken, and was unable to keep up with the others. The defendant pushed it and, as it fell, he struck it with a stick. Witnesses could not bear this and had him arrested. The defendant, witness added, could have engaged a cart which

could easily have been secured at the jetty.
Defendant pleaded guilty and was
fined \$5.

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