

PICKINGS WITH A PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

The Hon. H. M. S. Mathews, Acting Director of the Department of Land Records and Agriculture Rangoon, writing under date of February 12th, 1894, makes the subjoined statements of the rice crop prospects in Burma:—

In the eleven chief rice-producing districts, which comprise the area under report, it is estimated that there are 4,727,438 acres actually under cultivation. This shows an increase of 8,376 acres as compared with last month's estimate, and an increase of 101,824 acres as compared with the area actually cropped last year. Information obtained in the threshing-floors shows that in Pegu and Tenasserim the grain is deficient in weight and that the ears are not so full as expected. It has therefore been necessary to reduce the *anna* estimates (outturn per cropped acre) in Pegu, Tharawaddy, Bassein, Wakema, Henzada, and Shwegyin.

This reduction of district outturns was partly anticipated in framing last month's estimate of the total amount available for export.

A further reduction has been made on receiving the detailed reports for January, and the amount available for export is now estimated at 1,320,000 tons of cargo rice, equivalent to 22,372,881 cwt. of cleaned rice.

The *Florida Farmer and Fruit Grower* states that the annual value of the world's coconuts is estimated at 60,000,000 dollars.

The *Horticultural Review* states that Dr. Caldwell, in a paper on the PRESERVATION OF FRUITS, calls attention to the injuriousness of salicylic acid so largely used in France in the preservation of fruits and vegetables, also to the danger from lead poisoning, to which consumers of acid fruits put up in tin cans are subjected. In Germany the use of solder, containing more than 10 per cent. of lead, for soldering tin cans containing fruits, is prohibited by a special law. The solder used in this country often has as much as 50 per cent. of lead. Such solder is dangerous, and its use should be abandoned. Sulphuring fruits is another bad practice. Borax, salicylic acid, sulphurous acid—all are injurious to digestion.

The same paper says in regard to the question of PEOPLE'S PARKS that it is gratifying to find that the smaller breathing spaces, embracing no more than a square, or two, are receiving considerable attention: their being of the greatest benefit, the more they are dotted right in the most densely populated parts of cities. An ideal city, it says, should contain four of these spots in every square mile, or a large central space in the same extent of land. The advantage of these containing only a square at short intervals over larger spaces that are less frequent, is that they do not interfere with street traffic and allow a complete sweep of wind along their entire length. Noting the tendency of people for urban residence, every possible means should be used to reserve ground for the purposes indicated. The longer the question is put off the more costly will it be to secure the necessary land.

A German scientist treats of the PEANUT as an article of food rich in albumen, of which it contains forty-seven per cent, together with niasteen per cent. of fat and non-nitrogenous extractive matters. He recommends the use of roasted peanuts in the form of soup or mush. On account of their cheapness, peanuts are recommended as a popular article of food, especially in poorhouses and the like; moreover, they are recommended as an article of food for the corpulent, for the diabetics, and for the subject of kidney disease, in the last mentioned of which foods rich in animal albumen are to be avoided.

According to Eastern tradition, the BANANA formed the primitive diet of primitive man. From the time when Alexander's soldiers, as Pliny says, invaded India, and found its sages enjoying themselves on

this luscious fruit, till the present time, the banana in tropical climates has taken its place in the first rank of the food of man. This fruit is typical of Eden. In the "fruit of the tree," says Moses the hygienic lawgiver, "is man's life," and did man live in accordance with reason under natural conditions, principally upon the fruit of the tree, drugs, doctors, nor hospitals would much longer trouble or destroy the inhabitants of its mundane sphere. To those who have not put the system to the test, we can truly say that such Edenic fruit as food will enable nature to cool and purify their system in the most effectual manner.

VARIOUS PLANTING NOTES.

LIBERIAN COFFEE, COCOA AND COCONUT PALMS seem a curious mixture to have on one plantation but in Ceylon they find the combination pay. We wonder whether any rash planters in South Travancore would care to try the recipe and report on results?—*S. I. Observer*.

NEW JAVA COFFEES—say Messrs. James Cook & Co. in their Monthly Despatch, 25th May—are only arriving in small quantities, the crop is likely to be much later than was expected; rains have caused some damage, and the proportion of inferior is said to be large, as many districts are suffering from leaf disease.

COCA-LEAVES AND KOLA.—The reports of the *Chemist and Druggist* for the week ending May 26th are deserving of attention by Ceylon men:—

Coca-leaves.—Fourteen cases good greenish-brown leaves from Ceylon (Huancoco character) sold today at 10d to 11d per lb.

Kola.—No sales were made today, although some good bright kola was shown. It was bought in at 1s per lb.

A NEW MODEL FARM.—Mr. A. W. B. Power, the popular Commissioner of Burdwan, before leaving, laid the foundation stone, according to a Calcutta paper, of the Power Model Farm, the sole gift of Babu Bonomali Kundu, a local zemindar and merchant. The farm and garden are to be placed in a piece of land of about 75 bighas, the property of Bonomali Babu, who is making arrangements to add to it another 25 bighas. Mr. Power, before laying the foundation-stone, made a short speech in response to Bonomali Babu's address, after which the Babu presented to Mr. Power a beautiful silver trowel. Mr. Power was a very popular and highly-esteemed Commissioner. He went home carrying with him the good wishes of the people.—*Pioneer*.

THE COFFEE CROP.—Proprietors of coffee properties in your island, especially of those in Uva, are jubilant over the prospects of the coming crop of the berry, the only drawback being the limited number of berries. Of course, the accounts received here by Hapatula and Badulla coffee owners vary much as to probable yield per acre because the fields are in many cases only partially covered, so much having been rooted out to make way for tea. All this is very remarkable, seeing how virulent the disease has been, but it bears out what one of the coffee pioneers (R. D. Gerard) said—that coffee would stand a deal of killing. I remember meeting him on the old road to the Kelibokka Valley with a party of Kandyans armed with cutties. He had just bought the Oanoonagalle estate, which had been grown over with jungle for years, and he was then going to set about clearing it from the overgrowth which quite hid the coffee. He declared that in two years' time he would gather 8 cwt an acre from it or more, and he did so, one field of 80 acres yielding 12 cwt! That was a wonderful field, with deep, rich soil amongst large boulders. Just now Ceylon peaberry commands 125s, while I remember it realising only 45s.—"Times of Ceylon."

LIBERIAN COFFEE AT THE STRAITS.—We call attention to our old friend, Mr. T. H. Hill's letter (on page 57) and very elaborate tables—surely Mr. H. could devise a more concise form for these, "lumping," the fields a little more and giving total results which would be looked at by many more readers. The statistics now published are an extension of what we gave in the *Tropical Agriculturist* in August 1893; and certainly returns of from 4 to 6 cwt. per acre are very encouraging. Mr. Hill would do well to give us a readable Report without so many figures.

KEROSENE OIL AND ECONOMY.—A large consumer signing himself "Poor Joe" says:—I can give an opinion on the above subject seeing I have made it a study for this last 4½ years and burn it every night at the rate of 4½ gallons every night. A lamp running at its full power, will give off a stronger smell than a lamp running at half power; a lamp running under ½ power will consume less oil by a great deal than when it is running under full power. I am aware that some lamps when turned down give off an offensive smell, but that is not the fault exactly of the oil, but of having a foul burner. If your chambers are crusted with black it is easily removed by heating a little turpentine, say about a gill and apply while warm and then a very slight rubbing will remove all dirt. If your burner is choked inside *the dust recess* with flies or trimmings you must expect your amp to give off an offensive smell when turned down, for the chamber gets a great deal more heated by a low light than it does at full power.

FIBRE OF AGAVE AMERICANA.—Mr. Thurston exhibited samples of Fibre prepared at Coimbatore:—(a) by scraping dry leaves; (b) by maceration; and of the bamboo scrapes used in the former process, in illustration of a note by him, published as Bulletin, No. 30 of the department of Land Records and Agriculture, Madras. It is there stated that "the Fibre of *Agave americana* (from Coimbatore) has been very well reported on (in England), and is considered to be nearly as good as Manila hemp. "The extraction of the Fibre is performed by hand and no machinery is used. The Fibre is extracted by two methods, viz. (a) scraping and (b) maceration. (a) *Scraping.*—The leaves are cut, the sharp spines removed with a knife, and about six inches cut off from the top of the leaf. The leaf is then split longitudinally into four or five pieces, which are beaten with a wooden mallet and placed on a board 4' x 4" x 3" held firmly by the toes. The pulp is then removed by means of a bamboo scraper, one edge of which is shaped in the form of a blade, and the Fibre dried by exposure to the sun. The fibre obtained by this simple process without washing or bleaching is very clean and free from pulp. The staple is not, however, very long. It is made into thread, which is used in weaving grass mats. (b) *Maceration.*—As in the previous method of Fibre-extraction, the leaves are cut, and the spines removed. The whole leaf is then beaten with a wooden mallet, and thrown in bundles into tanks or wells in which it is left to macerate for a fortnight to twenty days, or until the pulp is quite decomposed. The bundles are then taken out dried and bleached in the sun. "The Fibre obtained by this process is longer than that obtained by scraping but is not nearly so clean. A very large supply of the Fibre could be obtained, if a demand for it arose. At present it is sold in the bazaar at the rate of 2 annas per lb. but, if a regular trade in it was started, the price would doubtless be reduced. With reference to his statement that "a very large supply of the Fibre could be obtained, if a demand for it arose," Mr. Thurston stated that the *Agave* is planted by the Madras Railway Company primarily as a protective hedge, and not as a Fibre-producer; and that, in the event of a demand for the Fibre arising, the cultivation of the plant would probably have to be extended. Dr. Thurston is thanked for his interesting communication.—*Madras Agri-Horticultural Society.*

"AN EXPERIMENTAL ESTATE" to be worked under the control of each Planters' Association is the novel suggestion propounded by a Calcutta contemporary. We should not go so far as an "estate"; but an "experimental station" of some 10 or 20 acres, on which a good deal could be done in trying different manures or different modes of cultivating staple or new products, ought not to be beyond the Ceylon Planters' Association. We will not urge the proposal for the present, however; but reserve it until the capture of "America" a year or two hence gives the assurance of a new lease of prosperity for the "tea industry" which, at present low prices, cannot be said to be in a condition calculated to encourage expenditure in a new direction by the parent planting body.

TROPICAL VEGETATION.—At the gardens of the Royal Botanical Society, Regents' Park, Mr. David Morris, C.M.G., delivered the first two lectures upon "Tropical Vegetation," to a crowded audience of Fellows and visitors, illustrating his remarks with many limelight views of tropical scenery and vegetation in the West Indies and coasts of central America. He showed how the mangrove, one of the verbena family, had become almost amphibious. To enable the seeds to sow themselves in the mud in which they grow, they were kept upon the tree until a root of over 1 ft. long had grown, when the increase of weight sent them straight down into the mud to a depth of 3 in. and 4 in., with the first leaves already formed, and the young plants able to take care of themselves. Thus was found one of Nature's agents in forming dry land. Other instances were found in the orchids and illandsias.—*Daily Chronicle*, May 7.

INDIAN PLANTING AND AGRICULTURE.—We have to acknowledge the receipt from the Department of Revenue and Agriculture (Government of India) of Returns of Agricultural Statistics of British India and the Native State of Mysore for 1892-93 with Appendices giving the estimated area, among other things, of the cultivation under different products throughout British India. The information contained in this Blue Book of 84 pages is indispensable to us in revising our information for staple products. The main results are a total area under coffee of 122,788 acres against 127,648 in the previous year; of tea 360,463 acres against 381,219, which is inexplicable except we suppose the figures for 1891-2 were exaggerated; and for cinchona 14,653 acres, against 13,862—an increase which we also consider to be very puzzling, if not indeed explained through an extension of the Government Gardens.

THE COLA NUT.—The wonderful endurance shown by the West African negroes, who habitually masticate the bean when they have any specially hard work to perform, has long been known, and the drug seems now to be coming into more general use for the preparation of a drink similar to cocoa or chocolate. A large consignment has recently been sent to France, where the military authorities are taking it up for use in the army. A demand is also said to be developing in connection with the preparation of artificial coffee, which appears to be improved by the admixture of a certain amount of the coarser qualities of the bean. Recent researches show that while cola contains but little of the astringent tannin, which is so prominent a feature of both tea and coffee, it possesses about the same proportion of the refreshing theine as occurs in these beverages.—*Rural Californian*.