

Correspondence.

To the Editor.

INDIAN AND CEYLON TEA IN NEW MARKETS.

DEAR SIR,—In the weekly edition for Aug. 30th to Sept. 5th, I note that you think that enough has been said regarding proposals for the opening of new markets. This I take to be only concerning the actual operations to be undertaken, and not as to general remarks on what will benefit or prejudice the Tea Industry.

You quote the remarks of a correspondent who sent you a sample of green tea, (in case you had forgotten the taste of it) and as you remark his letter comes too late to influence the course of action, but I do hope that you do not consider it too late to advocate the only course, which, to the correspondent quoted, and in my opinion, is the only one which can put our industry on a better footing. Your London letter contain interviews with leading men on tea subjects, and these contain more valuable information on the subjects than I ever remember having seen in print; they give information on the subject of Tea selling, whereas up to date the planter is quite in the dark as to all that relates to this,—the most important branch of the Industry.

We see that there is a wide diversity of opinion even among experts; on some points; the planter would give information, such as the one of the change noticed in tea, judging by reports in your local market and the result of tasting the same tea later on in the London market.

The "Planter" Aug. 24th P. 12., gives an instance of a tea taster being sent out to improve the teas of certain properties, but when he arrived he said that he would not have known the fresh stuff to be tea at all, although he had tasted the teas of those estates for several years. He gave up the attempt to improve the tea with the amount of knowledge he possessed. There is in fact a want of knowledge between the various departments of the Tea Industry and each one seeks only its own advantage.

In your No. 36, we see from the interview with Mr. Webster, that he has a good line of action, and that it pays the Company for which he works. Here then we have one means of getting better results, and I fancy that before long we shall see many Co-operative tea concerns employing agents of their own. This is what I take to be the meaning of what your correspondent said who advocated the pushing of teas by private enterprise; and I cannot but think that men of Mr. Webster's stamp will do more for our tea than can be done by any such means as advocated by the three prize Essays. I apologize for reverting to the forbidden subject, but any suggestion which will induce proprietors to Co-operate, (or as we usually say to "Associate") must be of value. Without some schemes for bettering our condition the tea Industry must pass from the hands of the present proprietors into those of large companies, and the struggle to come is to decide the point whether the revenues from tea planting are to be gained by private owners or to be gained by shareholders in Companies. My view is that it is advisable that the present owners of tea property shall continue to profit by their properties, and that the present body of (active) Planters shall continue to gain their living by working in tea instead of wandering so other employments. And so the present proprietors and tea planters should combine to find out all they can about their tea after it leaves the factory, even going so far as to employ a dealer of their own if they find that the present body of dealers cannot give them a paying price for their tea.

It would be hard to point to any determined endeavour to sell tea at a profit, which has failed, and it has even succeeded with private individuals.

As to America, you regret to note that the amount exported to that country was less in 1893 than in

1892. It can't be said that the Americans returned any tea sent to them, but it is probable that there was not sufficient encouragement to continue sending tea, so that the individuals who sent tea in 1892 were choked off. This would not happen to any large Association, they would see the harm done by not keeping up the supply, and they would be able to bear a small loss without being ruined. In 1893 the price of commonest teas was actually better (in London than in 1892. Were these the teas that went to America? if so the cause of the falling off, which you note, is explained. Since Lipton & Co., &c. wanted teas, common tea has risen, that also may keep it from going to America, and we probably see all the tea which should now be educating the Americans, heaped up on our Indian railway platforms.

I should say that any falling off in supply must ruin the chances of gaining a new market; I don't speak of Tea only. In your Editorials I note the continued assertion of the superiority of 'our' Teas, but you can hardly say that you send your superior teas to any country but England. If you will consent to send a proportion of your tea crop of all qualities to any market there is little doubt that they would gain a footing and cost any other teas. I suggest that beyond merely sending what you make you should study the requirements of that market, and make tea as near as possible to the desired standards of quality, character, and appearance. The measure of failure in attaining any of these, would be the measure of the sacrifice in price which you would have to submit to until your teas got into favour. But you must not desert your market to gain a temporary advantage in some other temporarily inflated market.

I as an Indian Planter would do anything to get your Ceylon teas out of the market for which we have paid so dearly. You must admit that Indian tea is superior to Ceylon tea, and yet with the same breath you (Ceylon Planters) say that Ceylon tea is better than Indian tea. Both however are too superior for the new markets, and we are left to jostle one another.* I think that the superiority of tea should be recognized to mean character and not quality, and that we should strive after character only; then the conditions of good and bad soil, of good and bad manipulation &c., &c. will have their due value in influencing prices, but we shall gain all markets by the virtue of cheapness.

It is very evident that our dealers cannot extend our markets without our assistance. Our dealers have by much study and constant endeavour succeeded in placing 193 millions pounds, but our supply of one sort of tea is exceeding their capacity for selling any more at a profit to us although undoubtedly they can sell a great deal more at a profit to themselves. We must help the dealers as planters, and not as interlopers into the dealer's domain. We must suit our teas to the market, we alone can do so, now that the limit of mixing has been attained.

I wish to show my admiration for the enterprise shown by your paper in obtaining interviews from leading tea men. So far you have heard only the views of the great brokers and dealers, perhaps later on you might get the opinions of leading planters (both proprietors and managers.) I have certainly never been able to get so much information on planting matters, and particularly all concerning tea selling has been a sealed book to planting managers.

"1874."

ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION OF POWER.

Upcountry, Sept. 1894.

DEAR SIR,—We are hearing with increasing frequency of instances of the application of electricity to the transmission of power. The Liverpool Chamber of Commerce Journal recently gave a concise abstract of the comparative cost of steam

* We cannot follow this: the fight is against inferior adulterated China's and Japan's and in favour of pure superior Indian's and Ceylon's. As for our tea, Ceylon produces some of the best and also some of the most common of teas.—Ed. T.A.