

## Jamaica.

### An Improved Outlook for Sugar Cultivation.

The report of the Jamaica Department of Agriculture for the year ending March last, as prepared by Mr. H. H. COUSINS, the Director of Agriculture, touches on the tendency of present day conditions to restore to its former pre-eminence the industry of sugar manufacture, which has for some years had to yield premier place to the growing of bananas. The last mentioned industry has suffered two seasons in succession from hurricanes, while the cane sugar one has got off very lightly. Then the latter has lately experienced a most encouraging advance in the values both of sugar and of rum, and a general feeling of optimism prevails as to the future of the industry, planters being now much more disposed to consider the increased cultivation of sugar canes than they were before the war, when they found it paid them best to cultivate bananas, cocoa and coconuts. For example, in the district of St. Catharine, the irrigable area of which is considered the finest agricultural region in the island, the banana planters now consider that the sugar cane is the best rotation crop for bananas and that the danger of exhaustion of their soils and the production of second class fruit from the loss of humus in the soil, resulting from prolonged banana cultivation, would be well met by a rotation of cane and bananas in approximately equal proportions. The project for a St. Catharine Sugar Factory, which has cropped up at intervals for some time past, would now appear to have a good chance of realization.

The experience of the planters in the Vere district, where so far irrigation has been absent, has been that even under the unfavourable conditions of price ruling before the war, sugar production would have been profitable if only the crops could have been assured from drought, and shows that where lands are irrigated success is certain, and a sugar factory in the St. Catharine district is a safe proposition. Mr. COUSINS estimates that on these lands an average of over 32 tons of cane per acre over three crops would be yielded, and if the factory started in the 1918 season he thinks the planters would receive £35 gross per acre for their canes from the factory on a 6 per cent. basis for each of the first three years of the venture. This estimate is of course based on general prospects of cane sugar for the next few years due to the market conditions arising from the war.

As regards rum, a good deal is being counted on from the fact that at the present day five million British soldiers and sailors are being accustomed to the stimulating and comforting influence of Jamaica rum; it is assumed that when these men revert to civilian life once more they will have an increased disposition towards rum as a good and wholesome stimulant. The rum trade should therefore develop considerably after the war.

The Superintendent of the Field Experiments at Hope, Mr. R. S. MARTINEZ, (who has since abandoned his work and gone to the front as an officer of a British West India Regiment), reported last December that White Transparent still remained their best cane and is the one they can most recommend. It does better than any other cane at Vere where droughts are very prevalent. B.208 has done well in some areas but its superiority over White Transparent is in the long run doubtful. It gives very excellent plant canes, but too often fades away as a ratoon. D.625 gives an extraordinarily heavy growth when water is available but its poor milling and weak juice bias the planters against it. It is also very difficult to get ripe. Certain Jamaica Seedlings are being experimented with and Mr. MARTINEZ believes that they have got a couple of really good canes in view, but more experimental work would appear to be needed before any definite conclusion can be arrived at.