Our daily endeavour is now to obtain fresh markets. But, since production has already outrun the growth of population throughout the world, these can only be obtained by restricting the chance at present enjoyed by the tea-producers of other nationalities. The question is now and again asked, whether the Chinese and Japanese will be long content to take a subordinate place in respect of products which have long enjoyed pre-eminence? It is when endeavouring to seek a reply to that question that the *dicta* of experts come into play. No doubt it is to the use of machinery that the planters of India and Ceylon largely owe their successful rivalry with the pioneering countries in tea-growing. But there are experts who think even now, that the day must surely come when both China and Japan will avail themselves of this powerful aid, and that the competition of the future will exceed that of the present and of the past. Where would our own position in a parallel competition have been, had we to rely on the primitive methods that have hitherto supplied the producers of those countries! As yet we have achieved success. Could it have been attained, but for that very agent now declared to be the prime cause of the evils apparent all the world over? The answer to this question is too apparent to need demonstration. Therefore it is, that certain London experts call upon us, seriously to consider how far it may be for our future interests to extend the area now under the cultivation of tea. They say that if we push this much beyond the present area, and eventually deprive our Far East neighbours of the American and Russian markets, the chances are we shall force the natives of China and Japan into the adoption of those mechanical aids that have proved so useful to ourselves, and instead of mitigating, we shall thus increase the difficulties that we have at present to contend against.

For such reasons as these it may be satisfactory to know that the prospects of our outturn of tea for the present year are not largely in excess of the quantity harvested during 1893. All the world over—our mentors inform us—"there is now a demand for a restriction of output. Economic reasons are said to impose this. The difficulty as to restraining this output is the annually increasing area of land under colonial settlement brought under cultivation. Perhaps in the distant future, increase of population may overtake production. But it must be a long time before it can do so. Machinery, which has hitherto been looked upon as an unmixed blessing, has not, it is evident, altogether maintained that attribute. It is no use having cheap food if the wage-earning power of normal labour diminishes in a larger ratio than the reduction in its price. Ceylon teas may yet hold their place as the 'best the world produces,' but a limit in their quantity must be reached if you are not to overdo the capacity for their consumption."

Such is the gist of representations made to us by absent proprietors and others interested in the prosperity of our "tea industry"; but there is one factor which they have overlooked in respect of our competition with China, namely, the readiness with which the Chinese turn their tea-gardens into cereal or vegetable fields. When they found, in certain districts, that the demand for their tea among foreigners had fallen off, we have been assured on good authority, that this industrious and self-contained people simply made up their minds to grow that which served them as well, for their own sustenance, as the money of the foreigner. Our latest testimony to this effect came from a veteran Church Missionary resident many years in China, who said, in his district, the process of superseding tea by other culture, had gone very far. We see no reason why it should not go much farther—and therefore it is that we have a good deal of faith in the program put forth by Sir John Muir's Company, to the effect, that Indian and Ceylon tea planters have yet altogether to supersede the many million lb. of inferior China-Japan teas still used by English-speaking people. Surely, it stands to reason that the people of North America, Australasia and the Mother Country should drink the superior teas of India and Ceylon? That result alone, if achieved, would give us a demand for about 160 additional million of lb. of Indo-Ceylon teas; while for the 70 to 80 million lb. required in Russia and 20 million more lb. for the rest of Europe, all we ask, in competition with the Chinese and Japanese, is a fair field and no favour!

A NOVEL IDEA FOR PLANTERS' ASSOCIATIONS.

EACH PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION TO HAVE AN EXPERIMENTAL ESTATE.

In a late issue of a planting contemporary published in Calcutta, a writer from Southern India advocates some rather novel ideas in the planting line. In the main they are sound enough, and we agree with them more or less thoroughly, but we doubt whether the Associations of South India would care to go to the expense or trouble to carry out the methods he advocates. Briefly put, he suggests that each Association should subscribe enough money to start and keep a sort of experimental estate, having for its basis the staple cultivation of the district, tea or coffee, as the case might be. The 'staple' would in a few years, be probably able to make the whole estate self-sustaining, but until then of course the Association would have to make a small monthly grant for the up-keep. The remainder of the estate would be to try, as the writer puts it, the "various fads and new products recommended from time to time." Of course, such things should be taken up very carefully at first and extended on a commercial scale only when the soundness of the new venture has been proven. Otherwise the strain on the funds of the Association would be too severe and the whole thing "chucked up" in disgust. Apart however from trying new adjuncts, the success of which must necessarily be extremely problematical, a great deal of excellent work might be done in testing and comparing different methods of pruning, cultivating, etc., the staple products, *i.e.*, tea or coffee. A grave objection and a *prima-facie* one, is, granted the actual expenses for labour and so on are within the means of the Association, who is to direct the working and what is the director to be paid for his trouble? An able man would require a good salary, say some R300 to R400, and what body of planters could afford to pay this sum? The only way it could be done would be to ask Government to subscribe say 50 per cent of the funds raised by the planters themselves! then for the first few years devote the major part of the funds to planting up about half or more of the land in coffee or tea, utilizing the services of neighbouring planters for the work of supervision, or paying a monthly fee of R50 to a competent man to inspect account and generally direct the estate work. But we will not go much further into the subject at present till the idea has been a little more ventilated. We will content ourselves with remarking, that in the lieu of a Government experimental garden—not of course of the farcical master which passes under that name on the Nilgiris—such a one as sketched above, would be able to carry out a vast amount of good work.—*South of India Observer.*