

PLANTING NOTES FROM KELE- BOKKA, CEYLON.

October 6.

The weather for the last two months has been very wet here and nearly all the estates in the district is, I believe, much shorter in their tea than in the corresponding months of last year. The flush seemed to collapse altogether and three or four days' plucking a week was sufficient to keep it in hand. An improvement has now set in, in both flush and weather, and there is every indication of the beginning of the N. E. monsoon setting in. Tea below 2,000 feet elevation has flushed well I hear during August and September. In only the higher elevations has there been a serious diminution. There is one thing I am struck with in this district and that is that coolies are settled and we have not that continual restlessness and moving about so common in most other districts. There are head kanganis who have been on estates here for 20 and 30 years and on this particular one for over 40 years! Labour is recruited direct from the Coast as it should be and there is very little here of that vile and pernicious system of granting "tandus." Advances too are very low; in short the district is an example and shining light to all others.

Mr. H. Bressay of Nilloomally is expected to arrive from home in the district with his bride on 1st prox. and will be welcomed by a large circle of friends. On handing over then to Mr. Bressay, Mr. H. L. Blacklaw will take charge of Dangkande, Batotta, the former Superintendent, Mr. J. S. Nicolls, having left to take up an appointment in Wynaad.

BLENDING AND ESTATE MARKS.

The question raised with reference to the use of the names of estates in our London Letter is a singular one. We do not know how it may be viewed by our planting and mercantile community. For ourselves we can only discuss it in the light that outsiders must regard it. Put into few words the point at issue thus resolves itself. Is it legitimate that teas grown on other estates should be scheduled by their purchaser by the name of some particular garden of which he may be the owner? We are told that the practice of doing this is not an uncommon one, and that it has been acknowledged to have prevailed from the days when coffee was king. It must be evident that, presuming teas so scheduled to come again into the market, their repurchaser must buy under a false impression as to the locality of their growth. This fact should, we think, satisfy us that the practice cannot be morally defended. The argument on the other side is that the purchaser of such outside tea, being himself an estate owner, is warranted in labelling such teas as being shipped from his estate. But in reply to this it must be apparent that such labelling would convey to ninety-nine out of every hundred buyers, the belief that the tea was the production of the estate, the name of which had been so employed. Can this conclusion be contested? We should say that it cannot. And if it cannot be, the practice, as it seems to us, must stand condemned. For, manifestly the repurchaser does not get the article he imagines himself to be buying.

We do not know how far this alleged practice prevails among estate proprietors; but if it be at all common, it must follow as of course that a considerable amount of Ceylon tea is being made to "sail (through the markets) under false colours." We cannot think that this can be desirable; nor

can we bring ourselves to believe that the practice is any but a most exceptional one. Purchasers no doubt sometimes place considerable reliance as to the quality of the teas they buy, upon the name of the estate under which they are sold. We might instance many of such estates, the names of which at the present moment, would probably add a penny of value to their produce. It is to be believed that this addition would not be paid were it known that the tea was not absolutely grown upon the estate itself. It might be the case, of course, as it probably in most instances is, that the teas so vended are fully up to the standard of quality grown upon the sponsor estate. It would scarcely serve the purpose of any proprietor to godfather teas of inferior quality to those by which he had made and sought to retain his reputation. It is upon such a basis, no doubt, that the practice we have referred to would be defended. But on the other hand, it must be apparent that it may be possible by such a course to build up a false reputation. It can be conceived that by purchasing teas of a high class and packing them under the name of an as yet unknown garden, the production of this may be given a repute which, if it stood on its own merits alone, would not be deserved. Hence it must be manifest that the course indicated may be made to serve an improper if not absolutely dishonest purpose. It would have seemed to us, therefore, that it must be impossible of defence. And yet we are told that it has been both excused and defended by at least some men of standing among our estate proprietors. We are surprised to learn that such is the case. Morally, in our view, the practice is not to be defended. Further, we doubt much if it could be demonstrated to be commercially wise or advantageous. It has been shown that a fictitious reputation might be built upon it. Now, although for a time this might prove commercially valuable, it must be certain that it could not be permanently maintained, and that the inequality of shipments that must ensue, must end in pulling down the reputation as fast as, or faster than, it had been achieved. However exceptional the practice may be, therefore, we trust it will be discontinued altogether.

COCONUT PROPERTY IN THE WESTERN PROVINCE, CEYLON.

Notwithstanding the present protracted drought and its consequences in reference to next year's crop, there can be no doubt of the very high estimation in which coconut property is held in the Western Province and the adjacent divisions of the North-Western Province. We hear it stated on good authority that Mr. Oliveira has made a very special bargain in his purchase of Waljapala coconut estate of 204 acres at a good deal less than Mr. Rickards had paid Mr. Cooke. A year ago it realized R77,500: the recent sale was at R62,500. In the interval Mr. Rickards had neglected the place and at last he had to make a sale. Hence the difference in price. But a coconut garden does not take any permanent harm from the neglect of a year or so, if justice is then done to it, and so the present proprietor can be congratulated on a really very good bargain. Then the Morapolla coconut garden near Henaratgoda purchased from Mr. Andrew de Silva by Mr. F. Phillips, covering 80 acres, has realized R30,000. Finally, Perth estate in the Panadura district, of 900 acres—575 of coconuts, 40 acres cinnamon and the rest forest-reserve—has been sold by representatives of K. Hurmusjee to a Syndicate for R110,000 which ought to be a bargain, only the