TEA RAISING IN THE UNITED STATES.

The Department of Agriculture Presents American Tea in Tablet Form.

GUY ELLIOTT MITCHELL.

The Department of Agriculture has been making some experiments, which from present results seem to promise a revolution in the method of packing and preparing tea. The usual method adopted by tea raisers heretofore has been quite crude in that the dried tea leaves were merely stowed in a loose and bulky package. The effort of the Department of Agriculture is to furnish pure tea in a most convenient form and in a manner to protect the leaves from losing any of their strength through exposure to the air. This has resulted in a method of compressing the leaves into tablets, each of sufficient size to make a delicious cup of tea. What would ordinarily make a big package of tea can by this unique method be placed in a space about the size of a safety match box. Another significant feature of the experiment is that the tea used in these tablets is not imported, but, on the other hand, is grown at the experimental tea gardens of the Department of Agriculture at Summerville, S. C. A few weeks ago Dr. B. T. Galloway, chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry received a large box of sample packages from Summerville.

TEA TABLETS.
The Bulk of Loose Leaves is Equal to One Box of Tablets.

Each box of compressed tea contains twenty tablets about the size of a cent, but probably twice as thick. The various kinds of tea such as Oolong, American Breakfast, black and green, etc., are all prepared in tablet form ranging from sepia to dark green in color. The tablets as heretofore stated are made from tea grown at the Pinehurst tea gardens Summerville, S. C. and contain the purest of leaves thought to be unsurpassed by any imported tea. The tablet form is accomplished by compression with machinery. The directions furnished for using the tablets are as follows:

"Drop one tablet in teapot for each cup of tea desired. Pour in freshly boiled water, and after allowing it to stand four minutes, stir gently, strain, and serve. If made in the cup, use one tablet. Tea will immediately settle to the bottom of the cup, then strain the liquor into another cup, and sugar and cream as desired."

While it is explained by officials of the Department that this new form of tablet does not improve the flavor or taste of the tea, the chief value lies in the fact that the product occupies less space. A pound package of ordinary tea, it is stated, would occupy about twenty-five times as much room as one of these little packages of twenty tea tablets prepared by the Agricultural Department.

Tea Handled by Machinery.

The effort of the Department of Agriculture for sometime has been to find means for providing food for the Army and Navy which could be prepared in such a way as to save space. Tablet form naturally suggested itself to them and it is now believed by the government officials that the tea tablets will fill the requirements not only of the general government but those of general merchandise and family use. An important feature in connection with compression of tea into tablet form which should be considered of prime importance is that modern machinery takes the place of the ancient manual operations of the Chinese. Of course, a great advantage of the machine in the tea industry is reduction in the price of labor, but a more important item is the elimination, as far as possible, of human contact. By testimony of travelers in the Orient it is stated that the tea factories of that section are as a rule anything but cleanly, the result of the herding together of so many people—not very clean or healthy people—in cramped and often very hot workshops. The tea tablets as prepared by the Department of Agriculture, are made from the tea after it has been dried and rolled. It is then put through a boiling process after which it is placed in small moulds about the size of a cent, where by means of great force, it is compressed into small tablets. The operation of the machinery is so perfect and so rapid that the leaves can be picked from the plant at noon and in less than three hours, or in time for supper, can be made into tablets and ready to serve on the table. Few people of the United States are aware that tea is grown in this country. As a matter of fact, however, this country not only raises tea but produces an article, said by experts, to be of a higher grade than imported tea and which has no equal for cup qualities.

For years there has been a gigantic struggle between British and Chinese tea growers for supremacy in the world's tea trade. The most important feature of this struggle has been the substitution by the British of modern and specially constructed machinery in place of the ancient manual operations which the Chinese seem to envelop in mystery. Labor in India, while cheap, was not cheap enough to accomplish the overthrow of the Chinese producers and leave a margin of profit. The conflict between the rivals thus settled down to a trial of watch, thermometer, and steam or water power, against the unique and unnecessarily elaborate functions of the Chinese manipulator. On the up-to-date British tea estate almost the whole process of tea making from the transportation of the plucked leaf from the gardens to the factory, to the final boxing of the finished product, is performed by machinery. With all this machinery, however, it is necessary that two processes must be performed by human hands—the plucking of the leaf from the bushes and the cutting out of inferior leaf or accidental admixtures such as stems, straws, etc., from the finished product.

The intense activity in the tea industry of other lands awakened a like interest in the United States. A hundred years ago the first tea plant was introduced at Middleton Barony on the Ashley River near Charleston, S. C. Mr. Junius Smith in the forties made experiments in tea culture at Greenville, S. C. and in the fifties the United States Government collected in Asia and distributed tea seed by the Patent Office through the south Atlantic and Gulf states, which later gave rise to many thrifty little gardens capable of supplying all domestic wants. While these experiments prove the adaptability of the tea plant to the United States they did not prove the possibility of a lucrative industrial undertaking. The United States Department of Agriculture, however, in the last quarter of the 19th century undertook an investigation along this latter line and established an experimental station near Summerville, S. C. For various unavoidable reasons the undertaking was a failure and abandoned. Towards the close of the century Dr. Charles U. Shepard, at his own expense renewed this plantation and later received the general assistance of the Department of Agriculture. This is the Pinehurst tea nursery of to-day.

INSIDE OF THE TEA FACTORY AT SUMMERVILLE, S. C.

The American Tea Garden.

The Pinehurst gardens embrace at present about 90 acres of tea plants in various stages of advancement and produce from a considerable variety of seed over 10,000 pounds of dry tea annually. The original seed for the Pinehurst tea gardens was procured through the offices of the United States Department of State and the Chinese Government from the celebrated Dragon's Pool estate near Hangchow, China, whose output commands too high a local price to admit of its exportation.

Picking tea at Pinehurst is done by a carefully trained and well superintended corps of colored children who show great aptitude in this direction. Instances have occurred of fine plucking by one child in a day of over 50 pounds of greenleaf whereas the average in the Orient hardly exceeds 20 to 30 pounds. Experiments at the Pinehurst gardens show that tea from all modern climates could be made as productive here as at their source, a change in climate and the difference in cultivation and manufacture having a tendency to affect the quality of tea when prepared for the table. This is the reason assigned for the difference in the American grown tea from that of imported. The Pinehurst early season tea is considered more delicate and milder than that of cooler climates. The autumn season tea is stronger in color and taste and resembles the product from the more southern regions of the Orient.

The Secretary of Agriculture believes that there is an excellent field in the United States for a home tea industry for we consume approximately 75,000,000 pounds of tea annually or a little less than one pound per capita. Our people, he says, pay at retail about $40,000,0000 a year for tea as against $150,000,000 for coffee and $1,200,000,000 for alcoholic beverages. It has been calculated that the American people drink 400,000,000 gallons of tea annually. We are primarily a nation of coffee drinkers; in proportion to our population we consume only about one-sixth as much tea as the Britain, whether at home or in the colonies. While the United States does not import the cheapest kind of tea, nevertheless our importations are chiefly of inferior qualities. The first demand of the American consumer is cheapness, and often-times he will purchase tea of poor quality on account of accompanying allurements of crockery and other gifts. Nevertheless comparatively small consignments of better grades are imported for those who are willing to pay for them.

Colored Children Picking Tea.

The First Tea Factory Under the Flag.

Malt Coffee as Food.

A Russian army doctor attached to the 2d Turkestan Rifle Battalion has been making some interesting experiments in the matter of nourishing soldiers. Dr. Cyrillus Koljago administered to ten men for ten days malt coffee as their sole beverage, with the result that their weight increased during the time to the extent of 832 grammes a man. A like experiment was made by giving tea to the same number of men of similar constitutions and for the same number of days, and in their case the doctor certified a decrease of weight per man to the extent of 520 grammes. He then put the twenty men together back on to tea, and those whose weight had been so signally increased by the malt coffee had within ten days lost 660 grammes a head. The doctor now states what is very important to note, namely, that his experiments have led him to believe that it is not merely the nourishing attributes of the malt coffee which mark this increase, but that its effect is mainly to increase the action of the digestive organs, enabling them to draw from all other food taken the utmost quantity of nourishment each may contain.

An Insult to the Horse.

"Would you mind walking the other way and not passing the horse?" said a London cabman, with exaggerated politeness, to the fat lady who had just paid the minimum fare. "Why?" she inquired. "Because if 'e sees wot 'e's been carrying for a shilling 'e'll 'ave a fit," was the freezing answer.

Philippine Cities.

There are four towns in the Philippines with a population exceeding 10,000 each, and thirty-five with a population exceeding 5,000. Manila is the the only incorporated city in the islands, and its inhabitants number 244,732.

The Docking of Horses.

Agitation is promised to urge the passage of laws against docking horses, and owners of horses are being petitioned to join in the crusade. Dealers never dock horses, except at the request of a buyer. To offer a horse for sale with a bob tail is to create the suspicion that it is "second hand," one that has seen service before in the city, instead of being fresh from green pastures. Yet the dealers rarely sign such petitions. They declare that the operation of docking is not excessively painful and is atoned for by the easy life it leads to. To have the tail shortened is the initiation the rough horse pays to gain the comfort and light duties of a private stable.

Fashion is not the only reason to actuate the buyers in having their horses docked, but it is the principal one. A few say that the shortening of the tail makes for cleanliness, as the tail does not become draggled with mud and dust when docked, and another set maintains that it is really a comfort to a horse to remove the heavy useless mass of hair. City horses do not graze in pasture, so the argument that the switching of the long tail keeps away mosquitoes and flies has no value in this argument; but a decided objection may be voiced against the nuisance switching tails would be to a horse or pair in heavy harness. All style and grace in front action, a pair with hanging tails would look as untidy otherwise as a woman in bedraggled skirts. So said a coaching amateur, and he had plenty to add to the plea for docking.

"Essentially docking is not a painful operation," continued this driving man. "We do not feed the horse on the morning of the operation, and when it is brought into the operating stall the horse at once begins to munch eagerly on the oats in the manger. A canvas hammock is flung under its belly and the horse is hoisted to its tiptoes by pulleys, when a gate is stuck across the stall close to its heels and the tail pulled over, the flat top rail making an operating table. A stout twine is tied tight about the tail at the point to be severed. The hair is turned back and bound, exposing the bare skin.

"A few short jabs with a surgeon's knife and the tail is severed. Meanwhile, a cauterizing iron has been brought to a white heat in a charcoal hand fire, and the next act is to sear the cut with the iron. The horse winces, but it does not take the tenth part of a second to seal up the wound. As soon as the iron is taken off the horse will resume its munching of oats, and except while the cauterizing iron is applied it feeds without a check throughout the entire operation.

No one knows what the horses think about it. That docking is cruel may be granted, but the gains to the horse seem to counterbalance the hurts. All of which sounds a good deal like an argument made by an interested party as an excuse for a continuance of a practice almost universally condemned.

A Perfect Example.

A lawyer whose mouth was extraordinarily large, had on the witness stand a Southern backwoodsman. The witness had replied to a question that "It was a non-possibility." Quoth the lawyer: "'A non-possibility'? Now will you tell this court and this jury what you mean by a non-possibility? Give us an example." "Well," said the witness, "I think it 'u'd be a non-possibility to make your mouf enny bigger widout settin' your years furder back."

Was a Proper Judge.

When the last Cleveland baby was born, Mr. Cleveland was asked about the weight, which he gave at twelve pounds. Dr. Bryant, who was present, interrupted the ex-President to say that the nurse had reported the young hopeful to be an eight-pounder. "Nothing of the kind," said Mr. Cleveland. "I weighed him with the same scales that I use when I go fishing."

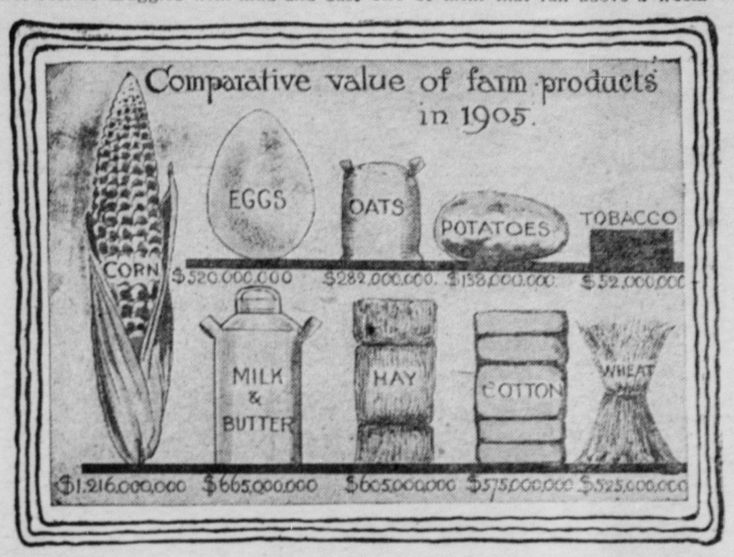
Death.

(G. E. M.)

I am a microbe of vast and fearful power.
My name is Death, where e'er I'm found.
I float through the air and sink
  into the vitals of the sons of men:
The youth in joyous spring of life;
The man, mature in years and strength;
The new-born babe and she
  Who watches tenderly his breath of life:
The coyish maiden, and the sage
Of tottering steps and silver locks;
All alike grew faint and listless,
Weak and wan, and sink at last
  To their eternal rest, beneath my glance.
Quietly at first I work, mid jest and laughter,
But not mere surely does the sun sink low behind
  The western hills
Than I make felt my power
  Through every limb and fibre of my victim's frame.
'Tis said that he laughs best who laugheth last;
And I laugh last, yea many a million time
As I perceive my victim gaze with hollow, vacant stare
  And note his breath come short, and gasp and—cease.
Ha! Ha! Another triumph of my prowess!
And now I float away to murder once again—
To snatch some maiden from her lover's arms;
To strike a youth, his mother's all:
Ceaseless my work. I know not pity,
Greedy am I, and each one whom I slay adds fuel to my greed.
So do I live and reap my harvest day by day of Death.

He Had Had Experience.

As the fearless white man entered the kraal of the native king, a salute was sounded on a drum of serpent skin, and six warriors with necklaces of human teeth rattling about their throats, led him before a rough ivory dias, on which sat a majestic and formidable figure. "Hail," said the white man. And without loss of time, he took out one of his brass watches, wound it up, and showed its works to the dusky monarch. "This marvel," he said, "I will give your majesty, making you the envy of all men, and in return for only six tusks of seventy pounds' weight each. The king took the watch, produced a monocle from a pouch hidden in his shield, and, after a moment's study of the brass trinket, returned it with a languid smile. "Last year," he added, "in London, I exchanged an old wooden war club for a bushel of these things, and, by Jove, don't you know, there wasn't one of them that ran above a week."



Briefs From Everywhere.

There are over $12,000,000 worth of jewels on Mahomet's tomb.

A railroad is being built to the summit of Mont Blanc.

A large number of the Jews resident in Jerusalem are of the blond type.

Mexico produces about one-third of the silver of the world.

Over half a million acres in India are devoted to tea culture, a comparatively new industry there.

Sir Henry Irving's birthplace at Keinton, Mandeville, has recently been sold for $3,000.

A drink of coal oil has been recommended for a cold. No one should take more than a tablespoonful.

Gold mines, abandoned by the Spanish many years, exist near the Panama canal route and will be re-opened.

The Khedive of Egypt has a saddle so heavily mounted with gold that it is worth $70,000.

The youngest archbishop in the world is Dr. Glennon, of St. Louis. He is 42 years old.

The marriage ceremony was not solemnized as a religious rite in churches till the time of Pope Innocent III, in the year 1198.

An ant will live one month after its head has been cut off. It is difficult to drown an ant. Submerge the insect for several days and he will resume operations as though nothing had happened.

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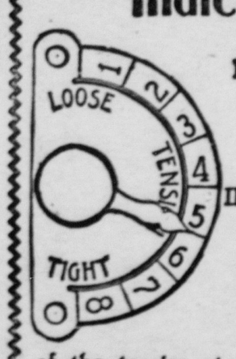

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