

THE PALLAGAMA EXPERIMENTAL PLANTATION, IN NORTH-EAST CEYLON.

We are wrong perhaps in calling it an "experimental" plantation; for the managing proprietor, Capt. Gordon Reeves, and his colleagues are as much assured of success as if they were investing their capital in any of the old, well-established districts instead of pioneering many miles beyond the recognised limits of our planting zone. Nevertheless, when we learn that in the Pallagama region, well developed coconut palms begin to bear fruit in five years, that fine coffee and cacao shrubs of 2½ to 3 years of age are found in the native gardens, while jaks, tamarinds and arecas are seen to flourish, it must be confessed that Capt. Reeves did not go into "Pallagama" without sufficient experience to warrant his confidence in its future. In the first place there can be no question as to the soil—that is of a quality only rarely to be equalled in Ceylon. "But what about wind?" has been a question often put by men who have heard of, or experienced, what that enemy of planters can do in the Laggala region. It is reassuring therefore to learn on good authority that the wind which sometimes tears everything before it in the height of the monsoon on the upper Laggala slopes, and is so strong on the patanas, that coolies cannot travel with loads (this is not the Pallagama outlet!) dwindles to a light, pleasant breeze long before the altitude of 600 feet above sea-level is reached, while lower down it is most heartily welcomed as a relief to a high temperature. As to wind at Pallagama, the character of the forest at once showed the professional planter there was no risk. But then there was the inevitable difficulty about "labour" foretold; but so far, we are assured, there has been an abundance of village labour available and that a good deal of work is being done, may be judged from the expectation that 300 acres will be planted with Coconuts, Liberian Coffee and Cacao, before the close of the year. All the nurseries are doing exceedingly well, although there is some trouble with elephants which rather superabound in the neighbourhood. The only drawback we can think of is the risk of drought; but that risk is not greater on Pallagama than it is in Dumbara which is a rich and prosperous planting valley. Then as to opening an outlet, the official promise is being kept and bridges are being put in sufficient to carry a heavy timber traffic. Mr. Ross-Wright, who recently took charge of Pallagama, is recognised by his Directors as the right man in the right place, his familiarity with Sinhalese as well as Tamil labour gained at Labugama, giving him a special advantage.

There can be little doubt, therefore, that Pallagama, as an established plantation and as the nucleus of a Planting District, will shortly have to be added to the long roll of divisions rescued from unprofitable jungle in Ceylon through the enterprise of European Colonists. The fate of pioneers has become almost proverbial; but the proverb is far more applicable to the opening of a new country altogether than of a new district in an established Colony. The pioneers in Dimbula Fe'ix, in the new Valley of Dikoya, or in the Maskeliya Wilderness, or even in distant Uva, by no means made a loss: some of them continue to own the valuable properties they pioneered twenty-five to thirty years ago. And in the case of Pallagama we sincerely hope that Capt. Gordon Reeves may be richly rewarded for his enterprise, while his supporters share in that prosperity according to the risk they have run by investing their capital.

PLANTING IN NYASSALAND:

B. C. AFRICA.

Mr. Edmund Woodhouse is certainly very enterprising—he is ready to go anywhere on any mission, within reason, to any region within the tropics! He advertises his willingness to explore and report on land suitable for coffee-planting purposes in the Shire Highlands. Mr. Woodhouse is a very experienced coffee-planter and if our correspondent "£5,000" and two or three friends chose to form a Syndicate to employ Mr. Woodhouse, we feel sure they would get the worth of their money in reliable and valuable information, indispensable to any intending investors.

FREE GRANTS OF LAND IN NORTH BORNEO.

The British North Borneo Company advertise through their Agents in Ceylon the offer of free grants of land to young men with a capital of £2,000 and upwards, for the cultivation of coffee, cinchona, coconuts in their territory. The land offered is available up to an altitude of 10,000 feet, and 500 acres is mentioned as the extent to be given to each applicant. This ought to be a capital chance for enterprising youngmen with the means at their disposal.

THE INTRODUCTION OF GAS ENGINES TO CEYLON.

We notice an advertisement in the *Ceylon Observer* giving some of the advantages of using gas engines in place of steam. These advantages are clearly stated in the advertisement, and they are such as commend gas as a motive power, somewhat more preferable than steam, especially for engines of moderate power. In places where a supply of gas may be had we have noticed these engines are fast supplanting steam as both more economical and handy. Colombo has been till recently behind hand in this respect, because we believe the opinion was prevalent that with gas at the price it is, both steam and coolly labour were much cheaper, and the experience and knowledge of steam power prevented experimenting with a motive power about which conflicting statements were made regarding the reliability of the engine designed to apply it. It was better to bear with what was known than to perhaps get involved in the worse unknown, which is better expressed in the common saying, that it might be a case of "jumping from the frying-pan into the fire." This can now no longer be said of Colombo for the gas engine has been imported and tested and has been found to fulfil all that is claimed for it. This test has proved that instead of constant care and concern attaching to the correct handling of steam engines by native attendants, the gas engine may safely be left in charge of any person with a quarter-of-an-hour's instruction. No special attendant is necessary. We have put this to the test. As our readers already know our machinery in the *Tropical Agriculturist* and *Observer* office has been driven by a gas engine for some time, and we have had our machinemen acting in the capacity of engine-drivers ever since its introduction. This they have done with no hindrance to their work or any trouble as to handling the engine.

(On considering the advisability of introducing a motive power into our office other than coolly labour, we entered into the cost as compared with hand power. We have always considered steam to be objectionable in our office, and for many years looked forward to the day when water power or gas could be utilised. Unfortunately, the Water Supply