

MARAGOPIPE, LIBERIAN AND OTHER KINDS OF COFFEE, AND NEW PRODUCTS GENERALLY.

We call attention to "J. M." 's interesting letter on page 134, in reference to the Maragopipe coffee referred to the other day by our correspondent, Mr. T. Christy.

We cannot learn of any one else in the island who has experimented with this coffee in the way described by Mr. Christy. "J. M." gives us some interesting information of his experience and his exhortation not to be impatient over experiments with new products is very well timed. As regards other varieties of coffee received, or tried in Ceylon and elsewhere, we have the following response from Mr. E. Woodhouse to our inquiry:—

"Yes: I certainly obtained a number of samples of different kinds of coffee from the West Coast of Africa, but it is so long ago that I have been trying in vain to recollect by what channel they reached me. They came in little bags, 5 or 6 of them if not more; but on opening them up I found to my disappointment they contained *cleaned beans* instead of parchment, and consequently useless for sowing purposes, and they were therefore consigned to the cup. The tiny beans were excessively bitter and by the way they were all small-sized beans, with one exception, and that was a sample of the large Liberian variety which was tried with such little success in Ceylon. The Central African coffee I saw in Zanzibar in 1878 in the house of one of the principal slave-dealing Arabs who said it came from the Lake Tanganyika. The beans were small with something of the appearance of the 'monkey' coffee collected on the estate upcountry. I may here remark that the Liberian cherries I saw grown in Selangor were juicy enough to be put through a pulper, without difficulty, whereas the Ceylon Liberian (I understand cannot be pulped with any degree of satisfaction. This difference was acknowledged by an old Pussellawa kangani who showed me over the Batu Cave estate belonging to Mr. Hill, and also by the ex-Ceylon Superintendent of Pengerang in Johore."

We further call attention to the letter (on the same page) of a planter who thinks the colony will not be in a sound position until among other things, we are exporting 250,000 cwt. of Liberian coffee. We should certainly like to see that day; but much fear the export of *all* kinds of coffee from Ceylon will not reach that figure again before the close of the present century. At the same time, every little helps, and we are much in favour of careful experiments in small clearings such as "J. M." and some others of our estate proprietors have initiated.

PLANTING IN SOUTHERN PROVINCE.

(From Mr. Ievers' Administration Report for 1893.)

It is difficult to estimate the area under tea. It was estimated last year by Mr. Elliott to be 5,000 acres in the Galle and 4,000 in the Matara Districts. There has certainly been an increase in the acreage, because Sinhalese are now opening up small gardens all over the district. I have collected the following information regarding the native growing of tea, but I cannot guarantee the figures. I am told it costs a native R100 to clear and plant an acre of forest, and R30 for an annual upkeep, and that an annual profit of R65 an acre is obtained when the tea comes into bearing.

CINNAMON.—The area has increased in the Galle District from 3,340 acres in 1892 to 3,875 in 1893. It is said that an acre of cinnamon land does not now give a profit of more than R8 per annum. The cultivation seems to be carried on more from sentiment and strong caste feeling than from its being lucrative.

SUGAR.—There is a decrease in the acreage in cultivation of cane, as only 864 acres are estimated to have been under crop, as against 1,040 in 1892. The yield was estimated to have been 6,912 cwt of sugar. The cost of cultivating an acre of cane is said to be R65 a year. The decrease is attributed to the necessity for allowing land to remain fallow, which had been cultivated for three successive years.

CITRONELLA OIL.—The area under this produce appears to have been normal.

THE UNITED PLANTERS COMPANY OF CEYLON, LIMITED.

The Directors now present to the Shareholders their Third Annual Report, with the accompanying Accounts to the 31st December, 1893, and are pleased to be able to show such a satisfactory result, bearing in mind the depression that existed during the greater part of last year.

The quality of the Tea was fairly well maintained, and the yield considerably increased, but prices on the whole showed some slight falling-off from the previous year.

During the year 236 acres of new land have been planted in Tea, and are doing well.

The Accounts now presented show a Balance of Profit of £6,590 1s. 11d, after paying an Interim Dividend at the rate of 5 per cent. per annum, all Current Expenses and upkeep of Machinery and Buildings, and after writing £2,000 off the Factories and Machinery Account, £1,000 off the New Clearings Account, and making further provision for the Superintendents' Fund.

The Directors propose to add £950 to Reserve Account bringing the amount of that Account up to £4,000, to pay a Final Dividend of 3½ per cent., free of Income Tax, making 6 per cent. for the year, and to carry forward a Balance of £808 6s. 11d.

The Directors have again to place on record their appreciation of the excellent care and attention bestowed by the Superintendents on the Estates under their charge.

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT NYASSALAND.

Mr. E. Woodhouse has placed at our disposal the following information received from Mr. H. P. Johnston in a letter dated 5th July:—

In regard to Nyassaland, land is very cheap at present ranging from almost nothing in the border districts to 2/6 in the settled country. The average rainfall is 55 inches annually. The country is exceedingly well timbered and well watered by running streams. The mortality at present among Europeans is 6·5 per cent, though this proportion is considerably reduced when the deaths of people killed in warfare, or hunting accidents or in infancy are deducted. The deaths from malarial fever and dysentery—the only two diseases of any seriousness—amount to about 3 per cent.

The natural aspect of the country is exceedingly beautiful. The soil is nearly everywhere fertile. Native labourers very abundant and very cheap, wages ranging from about 2s 6d to 3s a month besides food which costs 1s per week. Customs duties, taxes, &c. are very low. Some of the planters reckon that with ordinary good luck and with present prices, 100 per cent profit may be made on coffee directly the trees come into bearing.

There is a direct line of steamers (the German mail line) between Bombay and Tshiade (Ohinde) at the mouth of the Zambesi.

At Tshinde you change into small river steamers by which you are conveyed to Katunga on the Shire and thence you ride up 25 miles to Blantyre which is to all intents and purposes the capital, though the seat of administration is at Zomba, 40 miles near to Lake Nyassa. There are about 265 Europeans settled in the country.

THE NEW SEASON'S (CHINA) TEAS.

Our own Mincing-lane correspondent reports that business has been more active in the tea market through the arrival of the new season's Black Leafs. Samples were shown on the 4th instant, and sales to a comparatively large extent were effected at a range of prices which must be satisfactory to importers. The highest prices so far is 2s 6d per lb. The general run of quality proves more on the useful class, but of finest there are not as many parcels as could be desired, though it is the grade most wanted. At current rates merchants will do well to at once quit their holdings.

It may perhaps be noted as a rather melancholy fact that not a single London paper specially noted the arrival of the "Moyune" with the first of the new season's teas.

The run of the "Moyune" from the Red Buoy at Woosung to Gravesend was 34 days 9 hours 40 minutes or a few hours shorter than last year, when the time, was 35 days. Messrs. Wills & Co. (Limited), the agents of the China Mutual Steam Navigation Company at Port Said, state that the "Moyune" took in at Port Said 570 tons of coal in one hour and twenty minutes.—*L. and C. Express*, July 6.

TEA ADULTERATION.

Thanks to the wise regulation by which teas are analysed by the Customs Department, tea adulteration has been practically made impossible in England. It is not so, however, in Sydney. According to our go-ahead contemporary, the *Westminster Gazette*, at a recent sitting of the local Parliament one of the members, Mr. Neild, "drew from his coat-tail pocket a sample of tea, and handed the same to Sir George Dibbs for the edification of the authorities." Ten days later the Premier assured the Assembly, upon the authority of the Government analyst, that the tea contained "distinct traces of lead and antimony, to say nothing of wooden chips and shavings, and was, in fact, quite unfit for consumption."

The sample, it appears, came from a bulk shipment of nearly a thousand chests, most of which had found its way into the "festive teapot" before the Parliamentary exposure. The lead discovered by the analyst has been described by a Sydney merchant as "colouring matter," and he says that if you picked out from the tea a piece of stalk you could write your name with it, almost as though you had a blacklead pencil in your hand. It seems that the common plan of colouring on the plantations is to "involve an infusion of lamp-black into the leaves, or else churn the leaves along with lumps of blacklead in a revolving barrel." A great deal of this mixture is we learn, landed in Sydney every year. Does any of it ever reach London?

The *Westminster's* inquiry if any of this reaches London is answered by the fact that we are protected from such adulterations by the Customs chemist's examinations of all imported teas. There is, however, a swindle practised with teas which we exposed some time ago, and which is still being carried on by some of the largest of the much-advertised packet tea firms, who use a "tea-faking" machine. The large refreshment caterers and hotels have a great quantity of exhausted tea leaves. These, on being dried and passed through the "tea-making" machine, can be, and are, made to have the appearance of the finest teas, and when mixed off in moderate proportions with genuine tea may be sold to the public without any risk of detection. It is only a few months since an offer was made to the Aerated Bread Co., by a gang of persons anxious to further develop and exploit this swindle, to collect

the waste leaves at a certain price from the whole of this company's establishments. We understand, however, the offer was declined. The company would not lend itself to any such practices, and it is a pity that a similar high sense of honour does not afflict some of the largest packet tea firms, who have been lately freely indulging in this swindle.—*Food and Sanitation*.

SEASONING TIMBER.

The timber, after cutting (known as felling), should be placed in a dry position, so that the air may circulate freely round it. It should not be placed in the sun or wind, or it will be sure to "crack" and "warp" very much in drying. If the timber is roughly squared with the axe, it will not split to such an extent as though it were left in the round. If the trees are large, they may with advantage be cut "on the quarter," after a period of drying in the whole state. A good plan is to set the timber upright, as it will dry much more rapidly. After remaining in the "quartered" state some time, it may be cut up into the desired size. The boards, as now cut, will require careful attention before being in a fit state to use. They should be placed in drying-sheds, with the ends open to the air, avoiding, if possible, positions in which the wind will act directly upon them. The floor should be of some hard material, such as cement, and should be kept perfectly dry. Bearers must be placed horizontally between the uprights, leaving a space between each equal to the width of boards; these bearers should be placed about four feet apart. The boards are placed on edge with strips between them, a nail being driven into the top of each strip to prevent its falling downwards. An alternative arrangement is to place the boards one upon the other, with strips between each piece, taking care to place the strips one exactly over the other. There are many methods of hastening the drying of timber, one of which is to place it completely under water for a time, afterwards placing it on end. This will prevent to a great extent the "warping" of "stuff" when used by the joiner. Nothing, however, equals natural drying, which makes the "stuff" more durable. For timber used by the carpenter, two years may be stated as a reasonable time for it to season, but for the purpose of the joiner it should not be used under three years, unless artificially dried.—*From Works for July*.

MR. D. MACKAY ON PERAK.—In a conversation I recently had with Mr. D. Mackay I gathered that he had a high opinion of the future of Perak for both kinds of coffee, and, moreover, that there would be a splendid opening for coconut planting as there is a grand market for the product in China, where the growers of tea as well as the crowds in the cities are eager buyers of the nut, which realises a good price in the bazaars. His opinion of the Waterloo estate is that it cannot fail to be a profitable investment, the soil and the climate being both in its favor. It is already yielding good returns, and I shall not be at all surprised to learn that the current report of a coffee plantation in Perak being converted into a limited company has reference to this property, though I cannot be certain in regard to it; but the names of those mentioned to me in connection with the enterprise would point to it. My informant thinks that, so long as fine and suitable land can be had in the Straits for R10 per acre, few will care to take up land in Ceylon at R100. For some time labor and the Government land regulations stood in the way of planting in the Malay Peninsula; but these things are now changed. The land regulations are now modified, and Chinese will make as good coffee cultivators as Indians, and far more reliable, for these latter get too much pay, and as a rule soon go to the dogs; whilst, if John Chinaman has equally good pay he does good work for it. As regards coconuts in Perak, it seems that the trees come into bearing sooner and bear more heavily than in Ceylon.—*London Cor.*, "Times of Ceylon."