

BRITISH CENTRAL AFRICA.

FROM SOUTHAMPTON TO CENTRAL AFRICA IN 59 DAYS
INCLUDING STOPPAGES.

The latest news to hand of this interesting country is in the *British Central Africa Gazette* of June 28th. Mr. John H. Nicoll writing about "Ohikusi's Country," says:—

"The Eastern slopes of the Kirk Range are remarkably fertile: the soil, though thin in some places, is yet mostly deep and rich; there are many well sheltered hollows at an elevation not too low for coffee cultivation: and the country generally is well wooded and watered."

A meeting of Blantyre land-owners was held in the Court House Blantyre on the 15th June, to discuss the question of forming a township at Blantyre. There were present, Mr. John Buchanan c.m.e. as representing Buchanan Brothers, Mr. I. Lamagosa, (Lamagosa & Co.) Mr. Kasimir Steblecki, Mr. J. E. McMaster, (on behalf of the B.O.A. Administration) and Mr. Lloyd (Government Surveyor.) After some discussion, during which the question of a future water supply by gravitation, shelter from prevailing winds, health, the conditions to be agreed to by those whose property should form part of the township and other subjects, were considered, the members of the meeting adjourned to the site proposed as the centre of the future township. After a careful preliminary examination, it was unanimously agreed that the best site for the town would be one which would have for its centre the small V shaped piece of ground belonging to H. M. Government, near Chilimoni's old village, and embracing the surrounding land of the Blantyre Mission; Buchanan Brothers, Lamagna & Co., Mr. Steblecki, Mr. H. M. Govt. Pettitt Bros. &c. It was also agreed that Mr. Lloyd should prepare a survey of 100 acres, more or less, to include the greater part of the ridge running from the "Boma" to Chilimoni's old village; and to the East, into the Mission land, and possibly Mr. Sharrers; and to the West, into Buchanan Brothers land.

Mr. A. J. Swan informed the Editor, that his journey from Southampton to Fort Johnston was made in 59 days, and that this included stoppages at Zomba and other places en route.

A straight road from Zomba to Manje (Fort Lister) was completed for over two-thirds of its distance and should have been ready for traffic about the middle of July.

Mr. Poulett Weatherley, who recently passed through the Shire Highlands, was on his way with a large expedition for Lake Mweru and the Luapula river. Mr. Weatherley hoped to reach and explore Lake Bangweolo and the Upper Luapula, south of Johnston's Falls, and expected to be away for two years.

In Noes on Natural History by Mr. J. Bewhill we read:—"More people in British Central Africa are killed, it is presumed, by crocodiles than by all the rest of the wild beasts put together. At Tete, it was estimated that annually, 50 people lost their lives; and at this station alone, last year 10 were carried away."

"The peculiar conformation of a crocodile enables him to attack and seize his prey unawares. A long canal connects their nostrils with the back of their throats, their eyes and ears are placed in the upper part of the head so that while in the water they can see, hear, and breathe, while they are practically invisible. When they go below the water, they close their nostrils and ears by valves, and their eyes are covered over by a transparent membrane. A flap comes over their gullet to prevent the water going down their throats, when they are holding their prey under, to drown it. Their teeth are hollow at the base and each tooth serves as a sheath for another which will in time replace it. It is generally supposed that the crocodile has no tongue, but there is one at the bottom of the mouth. The lower jaw is hinged to the back of the skull and it is this alone which moves, not the upper portion, when it is catching prey or sitting sunning itself in a bank waiting for the crocodile bird to come and pick the leeches from its mouth."

PRESERVING BOOKS IN THE TROPICS.

In the Indian Museum Library, where the books are kept in close-fitting glass cases, with a few ounces of naphthaline upon each shelf, little or no damage is caused by insects. From a note furnished by Mr. R. Chapman, late librarian, it appears that the paste used in binding the Indian Museum books is poisoned by adding about half an ounce of sulphate of copper to each lb. of paste, while books already infested are disinfected by shutting them up for four or five days in a close-fitting box of loose naphthaline with as much of this substance as possible between the leaves.—*Kew Bulletin.*

DRUG REPORT.

(From *Chemist and Druggist.*)

London, August 2nd.

ANNATTO.—Fourpence per lb. is the price required for good seed from Coconada, but only 2d per lb. was bid. For good West Indian seed 2½d to 3½d per lb. is the price.

QUINCHONA.—The only lot sold today was a 150-lb. case of damaged South American red bark in broken quill, which realised 5s 9d per lb.

COCA-LEAVES.—The price asked today for 4 bales good green Truxillo is 10d per lb.

INDIAN PATENTS.

Calcutta, Aug. 9th.

The fees prescribed in Schedule 4 of Act V of 1888 have been paid for the continuance of exclusive privilege in respect of the undermentioned inventions:—

ROTARY FANS.—No. 48 of 1890.—Henry Aland, of 73, Roupell Street, Lambeth, in the Co. of Surrey, England, Engineer for improvements in the construction of rotary fans for producing or inducing currents of air, for blowing, ventilating and other analogous purposes. (From 19th August 1894 to 18th August 1895.)

COTTON MACHINE.—No. 69 of 1888.—William Sulton Bocquet (deceased) late of Rawalpindi, India District, Locomotive and Carriage Superintendent, North-Western Railway, for a machine for pressing cotton and other substances of a like nature. (From 7th Aug. 1894 to 6th Aug. 1895.—*Indian Engineer.*)

UTILITARIAN SIDE OF BOTANY.

(From *Lord Salisbury's Address before the British Association.*)

Botanists do not seem to have realized, except in the case of medicine, that modern botany has an outlet. Chemists and physicians seek practical aims. Zoologists help the fishing industry; Professor Ray Lankester's laboratory at Plymouth contributes to the nation's prosperity as well as to research. But where is the practical outcome of modern botany? The brilliant work of Marshall Ward is full of purpose to many large industries, and that of Oliver has bearings on horticulture; but the trend of botanical work in this country has not been utilitarian. The Scottish Universities Commissioners made botany, bracketed with zoology, optional with mathematics for the degree in agriculture—an illustration of the little importance attached to botany by the lay mind. But it was its utilitarian side that gave the first impetus to the scientific study of botany. The plant world as the source of products of economic value and drugs attracted attention, and out of this grew by natural development the systematic study of plants. The point of view was that botany was an essential branch of medical study. A practical outcome was the establishment of botanical gardens—now in many instances appendages of teaching establishments, or mere pleasure grounds. But the gardens at Kew still maintain the old tradition of botanic

gardens as a centre through which botany renders scientific service to national progress. Modern botany has not yet found in this country its full application; it has not rendered the service due to the State. In horticulture and agriculture it should find a sphere of application by which it may contribute to our national well-being. Botanists must be the apostles of forestry; and forestry in turn will re-act upon their treatment of botany. Botany cannot thrive in a purely introspective atmosphere; it can live only by keeping in touch with the national life.—*London Times.*

TOBACCO IN SUMATRA.

AMSTERDAM, Aug 8.—A new limited company has been established at Rotterdam with a capital of fl. 2,000,000, which is already fully taken up. The company is styled Deli Agricultural Company, and will continue the working of the estates Mabar, Saentis, and Jermania in Deli, formerly belonging to the firm O. Eckels & Co. The director will be Mr. M. G. van den Arend, director of the Tobacco Company Ar-endsburg.

Of the crop of Sumatra tobacco of 1893 there have been sold in Holland up to this date 115,213 bales against 69,182 bales in the same period of the preceding year. For the Autumn sales, the first of which is to be expected on 18th September, there will be about 46,000 to 47,000 bales. According to the latest reports, the shipments of the 1893 crop have ceased, and the total quantity is about 167,000 bales. The sales held here in the month of July, although they went off satisfactorily, have not shown such high prices for the article as in the former months. The reason is that with the fine lots also lower qualities were offered combined, and thus the average bid must be lower. This system necessitates the buyers taking the fine and ordinary tobacco together, so that there remained very little unsold. Owing to the present war between China and Japan, fears were expressed that the Deli tobacco companies would not be able to engage the required number of coolies in China, and this has influenced the shares of some of these Companies. Deli Company's shares declined 31 per cent., Amsterdam Deli Company shares 14 per cent., and the Senembah Company shares 5½ per cent.

The following dividends have been announced.—Agricultural Company Gending 14 per cent., Agricultural Company Maron 7½ per cent.—*L. and C. Express.*

THE WORLD'S COFFEE SUPPLY.

Viewed broadly, it may be stated that since 1890 the aggregate yield of coffee in all places has been increased by nearly 4,000,000 bags says the *Grocer*, by far the greater portion of this heavier quantity raised having consisted of Brazil and Central American descriptions, which have been relied on more than most other kinds to fill up the awkward gaps that have been occasioned by the total or partial failure of the crops usually furnishing supplies of what are known as our "fancy" coffees, and which have always been in strongest request both for home use and exportation. These superior grades of colony coffee, that formerly came from Ceylon, Java, and the other East Indies in rich abundance, have, as is too well known by the London trade, till now been grown and shipped hither in diminishing quantities, so that it has been more difficult than ever to obtain parcels of the requisite standard of quality for consumption, either here or on the Continent, where the taste and liking for the plantation sorts of coffee have become decidedly more marked with every succeeding season. On the other hand, as intimated above, the cultivation of the commoner growths of coffee, such as Brazil, and their importation into the United States where they are generally have appreciated,

has gone on at tremendous strides within the last five or six years, and have thus stayed off what would have been a veritable coffee famine in the prolonged absence of consignments from fresh sources of production. This acquisition of supply, however, has not been completed without violent fluctuations in value, extending from 15s to 30s per cwt. at certain periods, and when long in the upward direction encouraging the planters everywhere to redouble their exertions in producing as plentiful a yield of coffee as possible in the subsequent year. The great American demand being thus satisfied, has left undisturbed, in a less degree than can be easily understood, the European markets, where a decoction of Brazil coffee is not the universal favourite with consumers; and although prices have been stiff and advancing since 1888, they have not been nearly so high as might have been the case if both the European and American markets had to be adequately supplied from the same kind of article. Besides keeping the value from mounting up to an extravagant height, the general outturn having been materially enlarged, has resulted in placing it much above the average of previous years, and in the table already referred to it will be seen that there has been a surprising augmentation in the supply of coffee since 1890. The figures pertaining to the present year, and more particularly those relating to 1895, are, of course, merely "estimates" for the time being, but may be taken as approximately near the truth, and help to make it clear that the expectations of still more abundant crops next season are founded upon reasonable calculations, as herewith shown:—

	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895
	Bags	Bags	Bags	Bags	Bags	Bags
Contr. America...	1,699,800	2,165,800	2,117,000	2,859,600	2,300,000	2,300,000
West Indian...	792,500	684,600	735,000	746,200	750,000	750,000
Rio.....	2,441,000	2,850,000	3,702,000	2,943,000	2,900,000	2,900,000
Santos.....	2,061,000	3,041,000	3,588,000	3,406,000	1,750,000	1,750,000
Bahia.....	169,500	156,000	308,000	192,000	400,000	500,000
East Indies.....	595,500	437,000	501,000	473,600	386,500	489,000
A'n and Mocha...	190,400	114,000	215,000	210,300	240,000	250,000
Java.....	918,000	398,700	695,800	952,800	315,500	850,000
Totals.....	8,657,800	9,297,100	11,857,800	11,383,000	99,420,00	12,638,000

—H. and C. Mail.

COFFEE IN SUMATRA.

The Coffee Company Uanea, has not yet declared a dividend, as the crop was still too small, having amounted to 649 piculs in 1893, while the estimate for 1894 is 3,250 piculs. The four undertakings are in a satisfactory condition, 1,527 bouws with 2,450,000 trees (equal to 1,500 to 2,000 acres perhaps) being cultivated.—*L. and C. Express.*