

with pernicious liquors, must contribute to lessen its virtues. Notwithstanding all this the frenzy for this Asiatic infusion has now become almost universal in the northern parts of Europe. But it cannot be denied that since its first introduction, it has contributed more to the sobriety of the nation than the severest laws and most eloquent harangues of Christian orators, or the best treatises of morality."

I have just seen a Tea named 'Dulcemoza.' I suppose it is so called, being intended to be drunk in every *Dulce Domum*.

A. M. FERGUSON.

BOTANICAL EXPLORATION IN BORNEO.

One of the most interesting papers read before the Royal Horticultural Society was that delivered by Mr. F. W. Burbridge, M. A., curator of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Dublin. He prefaced his remarks with a graceful allusion to the extensive social, political and commercial work which the late Sir James Brooke, better known as Raja of Sarawak, accomplished in Borneo. Sir Hugh Low was the first, however, to investigate the flora of West Borneo, and to commence the introduction of plants which were new to science. It was in 1877 that Mr. Burbridge and Mr. Peter Veitch were sent out by a Chelsea firm to make botanical collections, more particularly in reference to the discovery of new species of "pitcher-plants" known to exist in great varieties and numbers in certain parts of that country. Before starting, Mr. Burbridge received a pleasantly frank description of the inhabitants of Borneo from the botanical traveller, Mr. Thomas Lobb, who had visited the place a quarter of a century before, and who described the natives as an unmitigated lot of thieves and liars. Mr. Burbridge gave some highly entertaining accounts of the difficulties of travel in that remote country where such luxuries as vehicles were practically unknown, and, for the matter of that, impracticable. It took his party six days to travel a distance of 18 miles. He succeeded in bringing home no less than fifty new species of ferns, besides several new pitcher-plants and orchids. Mr. Burbridge was enthusiastic over the number of fine orchids—notably one with flowers with a spike exactly resembling a lily of the valley—and rhododendrons still to be introduced into English gardens. The opportunities for botanical exploration are yearly becoming so many that doubtless even Borneo will soon be exhausted of its rarities. The paper was attentively followed by a large audience, and the author received a hearty vote of thanks.—*O. Mail*, April 27.

VANILLA IN TAHITI.

The cultivation of vanilla has received a good deal of attention lately from our official representatives abroad. The British Consul in Tahiti (Polytesa) has just sent home an exhaustive report on the culture of the plant in his district, from which we take the following passages:—

The cultivation of vanilla has been carried on in the Island of Tahiti for several years, but is limited to a few districts only, that of Papara supply more than half of quantity sent into the market. The native mode of culture is, as a rule, simply to plant the cuttings of the vine under the shade of trees, and then to leave them to grow and twine round supports as best they can. Shade, though not dense, is necessary to ensure a successful crop of beans. About one year from the time of planting the vine commences to flower, and the inoculation, which then takes place, must be carefully attended to; this is generally carried out by women and children whose

light hands are best suited for the delicate operation. In from six to nine months from the time of inoculation the bean will be ripe for picking and curing. The method of curing is to keep the beans alternately indoors rolled in cloths, and outdoors during the day spread on mats exposed to the sun; for periods of three or four days at a time, until they are dried and ready for the market, but many native planters now dry their vanilla in boxes with glass covers. At the Tamarua plantation, which is under foreign management, great attention is paid to trimming the plants, and keeping the ground clear from weeds, and the vines are trained on well-selected supports invariably carefully attended to.

The boxes used for curing the beans are made of hard wood with glass covers, and measure 6 by 4 by 2 feet in depth. They are usually filled three-quarters full, the beans being placed on a blanket in the bottom of each box and covered with a double thickness of blanket at the top. The glass lids are then put on, and the boxes exposed to the sun for about fifteen days, when the beans are generally found to be sufficiently sweetened to admit of their removal to the drying-house, which is constructed of corrugated iron, and contains three tiers of wire shelves. The beans are laid on the top tier first, and are then moved to the second and third in succession as they gradually dry, and remain on the latter until they are perfectly dry and fit for the market.

The Tamarua plantation consists of about 51 acres. The annual expenses with an experienced foreman receiving 200*l.* per annum, amount to about 400*l.* The crop varies from 90 to 260 lb. per acre per year. An average of 175 lb. at the medium price of 4*s.* per lb. leaves a very fair profit.

The Tahiti vanilla is inferior to that of Mexico, Bourbon, and Mauritius, and the drawback is not improved by the careless manner in which the native, and even the European, dries and ties his bundles of beans for export. The following figures show the exports of vanilla from Tahiti during the last ten years:—

	1883.	1884.	1885.	1886.	1887.
Weight, lb.	... 2,726	5,454	4,919	8,406	7,610
Value, £	... 818	1,636	1,475	2,522	3,044
	1888.	1889.	1890.	1891.	1892.
Weight, lb.	... 12,569	8,789	15,882	24,685	25,560
Value, £	... 5,028	1,758	3,258	7,456	4,418

—*Chemist and Druggist.*

STANDARD TEA COMPANY OF CEYLON: ON COFFEE AND TEA CULTIVATION.

The third annual meeting of this company was held at the offices, 25, Fenchurch Street, on Tuesday, 1st May. The directors present were: Mr. Alex. Brooke (in the chair), Mr. Peter Muir, Mr. Robert Kay Shuttleworth and Mr. Norman W. Grieve. Among those present were Mr. A. E. Wright, Mr. George Johnston, Mr. H. L. Stables, Mr. E. Forman, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Capper and Mr. Robert J. Chippin fell.

The Secretary read the notice calling the meeting.

The report and accounts were taken as read.

The CHAIRMAN said that it was a pleasure for the directors to recommend for a third time a dividend equal to 10 per cent. per annum. Exchange had been favourable, averaging for the company 1*s.* 3 7/32*d.* The Indian Government had been assaying to "improve" exchange undeterred by the example of the United States Government and the bileous troubles consequent thereon in that country; but the Calcutta officials so far apparently had done little good or harm. Coffee as seen in the report had continued to contribute substantially to profits. There were received from all the estates in 1893 723 cwt., including 77 cwt. from Gordon, the newest acquisition, and not in 1892 accounts. Excluding Gordon coffee, the company had in 1893 646 cwt against 1892 530 pwt. Last year attention was made to hopes entertained by some in Ceylon of benefiting their coffee by planting among its greivilles as shade trees. This was brought home to him (the chairman) when visiting in February the Liddesdale

and St. Leonards estates. Coffee there was suffering a good deal from bug. Away from the grevilleas the coffee bushes were black—boughs, leaves, and such berries as there were. Under the full-grown grevilleas, where they had showed down a thick covering of their foliage on the coffee bushes and the adjoining ground, the coffee looked vigorous and thriving, boughs and leaves healthy, and berries plentiful; in marked contrast to the bushes beyond the range of the grevilleas. All the coffee on the company's estates unplanted with tea had been planted up with grevilleas. It was to be hoped that a cure had been discovered for at least one of the evils that coffee suffers from. The St. Leonards tea factory being now complete is a great comfort. It is a handsome building, and very perfect of its kind, reflecting credit on all concerned, especially Mr. Bagot, and also on Mr. Michie, who designed it and started the machinery. The paragraph in the Report about the leaf plucked before and after the completion of the factory, though strictly accurate, required modification. The quantity sold to neighbouring estates was for a net price. For purposes of comparison there ought to be a charge added for making the tea; and it would be fairer to say that the two-thirds crop sold in Uda Pussellawa realised a sum equal to £3,400, and the one-third in London £4,000. The produce of Eskdale used to be sold to the Kandapolla factory, where they treated the company well, paying for the tea on a sliding scale, giving a fair price as a minimum, and a share in whatever over that the tea eventually realised. Nothing could be fairer. The tea was now coming on, though there was still a great deal very young on most of the estates. It was so intermixed, tea and coffee together, that it was difficult to give exact acreage. Roughly Eskdale is the only estate without much tea not yet in bearing. Tea no doubt, the chairman contended, has its diseases; but it seems freer from disease than coffee and most articles of produce, owing probably to its periodic heavy pruning, when the plant is pretty well cut down altogether, and latent disease got rid of with the prunings—indeed, in some parts of the island the stumps left are cleaned with a solution rubbed into them. The chief risk in tea planting, bar war or such calamity, seems over-production and inadequate prices. Ceylon and Indian teas have displaced China in Great Britain, and doubtless in time will do so elsewhere. Native manufacture, whether by Chinaman or a nigger, means some indifference to cleanliness. The Ceylon process of tea making in a well-constructed factory is a clean one at all events. In St. Leonards factory everything is scrupulously clean—anyone might eat his dinner off the factory floor. The export demand for Ceylon teas increases. It helped our market tangibly when lately the home trade held off, probably frightened by rumoured heavy Colombo shipments; and the demand will continue to increase, and the cleanly, though possibly the most expensively made, tea of the British planter must more and more oust the native product, both in Europe and America. It must, however be borne in mind that it is a cheap article that has to be ousted, and that it is difficult to persuade those accustomed to buy a cheap tea to pay double the price for an article even many times as good.

The CHAIRMAN concluded by moving the adoption of the report and accounts, which was carried after remarks by those present, in which Mr. GRIEVE alluded to his planting the now mature grevilleas at Liddesdale in full expectation of benefit to the coffee, now apparently being realised, and said he had not quite shared the fears that coffee in Uva Pussellawa would smylddeudi out.

A dividend of 7½ per cent (making, with the interim 2½ per cent distributed on October 20th, ten per cent per annum) was voted, and also the paying off the balance remaining of the preliminary expenses, and the placing £2,000 to reserve. Mr. Robert Kay Shutt'worth was re-elected a director, and returned thanks.

Mr. WRIGHT said it seemed that there was a race for the coffee between bug and grevilleas. That bug might win by killing coffee before the grevilleas

were sufficiently mature; or the more happy result be obtained of the grevilleas winning by coming to maturity in time to save coffee. It was a highly interesting race. He moved, in very complimentary terms, a vote of thanks to the directors, to the managers of the estate, and to the Ceylon agents Messrs. George Stuart & Co., including Mr. Edward S. Griggs; and Mr. Johnston seconded.

The CHAIRMAN, in acknowledging the vote, expressed pleasure at Messrs. George Stuart & Co. and Mr. Griggs being included in it, and said he was sure he had with him Mr. Moir, his sole colleague in starting the Standard Tea Company, when he said how much they had been, from the commencement, wisely, thoughtfully, thoroughly guided by Messrs. George Stuart & Co., both in what they should buy and what they should not, from the time when they commenced with the purchase of the St. Leonards Estate and even before that.

Mr. MOIR briefly but emphatically assented; and the proceedings terminated.—*H. and C. Mail*, May 4.

THE ACME TEA CHEST.

In one of his recent reports, the Inspector-General under the Companies Winding-up Act pointed out that a very large proportion of the losses incurred by investors in connection with joint-stock companies was due to their putting money into enterprises promoted to work patents. Notwithstanding this quasi-judicial utterance, which means a great deal, the enterprising patentee, or the syndicate farming his invention, is ever on the *qui vive* to secure the co-operation of the credulous investor. The latest exploit of this kind is the Acme Package Company, which appears to be a Glasgow venture, no less than five of the directors being Glasgow men, no doubt, of highly-approved respectability. The company is formed, according to the prospectus, to acquire the business and patent rights, together with the special machinery and plant, of the Acme Tea Chest Syndicate, incorporated for testing the practicability, cost of production, and commercial value of an invention for the manufacture of tea chests and similar packages. These chests are made of lead-coated sheet steel, under hydraulic pressure, and certain advantages are claimed for them which it probably requires an expert in the tea trade to appraise at their true value. We do not profess to any more knowledge on the subject than is possessed by the ordinary investor; but we have read the prospectus very carefully, and we fail to discover any good reason why the public should find £50,000 in hard cash for what, after all, is only an enlarged sort of experiment. The whole capital is fixed at £75,000 but shares of the value of £25,000 are to be allotted to the parent company in part payment of the purchase money, in addition to which it is to receive £3,000 in cash, "to cover expenditure already incurred." That is to say, the syndicate is to be recouped for the whole of its outlay, to transfer the risk to the shareholders of the public, and to receive five thousand £5 shares as the price of good-will and patent rights. Whatever happens, the syndicate will be all right. If it gets its £8,000 in money, it will stand "five thousand shares to nothing" as a sporting man would put it. No evidence is forthcoming of the value of the plant, and, for all the investor knows, it may be worth nearer £800 than £8,000; but, whatever it is worth, the proposed arrangement is an uncommonly good one for the Acme Tea Chest Syndicate.

The authors of the prospectus appear to rely very much upon a trial of six weeks, when eleven thousand four hundred and sixty-nine chests were made and sold, showing a net profit of £268. We do not suggest that there is anything incorrect in this statement of results; but it is as well to point out the following clause:—"The foregoing statements in the separate sheet enclosed with the prospectus are founded on information supplied by the managing director of the syndicate, and the directors believe them to be in all respects true. It will, however, be a condition of allotment that applicants agree with the company as trustees for