Clever, but a little artificial.

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2nd Prize

Life on a tea plantation somewhere in the British Empire

Lipton tea

Tea is a most refined beverage beloved by the hostess and her guests. The beverage of the meeting place whether it be East or West. It is an amenity which no person should forego without a trial. Its ranges of flavour are so wide that a tea can always be found that will delight the most critical palate. The question as often put forward “What is tea?” Tea contains essential oil which gives flavour and fragrance. Theine, which is a stimulant and deaminin which gives body and pungency. Tea is simply a delicious, harmonious, and stimulating beverage. The poet called tea “the cup that cheers but not inebriates.”

The daily life on a tea estate in Lipton commences about an hour before sunrise when the estate population is aroused by the blowing of tinum horns and this signal is taken up by all the tinum horn leaders in all the “lines” and the surrounding areas with the sound of native drums.

The first stage in a planter’s life is that known as “cruising.” A “cruiser” is really a learner or apprentice who generally attends from six months to a year.
His first real job was to learn Tamil, the language of the labourers who come from the Madras Presidency in South India. The new position was that of assistant to J.B. (Jamil, son of a small master) and he rose at a rate between 5 and 6.30 a.m. and attains shortly after the "daylight signal" where the labourers are detailed to various jobs under the charge of a "Kangani" who is a cook with somewhat more intelligence than the average labourer. After "signal" he makes a round of the various works in progress throughout the estate. A typical morning would embrace an inspection of the undermentioned works:

1. Plucking. Only certain young leaves can be selected for the manufacture of good tea and the greatest care is necessary in the field to ensure that only the right leaves are picked. This entails constant supervision and without it good tea cannot be obtained.

2. Pruning. The tea bush of allowances is grown will reach a height of 3 to 40 feet, but on an estate the bushes are kept pruned down to a height between 2 and 5 feet from the ground level to make picking possible. The pruning operation takes place every 3 or 4 years according to altitude, but in the low country where growth is more rapid it has to be done more frequently.

3. Artificial cultivation. Regular applications of artificial manures have to be made every 6 to 12 months as the soils are very poor in certain ingredients and the tea bushes would quickly deteriorate without this assistance.

4. Draining. This again is an important work.
which is always in progress. The greatest problem a planter has to face is the prevention of soil erosion which is very considerable on the steep lands where most of the rice is grown. Lentive drains to carry off surplus rainfall and still pits to prevent wash and silt are found throughout a rice estate and these have to receive constant attention to keep them in working order.

Here may be other works in progress as well which will also receive a visit from the assistant in the course of the day. The morning round will generally be completed about 10 o'clock, when the leaf which has been plucked will be weighed and sent to the factory. The second weighing of the leaf will take place at 2 p.m. and the final weighing between 4 and 5 p.m. After the final weighing, the assistant will enter on his check roll, a form of pay roll, the names of all the workers who have completed a day's work. Twice a week the accountant will have to order his beef book which goes to the local surgeons and contains an order for his requirements of provisions, fresh meat and provisions of all sorts.

The next stage in a planter's life generally reached after 5-10 years as an assistant is the Estate Superintendent or manager ( Bombay : paddy store ; big master). Only the larger estates employ assistants and those without an assistant. All the duties already detailed for the SD. fall to the lot of the PD. assisted by one or two conductors. In addition to the SD. duties the PD. has to supervise the work in the factory and watch carefully...
all the various processes of manufacture such as withering, rolling, fermenting, tying, sorting into various grades and packing. He has also to list the manufactured tea and all that they have been properly made. Each of these processes requires the greatest care to ensure the best results and that.

The good health of the superintendent must be taken up in watching his factory: however good his native stamina may be. One the important duties of the superintendent is listening to complaints to or the grumbles amongst his labourers. For this purpose an "off-day" is generally held on one or two afternoons per week when the wisdom of a Solomon and the patience of a Job is required in unraveling the various matters which are brought before the superintendent. These may vary from a charge of attempted murder which is very rare among the labourers to a complaint by a husband who has been beaten by his wife.

The routine work of the estate is broken every three or four months by a visit from a visiting agent who is generally a senior planter of considerable influence and is responsible for advising the superintendent and also the board of directors on the agricultural policy to be carried out. This inspection is very much like the inspection of a General office in the army and for it as an occasion for with and period everything being made as to its best.

The great event in a planter's life is "home leave," say a nine months leave.
from Ceylon which has to be spent in a tropical climate. This leave is usually given after 5 years' work on the low country estates and after 6 to 8 years in the more healthy places.

References
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