

DROUGHT AND DISTRESS IN TRAVANCORE:

NO PROPER MONSOON FOR THREE YEARS.

From a resident who dates Nagercoil, October 13th we have the following sad account of the state of things in South Travancore:—

"We are having a time of most severe drought here. No rain here for months—in fact we have not had a proper monsoon for three years, and now things have become very serious with us. Even drinking water is hard to be got. Relief works are being started and rice is being given out, at Government expense, to the poor. And unless rain comes in a few days, all hope of a harvest in February will be gone—which is the most serious matter of all."

NOTES FROM NORTH BORNEO.

(FORWARDED BY MR. W. D. GIBBON, KANDY.)

SANDAKAN, Sept. 24th.—Mr. Sarell, late of Nillomally, has reached Kudat and is residing there with the resident Mr. Little for a few days, before taking up his appointment at Taritapan estate. The weather is pretty warm at present, but he thinks everyone looks healthy, and the scenery is lovely. The Bungalows are most comfortable; floors well raised from ground.

Very good news has been received at Sandakan from London about tobacco. New Companies are being formed. Men are wishing to send their sons with money to invest in North Borneo; but of course are handicapped by the few openings for creeps. A good year in tobacco is expected, and prices are likely to keep up.

Mr. Walker writes that Coconut planting is taking hold in Borneo, and trees planted so far, are equal to anything of their age in Ceylon which he attributes to the equal distribution of rain throughout the year.

NOTES BY THE WAY.

(By an old Coffee Planter.)

Dimbula, Oct. 15th.

How pleasant it is, after a number of years' absence to re-visit the scenes of one's earlier days in the Island, and to receive as I have done a most cordial reception from all and sundry of those still located in the old districts I have passed through. I will not weary you with long accounts, but may just remark that from Gampola on to Nawalapitiya it is amazing to see the expanse of healthy looking tea which has replaced the many sickly old coffee "Totams" which in by gone days kept up a continuously struggling existence. How long they may keep up without systematic manuring is, I confess, to me a rather stiff problem. Opinions differ much on this head, and even visiting agents appear anything but sagacious as to the benefit to be derived; but one thing I do know that without a suitable stimulant carefully applied there are numbers of estates that are bound to collapse from sheer poverty of soil already exhausted in the King Coffee days. Passing on through Kotmale it was pleasing to observe the astonishing area of promising tea where coffee of old held sway, and although perhaps results per acre may not compete with some other districts there is a very fair return and estimates generally are for the past year well realized. As you know the climate of Kotmale, although pretty wet, is very healthy, and now the planters there are enjoying a spell of fine weather, with good prospects. Here I may remark that taking the estates generally there is an absence of the eyesore of weeds to any great extent as used to be not uncommon in earlier times, and pruning is being evidently systematically carried on with good results.

Arriving at the "gap," by the short cut through Queerberry, where our much lamented friend Elder so long was in charge and who was so much respected all round—we look along this Dimbula district with surprise at the transformation from, first, the old expanse of unfelled jungle, then fields of fine coffee, afterwards rendered useless by the fall leaf disease, and now green and bright again with the new product, tea! All seems now hearty and healthy, although until lately the weather has been much against good flushes. Now the sun has reappeared and all are busy, and looking for good averages. May tea flourish and give returns approaching to the good old coffee king.

THE JAVA CINCHONA INDUSTRY.

Mr. J. A. Watering of the firm of D M & O Watering of Amsterdam cinchona and general produce merchants left for Java on Friday last, with the object of investigating the actual position of the cinchona industry in the Dutch Indies. It is thought that Mr. Watering's journey is connected with a scheme for forming a trust for regulating the supplies of Java cinchona bark. It is reported that the Government cinchona gardens in Java will be gradually given up, and ultimately limited to an experimental station. At present these gardens contain in the open ground 2,956,807 trees (of which 2,208,000 are Ladgers, 112,500 Officialis, and 634,000 Saccirubras) and in nurseries 725,000 shrubs, of which 300,000 are Ladgers and 425,000 Saccirubras.—*Chemist and Druggist*, Sept. 29.

THE COMING AMSTERDAM CINCHONA AUCTIONS.

The next Amsterdam cinchona sales will take place on October 4th. On that occasion 6,920 bales and 376 cases Java cinchona bark, weighing together about 603 tons will be offered. The average percentage of sulphate of quinine to the manufacturing barks is 4.93 and the barks represent a total weight of 22,835 kilos (641,360 oz) of sulphate of quinine; the pharmaceutical barks, of which the aggregate weight is 30½ tons represent 628 kilos (or about 2.04 per cent) of sulphate of quinine. Of the manufacturing barks about ½ ton contain 0.1 per cent; 2 tons 1.2 per cent; 27½ tons 2.3 per cent; 110½ tons 3.4 per cent; 176 tons 4.5 per cent; 146 tons 5.6 per cent; 49 tons 6.7 per cent; 41 tons 7.8 per cent; 6 tons 8.9 per cent; 2 tons 11.13 per cent.—*Ibid.*

THE NAMUNUKULU TEA COMPANY.

PASSARA, Oct. 18th.—A very powerful and influential Company has been formed in London for the purpose of acquiring several estates in the Cannavarella and Mousagalla Valleys. The Company bears the well-known name of "The Namunukulu Tea Company Ltd." The shares in this Company were speedily disposed of by private treaty. The coffee estimate for its first year of working is between 5,000 and 6,000 bushels, besides returns from a large area under tea, and cinchona bark bearing the well-known brand "Cannavarella."

The London Directors of this large Company have been advised to await any announcement it may please His Excellency Sir Arthur Havelock to make respecting the extension of the Namunukulu Railway feeder, prior to deciding upon a site for the large Factory which must necessarily be erected, the feeling at home being that the Government Railway should be patronised if possible, were Sir Arthur's Government able to see its way by helping them to put their produce on the Railway. The capital of this Company is £50,000 sterling.—The "Times" is not acquainted with this part of our island, hence its many mistakes.—*Cör.*