

The holing should not be entrusted to contractors unless the work can be carefully supervised. Those planting new lands should pursue the following method, to ensure the growth of vigorous trees and the getting of heavy crops for years without the aid of artificial manures. After staking, the surface soil and ashes, &c., should be collected in heaps near each alternate stake. Then the holing should be done, and the holes filled with these scrapings mixed with the ordinary soil (also scraped when filling) around the holes. The sub-soil taken out of the holes should be made to form a walling on bund and on the upper side of sloping on hilly grounds. Holes 15 inches in width and depth is sufficient; but great care must be taken to secure this width and depth. A cheap plan is to get ordinary tea holes dug at R5 per thousand by contract, and then to widen and deepen them with estate men giving them task work, and each man a stick of 16 inches to guide him. In poorer soil "18 inch" holes are preferable. The plant, after being put, grows slowly for four months, and then begins to grow very rapidly. Even if all the leaves drop, so long as the stem is green, it must not be disturbed for another plant, as vigorous suckers come up from below. Spindly tap roots should be cut, and good planting soilies put to the work, or turned-up tap roots and stunted plants will be the result.

S. A. A.

P.S.—Money can be liberally spent in holing properly, as plants are very little more in price than Arabian coffee plants were, and costs less per acre, as less plants are used.

S. A. A.

VALUE OF COCONUTS.

Kotagala, 20th Aug.

DEAR SIR,—Could you give the average value of coconuts at the present time as compared with those given in "All about the Coconut Palm?"—
Yours truly,
INQUIRER.

[To the Messrs. De Mall we are indebted for the following interesting decennial return based on their experience and recollections of the past:—

	R.	e.	R.	e.
1840 value of coconuts per 1,000	15	—	to	20
1850 do.	22	50	to	25
1860 do.	25	—	to	30
1880 do.	30	—	to	32
1890 do.	35	—	to	37
1894 do.	35	—	to	45

—Ed. T.A.]

GREEN MANURE FOR PLANTATIONS.

DEAR SIR.—In the July number of your *Tropical Agriculturist*, your Nilgiri correspondent mentions wattle as a good green manure, owing to the nitrogen contained in its tender shoots.

Can any of your correspondents, who have experimented with green manure, give me the benefit of their experience as to the results obtained, or tell me what plants easily obtained are the best, i.e., contain the most nitrogen? and whether such should be applied green or allowed first to rot in compost heaps?

Your correspondent writes that 25 lb of sun dried tops (of wattle) should be applied to each tree: surely this is an excessive amount, or is it a misprint?

I have heard of the common bracken being cut and applied as manure. Has this any quantity of nitrogen? Surely amongst the many plants growing wild in the jungle, or abandoned land,

and in ravines, some might be found useful as green manure.—Yours faithfully,

AGRICULTURIST.

[Here is work for Mr. Cochran as Chemical Analyst, if the P. A. would only employ him.—Ed. T.A.]

PADDY CULTIVATION AND STRAW.

DEAR SIR,—Colombo is supplied with straw from the Hewagam and Salpiti Korales; and I send you a well-informed native friend's calculations, from which you will see that he calculates an acre of land gives R5 worth of straw. This, he says, is a low estimate and at the present rates for straw, which are less than they were when there was a greater demand from upcountry.

The production of straw depends upon the distance from a market. In the out-of-the-way parts of Pasdum Korale, in reaping, little more than the ears are cut. On the other hand I heard of a case just outside the town of Colombo when an immature crop, which was threatened by flood, was hurriedly reaped for the sake and value of the straw alone.

The value of the straw as a manure is recognized and the length cut in reaping is settled by balancing the money value from them as against the manure value.

These figures bear out your view that the straw in the Colombo district, when there is a market for it pays the expenses of cultivation, being about R5 each.

A good deal of bone is used as manure, about R2 worth per acre—that is about 2 bushels by measurement or the same quantity as the seed used, more only improves the straw and this gives the maximum of crop.

Salpiti Korale.

1 Amunam sowing extent gives 20 Kolas of straw

1 Kola straw worth 75 cents

20 Kolas worth R15

1 Amunam = 6 Bushels sowing

2 Bushels = 1 Acre

6 Bushels = 3 Acres

3 acres give R15 worth straw

1 acre gives R5 worth straw

at a lowest estimate. R2 per acre bones.

—Yours truly,

GOYIYA,

CRUDE COCAINE—COCA PASTE.

DEAR SIR.—Mr Thomas Christy means coca paste or crude cocaine. I fancy it is prepared by boiling the leaves and throwing off the moisture and getting rid of the fibre.

Sugar, liquorice or spanish juice, confectations of senna (from whence black draught) and heaps of other things are made the same way.—Yours,

ERYTHROXYLON.

THE MANURING OF TEA.

DEAR SIR.—Is it not about time to settle the vexed question as to whether manure, in any shape, takes away from the flavour of tea? I saw it stated the other day that the Chinese (or was it the Japanese?) did not manure their trees when making black teas, as it was their opinion that it deteriorated the flavour. Now these people, with all their centuries of traditions, ought surely to be credited with some knowledge of the matter; and yet the opinion in Ceylon (with our very brief experience) is much divided. Some say all manures are harmful to flavour; others that only artificial manures are so, and that cattle does not influence it for the worse,

Could you not collect some sure evidence upon the matter, Mr. Editor?—Yours faithfully,

AGRICULTURIST.

[We shall be glad to hear from Ceylon planters who have experience of prices before and after manuring; for, we suppose if flavour deteriorated, the price would show? We cannot find any authentic reference on the point in our books on tea.—Ed. T.A.]

THE CASTLEREAGH TEA COMPANY.

DEAR SIR,—Your paper gives us very little information concerning the half-yearly report of the Castlereagh Tea Company. Do you not consider this rather a mistake, seeing that the interests of the island and the savings of the majority of the Europeans are so deeply concerned in the working and dividends of our public Tea Companies? On Mr. Armitage's list the Castlereagh Company stands ninth out of thirty-four Companies as having the largest capital. I think it is therefore as much entitled to a full report as any of the other large or small Companies.*

Will you kindly allow me space in your valuable paper to make a few comments of my own on the Circular now issued by the Company, and to reply to a correspondent in the *Observer* of the 23rd inst. who is making enquiries concerning it?

When the Company declared in January 3 per cent for the half-year, I foretold in this paper that the dividends would dwindle down to half or nothing.† I was wrong it appears, for by the Companies' Circular I find that there is to be no dividend at all. Thus on account of the Directors' action in working the estate the shares have dropped from £102.50 to £70.00 in the space of one year. But let us turn to the circular which so many are looking at almost with despair, I use this word advisably, for I know of a shareholder who is ill, and was ordered home. He only waited until the Company paid their half-yearly dividend to enable him to sell a few shares to meet his expenses. Now, the shares have dropped 30 per cent. in one month, and there is no dividend and no buyers.

Upwards of six years ago this Company was formed with a capital of £240,000 for 476 acres at £500. Then the Rupee was at 1s 6½d. Since then it has "dangled" on, giving in favourable seasons as much as 113,000 lb. of tea. This year they will be very short of their estimate getting little over 100,000 lb. and the Directors suddenly discover that they must spend £6,200 on the purchase of new machinery to make it work. How in the name of all that is wonderful has the tea been manufactured during the last four years, and now when we are getting less than formerly the Directors issue a circular, which say that they require "a much greater efficiency and to improve and add to the machinery at an estimated cost of £6,200."

If the shareholders were induced to subscribe £500 per acre for 400 acres, how comes it that there is not machinery sufficient to manufacture 100,000 lb. of tea? But what have Messrs. Rollo and Armstrong got to say to all this: was it not on their valuations and reports that the Company was floated? Should they not speak out and justify themselves?

* A Shareholder is under some delusion: how can we give information about a Report we have never seen? We are not shareholders; and if no Director or Shareholder sends us a copy of a Report we are helpless.—We have had to strike out some parts of the above letter; because while any limited Company may, to some extent, be open to public criticism, still the proper course for a Shareholder with a grievance must first, surely, be to try and get up a meeting of those concerned, or to call on his Directors to explain?—Ed. T.A.

† Was "Shareholder" wise in thus prophesying evil about his own property? Who knows but he thus did harm to his own shares!—Ed. T.A.

Again the Circular states that during the six months "they got 51,905 lb. of tea, the quantity falling short on account of the dry weather," and further "it has been decided to extend the manuring by 100 acres more than what was estimated," viz. 50 acres to be included in the annual expenditure, and that "the same involves an additional outlay of about £5,000, which sum must be paid for."

A fine state of affairs this! It is a new idea to make good their shortness of rain by spending the profits on extensive manuring.

At the annual meeting in January not one word was said about this new machinery or increased outlay on manure, notwithstanding the cutturn of crops was raised. No, no, it was much more convenient for the Directors to choose their own time and advise their shareholders of the fact, after the money had been made and spent, and when there was no meeting of indignant holders to dispute the necessity of it.

A SHAREHOLDER.

[Surely "A Shareholder" is hasty in condemning "manuring," the benefit of which he may well expect to reap during the next twelve months, not only in a fat dividend, but in seeing his shares rise correspondingly.—Ed. T.A.]

VARIOUS PLANTING NOTES.

PERU AND BRITISH CENTRAL AFRICA.—We call attention to the letters from Messrs. Robb and H. Brown: the latter especially, contains information which must be considered very tempting by planting capitalists wanting to invest in coffee.—[See page 232.]

THE "OTAHUTE POTATO," said to be brought to West Africa from the Andamans is the subject of special notices in the papers sent us by Mr. Ashmore from the Gold Coast. In the opinion of Dr. Trimen, the name is probably a corruption, and the plant is obviously some ordinary yam (*Dioscorea*) and not at all likely to be anything new.

TRIMEN'S "CEYLON FLORA."—Mr. Britten's notice of Dr. Trimen's "Flora" which we republished the other day from *Nature* is appreciated; but our worthy Director does not understand why Mr. Britten should send him to Ceylon three years too soon,—1877 instead of 1880. As Mr. Britten took Dr. Trimen's place at the British Museum, he ought to know the date well enough!

DROUGHT IN SELANGOR.—Mr. G. C. Bellamy reporting for July from Kuala Selangor, writes:—"The drought which has lasted for so long assumed serious proportions during the month, so much so that only one well was available for drinking purposes and I had to put a guard on it to see that the water was not wasted. Fortunately we had a few light showers when matters were at their worst, and in the last day or so heavy rain has fallen, so that all anxiety is now removed."—*Selangor Government Gazette*.

"THE CEYLON BLEND."—A prominent New York Tea retail house winds up a very cleverly worded circular—described by an American editor as a fine example of candid statement to consumers and one admirably calculated to command confidence, with the following paragraph:—

WHAT WE RECOMMEND.

A single pound will make from one hundred and fifty to three hundred cups of tea. A few cents more per pound adds but the merest trifle to the cost per cup.

We make it a rule, therefore, to advise tea-drinkers to purchase as high grade teas as they feel they can afford.

Our 40c teas are good drinking teas, but the 50c and higher grades, especially our *Ceylon blend* at 75c, are so much superior, we believe everyone will be well repaid by the additional outlay.