

where there were two tobacco estates. A very rich goldfield at Madai was worked by the Chinese as long ago as 1812, but this fact was not known to their predecessors or themselves. The whole of their land was covered with an uninterrupted giant forest possessing millions of tons of timber, hundreds of thousands of tons of cane, and tens of thousands of tons of gutta-percha, indiarubber, &c. All these things were very difficult to realize unless one had been in the country, but the shareholders—especially those who had taken an interest in the tobacco companies—were now beginning to realize what Borneo soil was. They had 20 million acres of land. The shareholders might say that they had waited a long time for dividends, and there was no doubt that they had hitherto been greatly disappointed with the results, as had also the directors, but he nevertheless advised them to remain hopeful in regard to the prospects of the undertaking.

In the discussion which followed some complaint was made with reference to the expenses, which were considered too high, especially in London. Mr. WAGSTAFF remarked that they had heard a good deal about hope, but they had only had one dividend in 11 years. He had been glad to hear the cheerful statement made by Mr. Cowie.

The CHAIRMAN, in reply, stated that the present was the first time he had heard that the staff was overpaid, but the directors would do all they could to keep the expenses as low as possible. The defalcation to which reference was made in the balance sheet amounted to about \$20,000, and it was committed by a Chinaman formerly in their employ—their agent for dealing with their copper coinage, especially in Labuan and Brunei. The defalcation was not likely to occur again. The revenue of Labuan was calculated to pay more than the pensions of which they assumed the responsibility when they took over the island from the British Government. He did not agree that the London expenses were too high; and it would be most impolitic to conduct the London business by means of an agency.

The resolution was then adopted.

On the motion for the re-election of the retiring directors—Mr. Edward Dent, Charles J. Jessel, and Admiral of the Fleet the Hon. Sir Henry Keppel—a discussion ensued regarding the holding of the directors.

The CHAIRMAN, in reply, stated that Mr. Dent held more than twice his necessary qualification. At a critical time, too, that gentleman put a considerable amount of money into other Borneo companies, although he might have done so by selling some of his shares in this company. The system of paying directors by results did not work well, and he did not think that the board of this company were overpaid.

Eventually the retiring directors were re-elected on a show of hands.—*London Times*.

PICKINGS WITH A LOCAL APPLICATION.

RAINFALL.—"TEMPLETON'S WORKSHOP COMPANION" contains the following:—The mean average rainfall for the whole of England is 36 inches; at London it is 24 inches. The heaviest mean annual rainfall in England is at Styeholme-Borrowdale, Cumberland, where it is 165 inches, and the heaviest at any place on the globe is on the Khasia Hills, Bengal, where it is 600 inches. The quantity of rain decreases with the elevation from the ground. Dr. Heberden found the annual rainfall at the top of Westminster Abbey to be 12.099 inches; at the top of a house close by, of much inferior altitude 18.189 inches; and on the ground, 22.603 inches.

A FLORIDA grower, after making several tests, is of opinion that the cause of ORANGE trees dropping their fruit is deficiency of potash in the soil. Potash is the largest mineral constituent of the orange. The Florida orchardist manured a part of his orange orchard, and left the rest alone. The trees in the one held their fruit, and those in the other dropped theirs. A reversal of the order of

treatment next season gave the same result, the trees that were treated in the first year and neglected in the second dropping their fruit while the others retained theirs, thus indicating that potash caused the trees to hold their fruit; but its effect lasted only one year, probably owing to the large amount of the mineral absorbed by the trees. The absence of potash is said also to be the cause of oranges splitting open on the trees.

In the Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, Brisbane; the following note appears under the head, THEOBROMA CACAO:—

Theobroma Cacao.—A wardian case of Cacao beans were received from Ceylon during December. All or nearly all had germinated in transit, and most of them perished. All were given a chance in the bush-house, but only twenty spindly plants survived. These are doing fairly well and will be panted in the open next wet season. This is certainly a start with what should become in tropical Queensland a very important branch of agriculture. To simplify transit, I would recommend that the beans should be placed in a bed of coconut fibre refuse in bamboo cases about 2 inches in diameter and 10 inches long. A large number of them could be packed on end in a medium-sized wardian case with a lofty roof. Should the beans then germinate in transit they would have root-hold in the coconut refuse, and room to grow above. The bamboo cases could be held in position in the usual way.

English writers of Fiction are at times in the habit of referring some of the incidents of their plots to Ceylon—as a place (like Africa) where anything may be said to have occurred, without anyone being in a position to contradict it. The editor of that interesting little school magazine

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lately drew attention to a passage in Smedley's novel "Lewis Arundel," to wit: "Of the latter class Lewis Arundel had been one, since the day when Fraro, a stripling of seventeen, fought his rival, the cock of the school, for having thrashed the newcomer in return for his accidental transgression of some sixth-form etiquette. Ten years had passed over their heads since that day: the cock of the school was a judge in Ceylon, weighed sixteen stone, and had a wife and six children." But in this instance there is good cause for believing that the reference to Ceylon is founded on fact and that the Judge mentioned was none other than Judge Smedley, a close relative of the novelist.

In the "Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" by that clever writer, Dr. Canon Doyle, reference is made in the opening sketch to "the tragedy of the ARKINSON BROTHERS at Trincomalee" which the detective—hero is mentioned as having investigated. So far as my memory can travel back I cannot remember any thrilling incident that might give warrant to the reference to the tragedy mentioned. Trincomalee, as far as my knowledge goes, is a peculiarly peaceful place; and the reference would seem to be one of those stray shots which fall wide of the mark.

ORIENTAL BANK ESTATES.

SUGAR—COFFEE—COCOA & C.

The eighth annual ordinary general meeting of the Oriental Bank Estates Company, Limited, was held on July 26, at Winchester House, Old Broad-street, E.C., Mr. Quintin Hogg presiding.

The Secretary (Mr. Henry Greey) read the notice convening the meeting, and the report and accounts were taken as read.

The CHAIRMAN said: Gentlemen, as this is my first appearance before you as chairman of this company, I hope you will be as patient as possible with me if any of the details are not quite at my fingers' end just at present. Indeed, the chairmanship of a company, dealing with articles of production such as tea and sugar, is by no means a bed of roses, as I daresay those of