

Correspondence.

To the Editor.

THE MANURING OF TEA.

11th Sept.

DEAR SIR,—None have come forward to give their experiences as to whether or no manuring tea deteriorates the flavour. I have noticed that the tea from one or two well-known estates (to name them would be invidious), where manure has been regularly applied, has gone down in price considerably of late. Whether this is due to the manure or to coarser plucking, would be interesting to know. If the flavour does deteriorate, no doubt the extra yield obtained more than compensates for the lower price; but still it is a question which should be settled, and whether all manures act in the same way. What gives the tea its flavour? Is it nitrogen? If so, nitrogenous manures should be chosen where flavour is required.

I am much obliged to the *South of India Observer* for their valuable note on the minerals contained in bracken. I wish some local scientist would help not only me, but all Ceylon tea planters, by publishing the names of our commonest up-country plants which do contain nitrogen.—Yours faithfully,
AGRICULTURIST.

WANARAJAH TEA COMPANY,

Sept. 17th.

SIR,—I see that the Chairman of the Company states in his remarks that the Wanarajah Company has the lowest rate of capital per acre (R380) of any company in Ceylon. This is not correct, the Yatayantota, Weoya, and Yataderia companies, all have a much lower rate of capital per acre.

The latter Company has 700 acres of tea in bearing or R271 per acre with a reserve fund of R2,000 which really means a capital of R243.—Yours,
Z. Y. X.

THE CASTOR OIL PLANT.

Kotmale, 18th Sept.

DEAR SIR,—Has the cultivation of the Castor Oil plant been tried to any extent in Ceylon? Does it require rich soil, and is there any difficulty in extracting the oil?

The plant grows freely round copoly lines, and where the soil is of average quality, yields a heavy crop of seed.

Now that castor cake is extensively used as a manure, it might be worth while trying it on some of the waste land so plentiful in the old coffee districts.

The imports I observe were valued at R86,893 for 1892. Those for 1893 and 1894 would show a considerable increase on this amount, and the saving in freight alone, if manufactured locally, would amount to a substantial sum every year.
A. F. S.

A TAX ON EXTENSIONS OF TEA.

DEAR SIR,—Messrs. Gow, Wilson & Stanton assert positively the danger of a probable collapse of the Ceylon Tea Industry. Of course the Tea Industry is of vital importance to your Colony, so much so that you have been able to have a cess put on all your tea for the purpose of opening new markets. When one foresees a danger one must recognize the quarter from which the danger pro-

ceeds. The danger in this case is from over-production, but this cannot be classed as a positive danger if no more tea is planted. It strikes me that you are raising money on the tea now made in order to open markets for tea which is not yet planted. I will leave you to judge of the class of Planter from whom the greatest addition to the present tea area is to be feared. But whether the future plantations be owned by individuals or by Mammoth Companies, it is equally certain that your present small proprietors are paying hardly-earned money for their benefit. Is there any particular difficulty in making the future owners of tea subscribe to the general subscription for opening out new markets?

You have the power to get your Government to tax the existing Planters. Why should you not insist on a *Tax on Extensions of tea*. The amount should be sufficient to defray all Campaign Expenses; and it made sufficiently severe to prohibit fresh Extensions, (whether by existing or prospective Tea concerns) there would be no need of Campaigns of any sort.

In Australia and America when there was any fear of outside competition the people "took the law" and they stopped any fresh influx of competitors.

How far this is feasible, or advantageous or possible, and a line of action to be imitated, I can have nothing to say in your case. I merely place the idea before you.

I think it very hard that Planters should be ruined for the benefit of others who have the whole world before them, or of those already doing well and who wish to do better. If the very fear of overproduction keeps prices down, how will it be when it has become a fact?

A VERY SMALL PART-PROPRIETOR,

AN INDIAN TEA PLANTER ON TEA TOPICS.

PRIZE ESSAYS.

SIR,—The award was given for the best means of spending 100,000 rupees in six months in introducing Ceylon Tea to America.

I have thought out a plan by which you could sell nearly 900 thousand pounds of tea, and possibly have 50 thousand rupees in hand.

The idea is bred from the advice given by an American to force our teas on their market at a loss.

Let us estimate for a loss of 1 anna per pound steadily. I think that you could manage monthly shipments, with plenty of noise over their arrival.

Estimate to purchase 100,000 rupees worth of tea in your Colombo market at an average of 1/4 rupee.

1st month you ship 2,500 maunds at 8 annas (the maund=80 lb. and the rupee equal to 16 annas) and you lose 1 anna per pound. (R5); the loss is 12,500 leaving a balance of R87,500.

With each balance a fresh stock of tea is bought and sold at a loss of R5 per maund.

In tabular form it shows somewhat as follows:—

	Md.	Loss at R5.	Balance.
	lb.		
1st. month	2,500	12,500	87,500
2nd. do	2,187½	10,938½	76,563½
3rd. do	1,914½	9,573½	66,989½
4th. do	1,674½	8,373½	58,615½
5th. do	1,465½	7,328½	51,289
6th. do	1,282½	6,411½	44,877½
Total	11,024½		
	80 lb.		
			881,980

Precluding this loss of 12½ per cent (which is not likely over a period of 6 months) the plan offers

great advantages. It is an advertisement to the men who deal in the tea. If it succeeded it would establish a direct trade with America. It would be advisable previous to sending a shipment to send a large variety of samples to the American dealers, and get advice as to the most suitable tea for their own purposes, or to invite some dealer to your market and offer him the pick of it at $\frac{1}{2}$ less than the market price.

As soon as the dealers find that they can sell your teas they will want more than the limited monthly bonus, allowed, and you will have an established demand from the dealers. You can leave them to push the teas when once they are known.

If you care to spend the balance, or possibly the profit on the capital on advertising it might do some good. If you make tea of suitable character it will make it easier for the dealers to dispose of it.

Don't hang your faith on the idea that yours is a superior product; the test of superiority is the preference shown by the dealers.

Get a good tea taster to haunt the auction rooms in New York, to study the sorts and kinds of tea which are paid for at certain prices, and to ascertain whether anything similar can be supplied from Ceylon. Perhaps some of your most despised districts are actually selling their weak teas at a low price which could be sold as first-class teas in America when once they are known.

The Planters' Stores and Agency Co., sent me a Compendium for Tea Planters, and this gives the export to India & Teas for the last 26 years to each country.

The maximum of 676,507 pounds was sent in 1882-83. The amount has steadily decreased till in 1892-93 it is only 49,957 lb. Say that the decrease is made up by shipments from London; this cannot be of much benefit to the Tea Industry. There is only one possible way in which it could be of benefit, and that is in the delay of sending the tea round; it has longer time to mature and lose some of its most objectionable properties.

Still the fact that our tea has not made more headway on its own merits, (whether of quality or low prices); to my mind clearly shows that there is some radical defect in it.

In the "Planter" the subject of maturing tea has been mooted and it is probably one which will gain in importance when once called to general notice. Let us suppose that our tea is sold and into the tea pot, within a year; it is probable that another year added to its age would render it more acceptable to the consumer.

This is my hobby and I always return to it—to suit the consumer. Can any one tell me by what means the dealers take steps to suit the consumer. Undoubtedly they do find out to a certain extent; and when once they find out what teas are preferred they pay more for it; gradually this attracts the attention of the Planters, who by degrees come round to the desired change in character. But all this strikes me as a very round-about way of working and it is time that the planting community appoint experts to discover what can be done in the way of suiting the consumers of all markets, and to lay down rules by which this can be done to a certainty.

Now that withering machines have become available, the Indian Tea crop is less dependent on the seasons; and it would be interesting to find out whether the Brokers notice any marked tendency towards more equal quality year by year.

There are many things that require clearing up, and of which we Planters have the most hazy notions.

How is it that the character of Oachar and Sylhet teas has suddenly been raised from medium to good? Is it due to change in methods, or of manufacture, or to a change in the requirements of the market? We don't know and no one will trouble to tell us.

If these districts attain to their leading place as in 1875-78 the other districts will strive to follow them, but without any distinct knowledge of the reason of the change. Well; it's a wide subject and none of us, as yet, can do more than is done by the Prize essays, and give a few hints from what we consider to be our experience. I am going slightly against my principles in asking you to humour the

dealers as I believe that they are more anxious to make the utmost profit out of every pound of tea than to stimulate consumption by supplying good tea, but I urge this course only as a first step and in order to introduce a large bulk of your teas into America.

In all the forms of advertising I do not see mentioned one very favourite device for introducing new products. And that is the coupon system published in several or certain newspapers. "This coupon will entitle the holders to 5 lb. of Ceylon tea for so many cents or dollars, apply to so and so."

Personally, I think that too much fuss is made over America, and that Canada or any other temperate-to-frigid climates would offer a better hope of success for our comparatively strong teas in the event of our entirely refusing to copy China in the character of her teas.

I was astonished to read, in the essay by "Open Sesame" the following:—"A Temperate Nation, they should certainly be judges of good tea, and where the thick, dirty, China teas, etc., etc."

The epithet of "thick" applied to China tea seems to me contrary to all I have heard of it, but a still greater mistake is the other epithet of "dirty," it is making too little of a really formidable rival, and a reflection on the taste of the Americans which they don't deserve. In Russia, I hear that certain China teas still sell at very much higher prices than we ever obtain for even our best teas, showing that the Chinese have succeeded in meeting the tastes of their customers, whereas we have as yet only succeeded in supplying our customers' wants. "1874."

UNSUITABLE WOODS FOR PACKING TEA

Kandy, Sept. 20.

DEAR SIR,—At the request of the Committee I enclose copy of a letter inviting attention to the advisability of avoiding the use of unsuitable woods for packing tea.—I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully,
A. PHILIPS.

Secretary.

(Copy).

Colombo, 3rd Sept. 1894.

The Secretary, the Planters' Association, Kandy.

DEAR SIR,—We enclose a cutting of Tea Leaf, sent us by certain friends of ours in New Zealand, which was taken from a package of a break of Tea bought by us in the Local market. You will notice one (the outer) side has become discolored and has a peculiar and objectionable smell. Our friends say they were so fearful that this smell would affect the Tea, that they disposed of the teas at once. They express their opinion in which we concur, that the discolorization and smell were caused by the use of unsuitable and unseasoned woods for the boxes. We have made enquiries and find the packages, (there were two breaks from different estates similarly affected) were in one case imported from Cochin and in the other locally made.

Our own recollection of the packages was that they were damp and musty and quite unsuitable for the packing of a sensitive article like tea.

Our object in bringing this matter to your notice is, that planters may avoid the use of unsuitable Ceylon woods in future and see that the wood is dry and properly seasoned. As shippers, we could wish Ceylon made packages were never used, as the construction and woods are, as a rule bad and unsuitable.

Japanese momi packages, on the other hand are invariably well seasoned and constructed and beautifully finished, standing the rough usage they must necessarily get, much better, to say nothing of greater uniformity in tares.

The Press would doubtless be the best means of circulating this matter, if you think the subject of sufficient interest for publication.—We are, dear Sir, yours faithfully, (Signed) per pro. Bathgate Pim, & Co., F. STREET.

P.S.—We have mislaid the cutting of lead referred to, but will post you same later. (Sgd.) F. STREET.