

"Oudeis" on page 814 is very strong about making rubbish tea. He says that the makers of it hunger after large profit, but if you go round the rubbish makers, you won't find them rolling in wealth; they spend too much in making the rubbish. They have found that rubbish gets the same price as better tea, so the fault lies with those who won't pay enough for good tea—"the men who know too much." But note that the low prices have driven out our rivals and go on in that line; make tea (not necessarily rubbish) which you can afford to sell at still lower rates.

Does "Oudeis" know that it takes longer to grow six leaves than it does to grow four leaves, and that if you pluck 2 leaves and leave one, you can pluck round your garden in 4 to 6 days which means 4 times a month, and that to pluck 4 leaves and leave one you will only be able to go round twice a month; you get no greater weight of leaf, but you want fewer coolies, fewer buldiags, less expense in every way; you get less leaf, less prices but as a rule as much profit. One is led to imagine the rubbish maker as a bearded ruffian tearing the life out of his bushes and generally stamping round like a fiend, reeking not what he does so long as he makes a huge fortune. Whereas you will find him an anxious planter striving might and main to make both ends meet and keep his bill. Really "Oudeis" ought to know better. (Page 819) I see that a Traders' Association is to be started at R10 subscription and is to see to the interests of tea sellers and tea buyers. Like the rope in "tug-of-war" this Association may bind both sides together, but it must be a strong rope.

(Page 821) The letter from Mr. Melville White and his statement that it is proposed to set to work among the "Consumers" seems to me the most promising phase of the American Campaign, but I don't see why the voluntary subscriptions should be put aside. No matter how little is done by the Volunteers they should be encouraged, they can't do any harm. Why not try all the schemes, even mine as an adjunct, and not only cajole the consumer, but persuade him that you are doing your utmost to humour his wants. I should like to see Mr. Melville White's comments about the "men who know too much" and whether he thinks planters are humbugs who pull long faces to get better prices.

About the rough tea I have spoken up for, let me say that it was tea of this sort made in past times which won us the British market, because it was made cheaply and because it is good tea; it is quite fit to drink; it contains taste and flavour and theine and tannin and all that is wanted. There is no fear of its swamping the market, because one can't get more of it than of fine leaf tea; or I should say of medium leaf tea. It will always be wanted by people who can't afford to pay for fine tea and it will do them less harm. It will create a demand for tea amongst millions who can now barely afford a solitary cup as a treat, and I don't see why it should not be given to horses instead of impure water, if we can only make it cheap enough. I hold extreme views, I don't expect them to be taken up, but the pulling in both directions always helps to steadyness.

About China tea and fears of infection of the plague (is there anything of the sort spoken of?). I remember hearing that on the jetty at Guernsey there was once a notice displayed, to the tourists and passengers on the steamers, which said that "there is cholera in Jersey." But these two islands are supposed to be sisters and not rivals. "1874."

A VETERAN COCONUT PLANTER ON THE PRICE OF COCONUTS.

Aug. 24.

DEAR SIR,—I had no practical knowledge of coconuts till 1857, when I left coffee planting and settled in the lowcountry. I have no notes to refer to, as to the price of coconuts then or at

any subsequent time; so that I merely depend on my memory for what information I can give.

The price of coconuts according to my experience has been, first for quality which varies from less than 1,000 up to 1,700 nuts to a candy of copra; second, the price of copra has always followed the price of oil in England, which has ranged in my time from £21 to £36 per ton.

While the exchange value of the rupee was at or about 2s the price of average coconuts ran from R20 to R30 per thousand, in the period from April to January, but the light gatherings, between December and April, used to hardly supply local consumption, and prices were therefore higher at that time. On one occasion I got R40 for the March gatherings, but for the May gatherings I had to close with the highest offer which was only R25. I believe that the gold value of the products of the coconut is governed by the relations of supply and demand, and that the rise in rupee prices for coconuts and copra is due entirely to the fall in gold value of the rupee, an average of R25 when the rupee was worth 24d will be R43 at 13d the rupee.

The demand for coconut oil has gradually increased within the past forty years, but as supply has kept pace with the increasing demand, prices remains very much the same, or have rather if anything fallen off somewhat.

In those latter days it is the cheap rupee that has stimulated production and kept it at least square with the very considerable desiccation trade that has sprung up as well as the greatly increased demand abroad for the raw material.

The foreign demand for poonac is an important factor in the present price of coconuts. Twenty-five years ago the average price per ton was R25; it is now R70—an addition of R4 to every candy.—Yours truly,
W.B.L.

No. II.

Aug. 25.

DEAR SIR,—I regret I am not able to give you the prices of coconuts at the times named. In 1860 I know the price varied from R26 to R30 according to quality, for I purchased large numbers in that year for the firm of Wilson, Ritchie & Co. The rupee was then worth 2s, so that in sterling value the price of coconuts was higher then than it is now at from R33 to R40 per 1,000.—Yours truly,
PLANTER No. II.

UGANDA—AND COFFEE PLANTING.

Iona, Agra Patnas, 29th Aug.

DEAR SIR,—There is an interesting article on Uganda and its resources in the *Field* of the 23th July, page 130. According to the writer, labour is practically unprocurable, and transport costs £224 sterling per ton and is dangerous and bad at that!

So much for Uganda as a coffee-producing country.—Yours faithfully,

A. BOSSI ASHTON.

[Our correspondent must take care not to confound Uganda with Nyassaland or the Shire Highlands:—in the former no practical man has dreamed of investing capital in plantations until the railway, to be some hundreds of miles in length, is at least begun. Ibea or British East Africa is most of it, a fine country with great possibilities. But for the present, it is British Central Africa, and especially Blantyre and the Shire Hills that invite coffee planters with money and offer them good prospects. Labour is reported cheap and plentiful, and transport by no means too heavy in the latter.—
ED. T.A.]