

I. INTRODUCTION.

Tobacco has never been grown to any great extent in Trinidad, but many years ago a certain amount was produced, mostly from the Siparia district where the soil and climate were considered to be most suitable for the crop. Later, in the early 'nineties, it is recorded that a consignment of "very excellent tobacco of fine quality" was sent to the Imperial Institute and sold in London. This was grown from Cuban seed and was suitable for cigar wrappers, binders and fillers. About fifteen or twenty years ago interest in the crop appears to have revived, and more recently some good tobacco is said to have been grown in the vicinity of Port of Spain. These appear to be the only records of tobacco growing in the Island, and now, except for a few plants in an occasional peasant's garden, the only place where the crop is grown is at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture, St. Augustine. 1,2,26.^x

Tobacco was first grown at the College in 1923, when a few plants were put in for demonstration purposes. The next year seed of various kinds was obtained from Canada, and from this the varieties now grown at the College were produced by selection and selfing. By 1926, really good plants were being grown, and it was decided that the pipe and the darker cigarette types were the most profitable. Samples of cured tobacco were sent to the local cigarette factory and to the Imperial Tobacco Co., Bristol, with fairly encouraging results. Yields were satisfactory, and at Trinidad prices the crop proved to be a very profitable one, and a small acreage is now regularly grown on the farm.

The production of a good bulk of Tobacco was found to offer no particular difficulty, but the quality often left

^x See Bibliography.

much to be desired. This was largely due to the lack of curing facilities, but during the past season, 1929-30, a special curing-barn was erected, and investigations were carried out with a view to gaining knowledge as to how the tobacco could be improved, particularly as regards quality, and it is the purpose of the present paper to give an account of the work done and the conclusions reached.

The strips were 12 1/2 yds. wide, and were separated by a double row of pigeon pea so that a series of wind-breaks was formed. The green-manure crop, which had received a dressing of artificial fertilizers, was disc-harrowed and ploughed in, and the land was levelled and brought to a good tilth by further disc-harrowings.

On November 1st planting was begun, the plants having been grown in specially prepared seed-beds, and were planted out at about eight weeks old. In Field B the spacing was 3 feet 6 inches by 2 feet, but 3 feet by 2 feet is more usual. During growth the land was kept clean by sub- and hand-hoeing. When the flower-bud appeared the plants were topped to about twelve leaves, but no pruning was done. Hand-picking of caterpillars was necessary twice weekly, and the operation of weeding was carried out at the same time.

Harvesting was done by the method of splitting the stems down the middle and cutting them off an inch below the end of the split, leaving a stump of about six inches high in the ground. The split plants were then placed astride bamboo stakes in the curing-barn. In previous years the curing process was carried out in the store-rooms at the Field Office, but results were rather unsatisfactory owing to the unsuitability of the building, which had no proper ventilation system. After cutting the ripe plants the stumps were cut to ground level and one sucker allowed to grow from each for the ratoon crop. The plant crop was harvested from the end of January till the middle of March, and the ratoon, which were very poor, from the middle of April till the middle of May.