

## Correspondence.

To the Editor.

## LARGE EGGS FROM AN ORDINARY CROSS-BRED HEN.

Dolosbage, July 13.

DEAR SIR,—It may interest you, or some of your readers, to know of a very unusual formation of eggs, laid by an ordinary cross-bred hen. The first of them was laid on the 10th, and was larger than the average goose egg. The shell was slightly broken, and on being opened further, a complete egg was seen enclosed within it. This egg was of the ordinary size, with hard shell, and on being broken had the usual yolk and white. Again on the 12th she laid another egg equally large; but on the 13th one of the ordinary size; and seems well and healthy. I send you the egg that was laid on the 12th to make any use of it you like. It weighs  $5\frac{1}{2}$  oz.—Yours truly, L. R.

[Unfortunately, although carefully packed in two cases, the egg got broken en route: it must have been a very fine specimen: it would certainly carry off the prize at a Poultry and Egg Show. The chickens from such eggs should be valuable.—Ed. T.A.]

THE PALLAGAMA CO'S PLANTATION:  
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SHIELD.

July 15th.

SIR,—Having once before addressed you on this matter, I have been naturally much interested in the leading article on page 123. And I agree with you that you are wrong in calling it an "experimental" plantation. Ergo why the grant? You were not able in reply to my last letter on the subject to give me the particular terms of the grant, and I am still in ignorance on this point, but I take it that the land was conceded by Government on other and more favourable terms than those in force at an ordinary Kachcheri sale. And I want to know why. Was it because—as you say—in that fertile region well developed coconut palms begin to bear fruit in five years, and that "fine coffee and cacao shrubs of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 years of age are found in the native gardens," that it has been thought necessary to protect this part of the country at the expense of growers who have probably paid R20 to R30 per acre for their land, and find that their coconut palms don't begin to bear fruit till nearer ten years?

After all, one might view with equanimity the prospect of another 5,000 acres of coconuts, Liberian coffee and cacao coming in, within a measurable time, and under protected or subsidized conditions to swell the already bloated exports of Ceylon produce; but it doesn't mean that. It means tea. One of the avowed objects of the Pallagama Grant Association (see Memorandum) is to plant tea, and the chances are they will and with that as a product in chief—no matter what they begin with. Excellent business for the grantees—not bad for the Company who will doubtless get satisfactory dividends—but rough, very rough on the poor devils who still in many cases have to pay 8 per cent or more for their

OVER-PRODUCTION.

PROSPECTS OF TEA: THE BRIGHT  
SIDE.

Lawrence, Norwood, July 17.

DEAR SIR,—In these times of rampant pessimists, re future of tea, it is refreshing to read Mr. Berry White's speech which I enclose for

reproduction in *Observer* if you consider it worth while doing so.—Yours faithfully,

WALTER AGAR.

[We quote the portions of Mr. Berry White's speech as Chairman of the Jokat-Assem Company which are of local interest.—Ed. T.A.]

We imported during the year over 1,500 coolies, and the outlay under this head formed a considerable portion of the Indian expenditure. I am very hopeful that this has now very nearly come to an end; for although, no doubt, we shall have to go on importing on a smaller scale for some years to come; we had most gratifying evidence when my colleague and I were out last January and February that in the near future our labour requirements would, in a great measure, be supplied locally. Large numbers of time-expired coolies have settled down on or near the company's properties, and, as far as we could judge, have regularly taken root in the country. When we can once obtain sufficient labour without the expense of importation as a drawback, we in Upper Assam must inevitably stand in a superior position to all the other tea districts of the world. We make by far the finest and most valuable tea, and our outturn per acre is larger than that yielded by any other tea district except the Bheel lands of the Surma Valley. The only disadvantage we have to contend with is the cost of labour, and I am very sanguine that this drawback is rapidly disappearing. It appears that a great increase in the consumption of tea took place between June 1 and May 31 last, the deliveries for that period being 112,000,000 lb. of Indian tea, instead of the 109,000,000 lb. given in the report for the calendar year; so that on June 1 last there was an increased consumption of nearly 6,000,000 lb. over the previous year, and stocks were diminished by nearly 2,000,000 lb. Although very little tea has yet arrived, and it is always hard to forecast the quality of a season by the first arrivals, still, the reports and valuations we have received from India indicate that there is an unmistakable improvement in quality, and, without being unduly sanguine, we may look forward to considerably better prices ruling this season. Surgeon-General de Renzy and I inspected the estates in January and February last, and we were greatly pleased with all we saw.

I had not intended referring to the prospects of the Indian tea industry on this occasion; but on Monday last I received a most interesting circular, illustrated by a diagram prepared by Messrs. Gow, Wilson and Stanton, to whom the tea industry is indebted for much valuable statistical information; but although I admire and appreciate their industry and enterprise, I entirely dissent from their conclusions. It is shown that in the decade ended in the year 1892 the consumption of tea in the world (exclusive of the Chinese Empire) had increased by 94,000,000 lb. while in Great Britain alone during the same period the increase was no less than 37,000,000 lb. or about 3,500,000 lb. a year. This, I think, is a highly satisfactory increase, especially when it is considered that the increase has been wholly in British-grown tea, which, according to the late Chancellor of the Exchequer's estimate, should be put down at 33 per cent. more, as the same quantity of Indian tea gives one-third more, beverage of the same strength than China tea. I have just returned from India and Ceylon, and I think it very doubtful that the increased production of the next decade will amount to 94,000,000 lb. and probably will be much less. I think there is very little doubt that the next decade will see the last 4d. per round customs duty on tea removed, as the advocates of a free breakfast table gain strength annually. Free tea would mean much more than a reduction of 4d. per pound in the retail selling price, as it would then be released from all the many costs and charges involved by customs supervision. This would immensely increase the consumption in the United Kingdom; so that I consider the fear of over-production a mere phantom, and not worth discussing. Messrs. Gow, Wilson and Stanton are also greatly alarmed at the continued fall in the value