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THE
TEA INDUSTRY IN INDIA.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE *raison d'être* of any book ought to be that there is room for it, and also that it is needed. It is in such a belief that I have again ventured to seek the patronage of those interested in the Indian tea industry; and I may say that the belief rested, in the first place, on the representation of a firm of London tea-brokers, that such a book as I have now written would be of use at the present time. Thinking over the remarks made in this regard, I found that a wide field was open to me—one that, so far as I was aware, had not been opened up, and which, from the Indian side, it seemed to me, could not very well be opened.

I thought, also, that if I could combine with (what I hope is) an impartial view of the Indian tea industry, information useful for the guidance of capitalists and young men wishing to become tea-planters, I should be supplying a want which I well knew existed. By the

kindness of Messrs. W. and R. Chambers, I am allowed to state, that various inquiries from different parts of the United Kingdom have been addressed to them on the subject of appointments, climate, openings for capital, &c., after the appearance in their *Journal* of short sketches of life in the Indian tea districts: which inquiries have been handed to me for reply. I have therefore striven to meet this want.

In reviewing my previous little work—*Tea in Assam*—the Editor of the Calcutta daily *Statesman* was kind enough to characterize it as “interesting.” In my present endeavour I have remembered this, and have tried again to deserve such commendation. Class works are necessarily somewhat heavy in their reading: and knowing this, I have sought to make the subject as entertaining as was possible. This will explain the insertion of the chapters, “The Planter on Leave,” and “The Social Phase of Tea-drinking.” There is a great deal that is not cheerful in a tea-planter’s life; and I have consequently thought that a proven picture of the goal to which, I suppose, all men look—*i.e.* leave of absence—would perhaps act as a mental tonic to those that required one, and reconcile existing unpleasantnesses by a cheerful hope for the future.

Since returning to England, some three years ago, I have continued my connexion with Indian tea. I think I may say, that in this time, and by the aid of knowledge acquired in the Indian districts, I have been enabled to see some points, essential to the successful continuance of the industry, in a clearer light than could

be obtained by men wholly resident in India, either through the medium of the press, or private correspondence. Planters naturally side with planters, agents with agents, and owners with owners, when anything is wrong; each section believes in its own infallibility, and in the error of the others; and until they pass quite out from either of the cliques mentioned, they must continue to look upon most questions in a false light. I have found that many matters between the growers of tea and its consignees here, need to be reconciled. Also, that from want of a clearer knowledge of factory management and agriculture, planters have been often unjustly treated by Calcutta agents and London boards. Equally, I have been compelled to believe, that for lack of information, or consideration for the frequently secondary position held by agents in India, planters did not think quite as charitably as they might of their employers, who were supposed sometimes to *dik* the lives of managers, until existence—more particularly under the well-known ethereal conditions of life in the *Mo-fussil*—was not worth having. It is scarcely necessary to say, that—especially in the present almost critical state of the Indian tea industry—nothing could be more detrimental to the common interest, than diverse, irreconcilable opinions, which must inevitably result in heartburnings, bickerings, and discord. It is surely a need of the greatest magnitude, that there should be perfect union and accord between the entire staff of each interest; because, if the owners and the agents, or the agents and the planters, persist in pulling in different