

THE AMERICAN CONSUL'S REJOINDER.

United States Consulate at Ceylon, Colombo,
Oct. 22.

DEAR SIR,—The "Colombo Merchant" who sent you the "Shipping and Commercial List" of New York, containing my report on Ceylon tea, presumes to tell me and the readers of your paper, how I ought, or ought not, to write my official report—*noblesse oblige*.

In the line of duty, his sapient remarks will be sent to the Government at Washington with my comments thereon; but as the absence of the writer's name may detract somewhat from the force of those remarks, I would be glad to have them authenticated.

As for the cotton drill of the local Mill being "much cheaper" than Pepperill drill, I deny it and say that for quality the price is dearer.

For obvious reasons, I would not think of asking a Director of the Spinning and Weaving Company about the price and quality of their goods. I prefer to adopt a more practical method of obtaining that information.—I am, sir your obedient servant,
W. MOREY, Consul.

RESOURCES OF BRITISH HONDURAS.

A very exhaustive report on the present condition of the Colony of British Honduras, prepared by the Governor, His Excellency Sir Alfred Moloney, K. C. M. G., has recently been issued by the Colonial Office (*Colonial Office Reports; Annual, No 73, 1893*). From this Report the following general survey of the resources of the Colony will prove of interest not only in this country, but in many portions of Her Majesty's Possession.

The commercial prosperity of colonies which depend on a limited number of articles of export is liable to disastrous fluctuations. Striking instances are to be found in the ruin of a once extensive trade, that had been confined to a single commodity, from competition and the inevitable fall in price, from the ravages of rats or locusts, or from a single blight. So far British Honduras would seem to have stood exceptionally in the Colonial Empire in having for the past two centuries relied almost entirely upon its forest produce and on its rivers as means of transport to the sea. Some of our West African Possessions have stood somewhat similarly since palm oil succeeded the slave export trade; that industry is now seriously threatened by animal fats and other sufficiently available and equally suitable commodities. One of the extracts from coal tar practically killed the once flourishing and profitable cochineal trade, and also affected the indigo trade of India. Beet has contributed to the depression of the sugar trade. The substitution of iron for wood in shipbuilding, particularly in men-of-war, at one time almost killed the large timber export trade of the Gambia and West Africa. These are again attracting attention for their mahogany, cedar, rosewood, dye and other woods; and the marked and progressive revival of the trade, and the dimensions it is assuming must naturally be a subject of direct concern and anxiety to all wood-cutting centres.

Mahogany and logwood trees have been for several generations the principal articles of commerce in British Honduras, but they are said to be getting more and more difficult of access and consequently more expensive to work and get to the market. The value of these industries is not for one moment questioned. On the contrary, it is highly desirable to promote them and to protect the forests on which they depend. The Colony's motto, "Sub umbra flores," should have now a more extended application.

In view, however, of such experiences as have been referred to, it has been generally accepted that even in commerce it is a hazardous experiment to "carry all your eggs in one basket."

As guides in establishing profitable industries we must look to the source of supply, the prospects

and disposal of growth, and the area of the field of demand. It has now become a generally accepted policy in the Colonies to encourage the production of varied staple articles of export of a more or less permanent character. Much has been done in this direction by the active interest and assistance of the authorities of the Royal Gardens at Kew to develop new industries and to distribute plants of commercial importance. With this object there have been established in all our West Indian Possessions Botanic Stations. A similar institution has been established as a tentative measure in Belize, the capital of this Colony, which has such exceptional advantages whether we look to climate, soil, or a market. It has with some justice been advanced that British Honduras can be made the tropical garden of North America, and it may be remembered that 28° North is generally accepted as the frost line, which may be said to mark the limit northwards within which the growth of economic products in demand can be profitably undertaken. FERTILITY OF SOIL.—As to fertility of soil, what more convincing proof can be advanced than the facts that in the sugar areas to the north and south of the Colony cane has been known to "ratoon" from 20 to 30 years, and that in the rich and naturally fertilised valley beds, bananas have maintained themselves without degeneration for 10 to 12 years, if not longer.

PRODUCTS.

The products of cultural industries, still really in their infancy, are chiefly bananas, plantains, coconuts, coffee, henequen, Indian corn, limes, mangoes, sour and sweet oranges, pineapples, avocado pears, rubber, to which there should be added in time arnatto, cacao, coir, ground-nut, indigo, jute, pita, ramie, spices, vanilla and doubtless other promising marketable commodities.

To the small extent to which the banana has been successful to the north of the frost line referred to, where it will always be a precarious crop at best, it has proved inferior in quality to the West Indian and Central American fruit. Whilst in 1879 it did not appear among our records its export was represented by 72,436 bunches in 1891.

The plantain is a staple of food over a large section of Negroland in West Africa. The descendants of its interesting people to the north of the Gulf of Mexico represent a consuming power of probably 9,000,000. Tons of this fruit from Cuba and elsewhere meet with a ready sale in Florida. This Colony's shipments to New Orleans rose from 50,000 plantains in 1879 to 1,580,200 in 1891.

CACAO.—The home of the cacao is in tropical America. One or more valuable species may belong to British Honduras and include that which is said to be the best in a marketable sense. Notwithstanding, it may be said to be here remarkable for its absence from the export cultures of the Colony which have grown in value, in round numbers, from \$12,000 in 1879 to \$296,665 in 1891. Yet, in the Island of Grenada, of the West Indies, and but 5° to 6° to our south, and with an area of 133 square miles and an estimated population in 1889 of 50,000, cacao has developed into its main export, which reached in 1890 a value of 228,319%.

GROUND-NUT AND VANILLA.—The clover-like ground-nut, so desirable as a pasture where the bread-nut is not available, apart from its valuable oil-yielding seed, and henequen would seem to be admirably suited for growth in the pine ridges, as would also the Ceara rubber. That interesting orchid, the vanilla, whose home is also in Central America, is one of the most valuable products and has, near at hand, a rich and ever-growing market. Its cured pod sometimes fetches as much as 30s. per lb. It is a plant easily propagated by means of cuttings, and has developed into a considerable export from Vera Cruz.

COFFEE.—Our Guatemalan neighbours seem to turn no small attention to the cultivation of the Arabian coffee. Whilst it will doubtless prove suitable to the high areas of the Colony, the introduction of the hardy and rich Liberian coffee—so well suited to low-lying areas, with its comparatively heavier crop, averaging from 6 lb. to 8 lb. per tree, 400 of which

can be accommodated on each acre—should receive the consideration it deserves. Judging from the exports from the Malay Peninsula, and the imports to the United States, there is a promising field of demand offered in the direction of the later for the growth of Liberian coffee and of such commodities as jute and other fibres, indigo, ginger, and spices generally.

COHUNE OIL.—The Cohune oil industry remains yet dormant, if I expect the use for domestic and cooking purposes to which it is put among the families of mahogany and logwood cutters. Two-fifths of the Colony, viz., 1,933,762 acres, are, it is estimated, under this graceful native "Prince of Wales" palm. If we allow 25 trees to the acre, a very low average, and 1,000 nuts as the annual yield per tree, and accept that 100 nuts yield a quarter of oil, this dormant industry, if awakened to full activity, would yield 276,537 tons of oil at a price per ton appreciably above that which obtains for coconut oil, to which it is superior.

PINE PRODUCTS.—Then, again, apart from its resinous property, which was turned, I understand, to profitable account some years back, the native pine is estimated to cover a third of the Colony, or, 1,613,136 acres, and to average 100 trees per acre on our great southern pine ridge. Its wood is said to almost equal that of the yellow pine of the United States, which, in the beginning of 1888, was reported to have been nearly worked out and might, in part, have to be replaced by the local pine. The growth on the older pine-ridges of the Colony may, when opened up, prove of sufficient age and diameter to make it worth while to have attention turned to adding this timber to our exports, as can doubtless be done with many other valuable woods as yet unknown:

COCO-NUTS AND HENEQUEN.—The coral patches and marine islets we know as "Cays," that fringe to the eastward the waters of this Colony, offer a condition of site exceptionally favourable for the growth of henequen and the coconut tree, described as the most tender of palms as regards frost, the friend of tropical agriculturist. The area of such Cays is given approximately as 112,527 acres, which might be turned to much more profitable uses and yield than obtain at present. With even a quarter of such acreage suitable for the culture of such products as coconuts and henequen, it could be covered with plantations of the former numbering 2,813,200 trees with an annual yield of at least 100 nuts (a low average) aggregating 281,320,000, worth, at the current rate per thousand, 1,406,600. I might explain that such an aggregate of nuts on the basis of 1 lb. from 7 nuts or 14 per cent. fibre, should yield 18,000 tons of fibre that would realise in the London markets from 30% to 10% per ton, according as it is suited for brushes, mats, or stuffing.

The annual export from the Colony of coconuts during the past five years have averaged in number 1,651,333, and in value \$32,506.

SAPODILLA AND PIMENTO.—That delicious fruit, the sapodilla, if picked green, will stand shipment; the tree abounds in this Colony, and apart from its valuable and durable wood, yields an extract which contributes mainly to the manufacture of what is advertised and so widely used in the United States as "chewing gum." Then, again, trees yielding the pimento of commerce abound in a wild and unappreciated state, yet this spice was exported from Jamaica to the value of 81,326. in the year 1890-1.

—*Kew Bulletin.*

DEAFNESS. An essay describing a really genuine Cure for Deafness, Ringing in Ears, &c., no matter how severe or long-standing, will be sent post free.—Artificial Eardrums and similar appliances entirely superseded. Address THOMAS KEMPE, VICTORIA CHAMBERS, 19, SOUTHAMPTON BUILDINGS, HOLBORN, LONDON.

VARIOUS PLANTING NOTES.

ROYAL GARDENS, KEW.—Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information for September has for contents:—Vegetable Resources of India; Botany of the Hadramaut Expedition; Decades Kewenses: IX; Miscellaneous Notes.

MR. WILLIAM LUNT, in the employ of the Royal Gardens, has been appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Assistant Superintendent of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Trinidad. Mr. Lunt was also lately employed as botanical collector, attached to Mr. Theodore Bent's Expedition to the Hadramaut Valley, Southern Arabia.—*Kew Bulletin*

CENTRAL AFRICA AND PLANTING PROSPECTS.—The Board for Botany of the Royal Society decided not long since to send Mr. Scott Elliot, the well-known Botanist, to make a botanical exploration in Central Africa. Mr. Elliot reached his destination a few weeks ago. His first report has been received. It shows that the flora over the whole of this region up to an altitude of 6,000 feet remains unchanged, and points to the probability that it extends similarly down to the Zambesi. There are only very few trees to be seen, the commonest being the euphorbia and erythrina, and the variety of plants is likewise somewhat limited, the principal being the acanth—a plant richly ornamented with red spikes of flowers and large prickly leaves. The banana supplies the wants of the people, but coffee and tobacco and all other tropical plants could be grown if properly cultivated. He is, however, prevented from progressing as satisfactorily as he could wish by obstructive weeds, which grow in great thickness and to a great height, and, as the compass shows most extraordinary variations, he finds it almost impossible to make out his course.—*H. and C. Mail.*

THE ATTEMPT to train European and Eurasian apprentices for work in Botanical gardens is unfavourably reported on, and, for want of recruits, the Botanical Superintendent at Saharunpore proposes, with some diffidence to train juvenile offenders from the Bareilly Reformatory for botanical work.—*M. Times*, Oct. 24.

THE UNEMPLOYED TEA-GARDENS.—We read that the offices of Tea-garden agents are being deluged with letters from those who are out of work or who expect to be soon. The world seems to have Orange-Pekoe and Congo enough! But the question is whether there is anything at all that the world wants which unemployed might turn to supplying!—*M. Times*, Oct. 25.

CEYLON TEA IN AMERICA.—It is interesting to learn of the number who have begun, or are about to begin, a business in supplying America with Ceylon tea. The Company for whom Mr. Webster travels was perhaps, earliest in the field having commenced, we believe, in 1892 and seemed almost at once to secure considerable orders from Canada as well as the States. Messrs. P. B. Buchanan & Co. turned their attention to America in 1891, and for three years the senior partner visited the States, but did not secure much attention to India and Ceylon teas till early in 1893. Mr. A. E. Wright organized a business agency for certain Ceylon tea during his visit in the Exhibition year; and a contemporary's correspondent mentions that Mr. Farr (formerly of Wattson & Farr) is doing a fair and increasing business in Ceylon leaf; while we know of Mr. J. A. Henderson's special visits to New York on behalf of the enterprising Firm he represents. But all this—to judge by the actual figures representing exports so far—is as nothing to what we have a right to look for when once a "Ceylon campaign" is properly set going.