

N.B.—The matter to be read is marked off by thick lines into sections, each of which is to occupy a minute, and also by thinner lines into smaller sections, each containing the number of words to be read in twelve seconds.

# PASSAGE FOR DICTATION.

[The passage takes 8 minutes.]

The twenty-third of March, 1903, will long be remembered in the history of the remote West Indian Colony of Trinidad. It witnessed one of those terrible struggles that from time to time take place between the people and their rulers. It opened with the prospect of a constitutional and well organized struggle for the right of public entry to the Council Chamber during the proceedings of the Legislative Council, and ended in violence and incendiarism on the one side and in bloodshed on the other. For nearly an hour the mob stoned the whole building, which includes the Law Courts and many other Government offices, and then set it on fire.

- 1 The proceedings of this memorable day began about eleven o'clock, when the Committee of the Ratepayers' Association presented themselves at the door of the Council Chamber, and demanded admission without tickets. They were refused, and after the display of just sufficient force to constitute an assault they retired to hold a meeting in the adjoining square. At noon the proceedings of the Council began in the presence of about thirty persons, some of them officials, who had obtained tickets. One of the Councillors immediately called attention to the illegality of the notice excluding the public, and, having failed to carry his motion for the adjournment of the House, retired from the Council. Another member followed his example. Meanwhile the crowd outside were engaged, some in holding a meeting and discussing plans for future action, others in marching round the building, singing the National Anthem and beating drums and tins so loudly as frequently to disturb the proceedings of the Council. At one stage a van drove up with the Council's luncheon, and the driver called out to the crowd to "make way for the Governor's luncheon." This provoked the first real act of violence. The now excited mob declared that if there was to be no water for them there should be no food for the Governor, and they took possession of the contents of the van, and scattered them in every direction, breaking every plate and dish. Soon after they took possession of the Governor's carriage, smashed it to pieces, and threw the unbreakable portions into the sea. They then stoned the building, breaking every window, and driving the clerks out of the lower storey. The members of Council sheltered themselves as best they could in the Council Room in the upper storey, not daring to come out and face the anger of the mob. The lower storey being vacated and unprotected, the mob entered unmolested, made piles of paper and broken chairs and shelves, and set them on fire. The building soon was ablaze, and the Governor and Councillors escaped as best they could, some protected by bodies of police, the majority unprotected. In an hour or two the building was in ruins, although the fire-brigade station is immediately opposite. The police barrack on the other side of the building also caught fire from the ejected sparks, but the fire did not extend beyond the tower.
- 4 The next serious stage in the events of the day was the order to the police to charge the crowd, which was not given until the building was on fire. The police with shot and bayonet quickly dispersed the crowd, killing eighteen and wounding about forty. Some of the flying crowd rushed into or broke into three large stores, evidently for the purpose of securing guns, of which they are said to have obtained some. Fortunately at this juncture a body of marines was landed from His Majesty's ship "Pallas," which had been lying in the harbour since the Venezuelan blockades; and the rioters seeing this ceased their looting and dispersed. When the rioting began the leaders made several attempts to check the violence, but the mob was, as might have been expected, entirely beyond their control. Whether the attack of the mob was a well-organized attempt to inflict corporal punishment on certain members of Council, or whether one step merely led on to the next, will probably never be known.

- 6 The circumstances that led up to these deeds of violence are connected with the water-supply of Port of Spain. Some of them are of long duration, others are of comparatively recent occurrence. The water-supply has for many years been insufficient for the requirements of the largely increased population, and in the dry season has had to be cut off for several hours during the day. Steps had been taken to remedy this, and a sum of £57,000 had been expended in obtaining an additional supply. As soon as the supply from the new sources had been connected energetic measures were adopted to prevent waste. Some steps were undoubtedly necessary, but the people strongly objected to their pipes being cut. The supply of water for flushing the drains was discontinued, and the Town Commissioners protested against this on account of the danger to the public health. These measures, together with certain rumours as to the failure of the wells to give the quantity expected, rightly or wrongly, created an impression that the money spent in endeavouring to obtain the additional supply had been wasted. Two other features lent acuteness to this impression—viz., the very high insurance rates and the introduction of the sewerage system into the town. After the big fire of 1895 the insurance rates (already 15s. to 20s. per £100) were raised 50 per cent.; after the fire of last year these were again raised 25 per cent. Special efforts were made to remove the last 25 per cent., and on the assurance by the Governor that a good supply was forthcoming the insurance companies agreed to suspend it for six months. The period of suspension will expire on the eighteenth of April, and this explains the anxiety displayed by the Chamber of Commerce for a commission of inquiry. This was purely a monetary question. On the other hand, those interested in the health of the town welcomed the introduction of the sewerage system, but viewed with anxiety the possibility of the water-supply being cut off for several hours a day.