

Correspondence.

To the Editor.

LIBERIAN COFFEE—COCOA—KOLA AND
COCA LEAVES :INTERESTING INFORMATION FROM MR. THOMAS
CHRISTY.

London, E. C. Aug. 3.

SIR,—I notice in the *Tropical Agriculturist* for July that Liberian coffee is likely to boom in Ceylon. Of course, if you go to any of the people who really understand what the flavour of a high class coffee is they turn up their noses at Liberian, but I have endeavoured to show that there are certain people in England and in France who purchase coffee only for the strong flavour and they purchase it because it impregnates or saturates more easily the different ingredients which they sell for "coffee" when ground up, and it is this class of dealer who wants the Liberian because it is found here to carry a great deal of strength. On the other hand the giant Maragogipe coffee and any of the varieties of coffee Arabica yield beautiful flavour, especially those coming from Central America and Mexico; but in the generality of houses coffee is never measured or weighed. The consequence is that it is unreliable in strength when made into a decoction for drinking. As a rule it is found that the cafe noir or black coffee requires an ounce of coffee to produce a really good rich cup of this beverage.

I am intending when I get a little time to write to the *Queen* newspaper, which is read by very many ladies who take a great interest in housekeeping to suggest that they should get at the stores some measure which would enable the cook without the trouble of weighing to take a certain quantity of coffee, so that if she has to make 5 cups of coffee she would know that she would want so many measures of coffee berries in the roasted state ready for grinding. If any of your readers can give me any hints in regard to this through the *Tropical Agriculturist* or the *Ceylon Observer* I should be very glad of them.

COCOA IN CEYLON.—You throw out a hint that if the planting of cacao increases in the Central American States there will not be much chance for Ceylon. Now the demand for cocoa is so great in the Central American States that they are large importers of cocoa in the face of a very high duty. We consider their own cocoa superior to any we can send them in the raw state. I have before me at the time of writing cocoa beans which I have accurately measured and I find that they are $1\frac{3}{4}$ " \times $\frac{7}{8}$ " lengthwise; the circumference lengthways is $3\frac{1}{4}$ " full and the circumference of the side 2". The post sample of 7 beans fermented and dried weighed 18 grammes.

KOLA.—The Africans on the coast, of course, produce 75 per cent more Kola than any other place in the world. They have stuck to their price, and will not sell the fresh nuts, which they use for money, below a certain price. These nuts, many of your readers know, are packed into a basket of a certain size, so large and small together they fill the basket, but there are very few small nuts put into these baskets when it is intended that they should represent money. The small nuts are dried, that is to say, the nut from the end of the pod and all that drop off the trees very often get mouldy and wormy. All these are sent to the Liverpool market

and we are told that we must be satisfied because we will not pay anything approaching 7d a lb. for the fresh kola, which for chemical purposes, as it contains 75 per cent of water, naturally loses weight when treated. But for some reason, which I am not quite sure of at present, the French and the Americans have gone in for green kolas, that is to say fresh kolas, and they are buying as much as three and four hundred pounds' weight at a time. We passed through this stage in England, but found that for fluid extracts and tinctures we get much better results from the dried kola, and therefore it pays us much better to get the dried kola at 1s or 1s 6s a lb. rather than pay 7d per lb. for the fresh kola, plus the extra carriage of the baskets being carried on deck to ensure the kolas arriving in a fresh, sound state. It is fortunate for the West Indian planters who obtained seed early from me that they can sell their fresh kolas picked off the tree at such a high price. They line the baskets and cases with leaves and secure the package as well as they can and in a few days they arrive at the ports of the United States. The last West Indian mail brought 30 cwt. of fresh kolas to Southampton packed in 30 baskets.

One more subject and I think I have exhausted the new commercial products, and that is COCA LEAVES.—Enormous quantities of leaves are coming from Java. They are very good leaves; and I had a visit from a broker in Amsterdam (who came over here just at the time of the great fall in price of the cocoa paste or crude cocoa.*) He asked me if I could buy leaves, as one of the brokers had sent him to me. I said that there was only one firm in Europe who could treat them advantageously. I offered to give him the name of this firm and he said at once: "The broker who sent me on to you told me I might rely upon what you said and I see that it is right, because it is only to this one firm that I am able to sell my coca leaves." I replied at once: "Return to this firm and try and make a contract with them, because there is no one else who has sufficient capacity and knowledge of the process of treating the crude coca leaf to buy your leaves." Some of the firms in England watch for the hydrochlorate of cocaine to go down in price; they then buy up all the cocaine they can get and then repurify it if necessary and stamp it with their own brand, because they inform me of the loss in treating the coca leaf. As you quote Mr. Howard in your paper (also the *T.A.* for this month) they do not know how to crystallise the product that they get from the leaves in the same proportion that the German house does, who almost commands the market. Hence none of our English or French makers of cocaine will buy the leaves for fear someone may say "What becomes of the leaves?" My reply is that they are used in medicine and for making preparations mixed with wine; they also go for sweetmeats and lozenges.—Your truly,
THO. CHRISTY.

LIBERIAN COFFEE PLANTING.

Siangodde, August 23rd.

DEAR SIR,—The present South-west monsoon is not likely to last long, and a few dry weeks will enable those about to plant during the North-east rains to prepare their lands. In several places felling has been going on, the burning to follow as soon as a dry week sets in.

* What has cocoa paste or crude cocoa to do with COCA leaves?—the reference is we suppose, a mere coincidence.—*Ed. T.A.*

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, confectons 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,