

always said I had a talon for it' said Mrs. P. to some of her guests, who praised her tea-making. "For my part I don't think talons has much to do with it. It's stinginess generally that makes bad tea. If you use plenty, the confusion is sure to be good." Meanwhile Mrs. P. says, "there was such jugular feeling all the evening, and everybody was so anonymous in praising her tea, that she hopes it won't be the last time she shall see her friends heaped about in friendly concave."

A BALLAD OF 5 O'C. TEA (AFTER AUSTIN DOBSON.)

Served in most delicate ware,—
Dresden or Sevres,—where you spy
Dainty devices and rare,
Hues that enrapture the eye;
Hands that are shapely and white,
Pour out the fragrant Bohea,
Beauty presides at this rite
This is your 5 o'clock Tea!

Perched in the midst of the fair,
Masher, resplendent, yet shy,
Awkwardly shifts in his chair,
He will gain courage by-and-by.
Beaux so antique, most polite,
Prattle in garrulous glee,
Here in their element quite,
This is your 5 o'clock Tea!

Characters melt into air,
Good reputations must die,
Think you "my Lady" will spare
For all that you murmur "Oh fy!"
Colloquies vapid and trite,
Sland'rous tongues running free,
Small emanations of spite,
This is your 5 o'clock Tea!

ENVOY:—Sugar and cream can excite
Envy and malice we see;
Satirists cry with delight—
This is your 5 o'clock Tea!

Orchids.—F. B. DOVETON.

We have got quite hardened now-a-days to hearing not only a few nourishing, but many wishy-washy, drinks dubb'd *Teas*, such as Beef Tea, Hot Tea, &c.; but it is curious to note how very early this habit began. In 1699 John Evelyn published a little work called "Acetaria, A Discourse of Sallets," and in recipe No. 27 I read as follows:—"Flowers.—Some of them are pickled and divers of them make also very pleasant and wholesome *Teas*, as do likewise the wild Time, Bugloss, Mint, &c. *Penny-Royal*.—Of this plant discreetly dried, is made a most wholesome and excellent *Tea*." I was amused to see that one of the above flowers, happening to come at the end of a line, was divided not into *Bei-gloss* (ox-tongue) as it should have been, but into *Bugless* as though good against B. flats or Norfolk-Howards!

A. M. FERGUSON.

PLANTING IN NEGOMBO DISTRICT.

COCONUTS AND CINNAMON.

At last we are having the monsoon rains and the first half of June has been rather wet, 8.70 inches being the rainfall for the fortnight as against 6.37 inches in the corresponding period of the previous year. But this year April and May together only gave 6.85 inches, whereas in April 1893 alone we had 13.44 inches followed by 8.22 inches in May.

During the past two months harvesting of cinnamon was much hindered and retarded and as the growth of the bushes has been very unsatisfactory, owing to diminished rainfall since July last. The crop of 1893-94 is likely to be a small one.

From the same cause there will be a general short-fall in the crop of coconuts, but it will not be so serious as in the case of cinnamon. Among other advantages which the one has over the other the coconut planter can generally count on the certainty of securing the crop on his trees, whereas the cinnamon planter is greatly dependent on the weather for harvesting the produce of his bushes.

INDIAN PATENTS.

Calcutta, the 24th May 1894.

Applications in respect of the undermentioned inventions have been filed, during the week ending 19th May 1894:—

Withering or Limping Tea Leaf.—No. 150 of 1894.—Samuel Cleland Davidson, of Sirocco Engineering Works, Belfast, Ireland, Merchant, for improvements in the process of withering or limping tea leaf in the course of its manufacture into black tea and in apparatus therefor.—*Indian Engineer*.

CROWN LAND IN JAVA.

In the Amsterdam letter (May 30th) of the *L. and C. Express*, we read:—

It is said that the Government intends to suspend the issue of waste grounds in Java, in order to direct more attention to the working of the other islands in the Archipelago.

JAVA COFFEE CROP.

AMSTERDAM, May 30.—According to a telegram from the Governor-General of Netherlands India, dated May 26th the Government's coffee crop in Java is estimated for this year at 306,980 piculs. This quantity is about double as much as estimated last year, and the out-turn of the private crop will also be considerably more, by which the agricultural companies hope to regain the losses sustained by the small crop of 1893. From the East of Java, however, reports are received that the great expectations are not fully realised, as the fruit seems to have suffered much from the heavy rains.—*L. and C. Express*.

OVER-PRODUCTION: IN REFERENCE SPECIALLY, TO TEA.

Many of the leading journals both in Europe and America have recently contained—or have reprinted—articles relative to the above subject. The consensus of opinion expressed throughout these is that the whole world is suffering, and must continue to suffer, from the fact that the producing power of the present day is, as the result in part to the wide employment of machinery, in excess of that of consumption. It is hardly necessary for us to restate the arguments adduced to demonstrate this fact. They must be, we fancy, patent to every one who considers seriously the present depressed prices of nearly every article of food or of personal use. It is undoubtedly the disproportion between the two items mentioned, that is responsible for the difficulties that now beset us. Population has not increased in any corresponding ratio to the enormous increase of capacity for raising food stuffs. Our own leading industry furnishes a strong illustration in favour of this contention. Where would our tea industry have been, had we not succeeded in largely ousting from consumption the teas of China? What has most aided our planters in their struggle for existence, has no doubt caused some trouble, and possibly distress, to the Chinese tea-cultivators and middlemen. It has ever been the case that success in one quarter can only be secured by a reduction in the prosperity of another.

Hitherto, under the action of this invariable law, the leading industry of Ceylon has attained to a high point. The question to be faced is as to whether the industry, so far a production is concerned, is fast reaching its prescribed maximum. Already, as we know, there are not wanting signs which "he who run may read" that the present demand is more than met

Our daily endeavour is now to obtain fresh markets. But, since production has already outrun the growth of population throughout the world, these can only be obtained by restricting the chance at present enjoyed by the tea-producers of other nationalities. The question is now and again asked, whether the Chinese and Japanese will be long content to take a subordinate place in respect of products which have long enjoyed pre-eminence? It is when endeavouring to seek a reply to that question that the *dicta* of experts come into play. No doubt it is to the use of machinery that the planters of India and Ceylon largely owe their successful rivalry with the pioneering countries in tea-growing. But there are experts who think even now, that the day must surely come when both China and Japan will avail themselves of this powerful aid, and that the competition of the future will exceed that of the present and of the past. Where would our own position in a parallel competition have been, had we to rely on the primitive methods that have hitherto supplied the producers of those countries! As yet we have achieved success. Could it have been attained, but for that very agent now declared to be the prime cause of the evils apparent all the world over? The answer to this question is too apparent to need demonstration. Therefore it is, that certain London experts call upon us, seriously to consider how far it may be for our future interests to extend the area now under the cultivation of tea. They say that if we push this much beyond the present area, and eventually deprive our Far East neighbours of the American and Russian markets, the chances are we shall force the natives of China and Japan into the adoption of those mechanical aids that have proved so useful to ourselves, and instead of mitigating, we shall thus increase the difficulties that we have at present to contend against.

For such reasons as these it may be satisfactory to know that the prospects of our outturn of tea for the present year are not largely in excess of the quantity harvested during 1893. All the world over—our mentors inform us—"there is now a demand for a restriction of output. Economic reasons are said to impose this. The difficulty as to restraining this output is the annually increasing area of land under colonial settlement brought under cultivation. Perhaps in the distant future, increase of population may overtake production. But it must be a long time before it can do so. Machinery, which has hitherto been looked upon as an unmixed blessing, has not, it is evident, altogether maintained that attribute. It is no use having cheap food if the wage-earning power of normal labour diminishes in a larger ratio than the reduction in its price. Ceylon teas may yet hold their place as the 'best the world produces,' but a limit in their quantity must be reached if you are not to overdo the capacity for their consumption."

Such is the gist of representations made to us by absent proprietors and others interested in the prosperity of our "tea industry"; but there is one factor which they have overlooked in respect of our competition with China, namely, the readiness with which the Chinese turn their tea-gardens into cereal or vegetable fields. When they found, in certain districts, that the demand for their tea among foreigners had fallen off, we have been assured on good authority, that this industrious and self-contained people simply made up their minds to grow that which served them as well, for their own sustenance, as the money of the foreigner. Our latest testimony

to this effect came from a veteran Church Missionary resident many years in China, who said, in his district, the process of superseding tea by other culture, had gone very far. We see no reason why it should not go much farther—and therefore it is that we have a good deal of faith in the program put forth by Sir John Muir's Company, to the effect, that Indian and Ceylon tea planters have yet altogether to supersede the many million lb. of inferior China-Japan teas still used by English-speaking people. Surely, it stands to reason that the people of North America, Australasia and the Mother Country should drink the superior teas of India and Ceylon? That result alone, if achieved, would give us a demand for about 160 additional million of lb. of Indo-Ceylon teas; while for the 70 to 80 million lb. required in Russia and 20 million more lb. for the rest of Europe, all we ask, in competition with the Chinese and Japanese, is a fair field and no favour!

A NOVEL IDEA FOR PLANTERS' ASSOCIATIONS.

EACH PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION TO HAVE AN EXPERIMENTAL ESTATE.

In a late issue of a planting contemporary published in Calcutta, a writer from Southern India advocates some rather novel ideas in the planting line. In the main they are sound enough, and we agree with them more or less thoroughly, but we doubt whether the Associations of South India would care to go to the expense or trouble to carry out the methods he advocates. Briefly put, he suggests that each Association should subscribe enough money to start and keep a sort of experimental estate, having for its basis the staple cultivation of the district, tea or coffee, as the case might be. The 'staple' would in a few years, be probably able to make the whole estate self-sustaining, but until then of course the Association would have to make a small monthly grant for the up-keep. The remainder of the estate would be to try, as the writer puts it, the "various fads and new products recommended from time to time." Of course, such things should be taken up very carefully at first and extended on a commercial scale only when the soundness of the new venture has been proven. Otherwise the strain on the funds of the Association would be too severe and the whole thing "chucked up" in disgust. Apart however from trying new adjuncts, the success of which must necessarily be extremely problematical, a great deal of excellent work might be done in testing and comparing different methods of pruning, cultivating, etc., the staple products, *i.e.*, tea or coffee. A grave objection and *prima facie* one, is, granted the actual expenses for labour and so on are within the means of the Association, who is to direct the working and what is the director to be paid for his trouble? An able man would require a good salary, say some R300 to R400; and what body of planters could afford to pay this sum? The only way it could be done would be to ask Government to subscribe say 50 per cent of the funds raised by the planters themselves! then for the first few years devote the major part of the funds to planting up about half or more of the land in coffee or tea, utilizing the services of neighbouring planters for the work of supervision, or paying a monthly fee of R50 to a competent man to inspect account and generally direct the estate work. But we will not go much further into the subject at present till the idea has been a little more ventilated. We will content ourselves with remarking, that in the lieu of a Government experimental garden—not of course of the farcical muster which passes under that name on the Nilgiris—such a one as sketched above, would be able to carry out a vast amount of good work.—*South of India Observer.*