

Peruvian Balsam.

This article is the product of the *Myrospermum salvatoriensis* or *Hoitziloxill*, which grows almost exclusively on the "Costa del Balsamo," or "balsam coast," of Salvador, comprised by the southern shores of the department of Sonsonate and La Libertad.

The balsam is a beautiful tree averaging one hundred feet in height and 20 inches in diameter. There are two ways to extract the liquid, erroneously styled Peruvian balsam. The first consists in scraping the skin of the bark to the depth of one-tenth of an inch with a sharp machete in small spaces some 12 to 15 inches square all along the trunk and stout branches of the tree. Immediately after this operation the portions scraped are heated with burning torches made out of the dry branches of a tree called "chimaliote," and after this pieces of old cotton cloth are spread on the warmed and half-charred bark. By punching the edges of the cloths against the tree with the point of the machete they are made to adhere. In this condition they are left for 24 and even 48 hours (in January), when the rags are gathered and submitted to a decoction in big iron pots. After this the rags are subjected, while still hot, to great pressure in an Indian machine made of strong ropes and wooden levers worked by hand. The balsam oozes out and falls into a receptacle, where it is al-

lowed to cool. This is called raw balsam. To refine it, they boil it again and drain it, after which they pack it in iron cans ready for market.

The other method of extracting balsam consists in entirely barking the trunk and heavy branches of the tree, a process which, as a rule, kills it outright and at best renders it useless for several years. The bark is finely ground, boiled and submitted to pressure in order to extract the oil, which is considered of an inferior quality to that obtained by the system first described. Both methods are defective, but the latter is ruinous and forbidden by the authorities.

The name of Peruvian balsam was given to this article because it was first sent from San Salvador to Peru in the time of the Spaniards and from Callao re-shipped to Europe.—*U. S. Consular Report.*

MICROBES IN MINERAL WATER.—Vichy and other waters are originally destitute of microbes, but are quickly contaminated, and experiments show that the contamination arises from the air at the apertures through which the water rises. During the first fortnight after bottling the number increases, but later and in equal period decreases. The number of germs found in waters from various springs differs according to the temperature of the spring, the higher it is the more numerous the microbes.

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