

WHAT CULTIVATION DOES.

From an interesting paper by Mr. Robt. Webster on tea culture in Ceylon, read before the Guelph Scientific Society during the present month, we take the following:

For a long time the staple product of Ceylon was coffee. But in 1869 appeared the first symptoms of the pest that finally destroyed the coffee growing industry. This was the Coffee Leaf Disease, a fungus growth somewhat resembling rust on wheat. Scientists investigated it, but nothing could be discovered to check its spread, and the yield of coffee became less yearly. In 1873 it was 995,493 cwt., and in 1888 only 200,000 cwt. At first the decrease in the yield was counterbalanced by an increase in the European prices, but coffee was exported from Brazil in such quantities that the price soon fell, and the coffee planters of Ceylon were obliged to turn their attention to other products.

Cinchona was first tried and grown very successfully, but in a few years the market was glutted. Cocoa was also tried, but it required for its growth conditions of soil and climate that Ceylon did not possess. In 1863 tea had been introduced from Assam, and year by year had been more cultivated. On the failure of the coffee crop, the Ceylon planters, many of whom had been almost ruined, began to cultivate tea more generally, and the growth has steadily increased. The estimated yield for the present year is 46,440,000 pounds. Tea has several advantages over coffee in the way of cultivation. The latter is a surface feeder, while tea seeks its nourishment more deeply. Consequently land which is exhausted as far as the growth of coffee is concerned, may, if it has a good subsoil, yield good crops of tea. Again, the harvest for tea is spread over a large part of the year; in some plantations tea is picked for eleven months out of the year, but generally for only nine months.

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