

WOOL.

Herbert Gibson, representative of the Government of the Argentine Republic, read a paper on the "World's Wool-Parcels and Argentina's Contribution Thereto," at the Commercial Congress at Philadelphia a few days ago. He gave statistics to show that of the three districts where the production of wool is in excess of local requirements—Australasia, South America and the River Plate Republics of Argentina and Uruguay—there was an appalling decrease in the sheep stock in the two first-named regions. In Argentina and Uruguay, he said, there is to be found the sole exception to this general decrease in sheep throughout the world. The sheep stock of Argentina is now approximately 85,000,000, and of Uruguay 17,000,000, an increase for the two countries since 1890 of more than 20,000,000. Mr. Gibson said that in order to create a regular supply of Argentina raw wools for the manufacturers of the United States there are three things of capital importance. First, the presence of agents or representatives of the manufacturers in the wool markets of Buenos Ayres. Second, the establishment of direct steam communication between the two countries. Third, direct banking relations.

THE FIRST PHONOGRAPH.

Ray Stannard Baker tells for the first time the true story of Thomas A. Edison and the invention of the phonograph. Mr. Edison, who has grown very deaf of late, denies himself to most callers, and Mr. Baker was obliged to secure his interview through the medium of W. S. Mallory, the inventor's right-hand man, who went with him into Mr. Edison's private office. They found him in a characteristic attitude, his fingers thrust through his thick hair and his head leaning on his hand.

"Mr. Edison," shouted Mr. Mallory, "I heard an interesting story of your invention of the phonograph the other Sunday in Brooklyn. It was in church, and the preacher said that when you were a boy you had your ear one day to the ice and heard in the distance the sound of skates. He said that the idea first came to you that way."

Mr. Edison raised his head.

"Did a preacher say that?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Bosh! Now, I'll tell you how it happened. My model-makers all worked by the piece in those days, and when I wanted a model I always marked the price on it. In this case it was \$8. I had the idea of the phonograph in my mind, and I drew my design and gave it to a workman named Kruesi, who finished it in thirty hours.

"Kruesi fitted the tinfoil on the cylinder and brought the machine to me. I turned the handle and recited:

"Mary had a little lamb,

Its fleece was white as snow;

And everywhere that Mary went,

The lamb was sure to go."

"Then I set the recorder back to the starting-point, and began to turn the cylinder. At the very best I had expected to hear nothing more than a buzzing confusion, but to my astonishment and awe, the machine began to repeat in a curious metallic voice:

"Mary had a little lamb,

"Thus, the first words ever spoken into the phonograph were these four simple lines of 'Mother Goose.'"

The idea of the phonograph had come to Mr. Edison with a flash of inspiration, and the machine proved its marvellous possibilities on the first trial. Few inventions have ever been conceived or carried out so successfully.

"Kruesi's \$8 machine," added Mr.

Baker, "which could not now be bought for hundreds of dollars, is preserved in the patent museum at South Kensington, England."—Philadelphia Post.

TANNERIES IN BRITISH INDIA.

The encouragement extended to Indian tanners by the Government has, of late years, given rise to a great extension of this business, and its progress is at present very far from its possible limits.

The largest tannery in India is that of Cooper, Allen & Co., at Cawnpur, which is the point of convergence of the trade in hides in the north-west provinces. Boots for the army form the staple of the business of Cooper, Allen & Co., who employ on an average 2,500 operators.

Next in size to the above, is the Government harness factory in the same town, situated at the junction of the Ganges and the Ganges Canal. Here every description of saddles for horses, mules or camels, are made, with all the iron and woodwork belonging to them.

In the Bombay presidency four of the Wofussil factories employ machinery; at Dharavi, near Mahim, there are no less than forty tanneries, one of these being a large steam tannery manned chiefly by Tamil workmen. It belongs to the firm of Adamji, Peerbhoy & Co., who hold the Government contract for boots for the army.

Machinery is only employed in a few of the largest Indian tanneries, but with the further development of these industries, a demand for all kinds of leather-working machinery will be created, and American makers, who excel in the manufacture of these machines, should by all means avail themselves of the opportunities offered to them in India.—Philadelphia Manufacturer.

ALL ABOUT TEA.

Discussing tea and its history, a writer in the New York Times says:

"Tea did not become a popular beverage for a long period, as the masses were precluded from drinking it by reason of its exorbitant price. The Dutch East India Company monopolized the traffic, and supplied the limited demand for many years. Later, when England and other nations effected treaties with China, tea became an extensive article of commerce in Europe. It figured conspicuously as a bone of contention between the mother country and her colonies in 1773 in Boston and other ports. It was a luxury enjoyed by the aristocracy in the colonies up to 1790, in which year 88 pounds were imported direct from China in an American vessel. In the next decade the entire importation was 1,343 pounds. In 1801—02 came 9,451 pounds; in 1815—16 came 20,820 pounds. A portion of this was exported to England. The consumption in 1820 was less than one-half pound per capita. From this date up to 1850 the importations were about equal to the consumption, which had increased to 1.22 pounds per capita.

"At this period the treaty ports, namely, Foo-Choo, Shanghai, Amoy, Hong Kong, and Canton, were declared open. The influx of China's productions increased slowly, as the transportation was made in old hulks, which required from twelve to fourteen months for one voyage. Later, the clipper ships replaced these, and the time was lessened to five months. The Suez Canal reduced the time to sixty days, and now the Pacific Mail steamers and railroads deliver goods from China and Japan in this city within thirty days.

"Previous to 1856, China produced nine-tenths of all the tea grown. The varieties comprised green, English breakfast, or

Congow, Oolong, Powchong, and Bohea. The advent of Japanese tea in 1855—56 opened a new feature in the United States markets. Its first appearance was not inviting, as it was uncolored, and was packed in uncouth wooden boxes, unmatted. The science of preparation was then unknown to the Japanese. There was apparently no limit to the production of this tea, and its cup quality was delicious. When a treaty was concluded with Japan in 1859, Americans gained access to the tea markets of that country, and without delay proceeded to manipulate the leaf so as to make it more acceptable in our markets. The distinctive feature of the tea in infusion popularized it, and the demand soon exceeded that of all other kinds. This remained the case for a number of years.

"In 1869 Formosa tea was introduced here direct from the virgin soil. Its advent produced no little excitement, as the tea was superior in every respect to any then imported. When it was exposed in bulk, it filled the room with a delightful odor, and from the infusion came a flavor resembling the extract of flowers—a perfect bouquet—the higher grades excelling in this respect. This character of tea is in greater demand and consumption in excess of all other kinds.

"Tea is picked each year from May to September. The first picking is in May, the second in June and July, and the third in August and September. The latter comprises inferior grades and refuse."

THE WORLD'S PETROLEUM.

Over 5,000,000,000 gallons of petroleum are now produced annually in the world, according to recently compiled statistics, furnished by the United States Treasury Department Bureau of Statistics. Of this amount 2,500,000,000 are produced in the United States, 2,250,000,000 in Russia, and the remainder is distributed among a dozen countries, Austria producing 87,000,000; Sumatra, 72,000,000; Java, 30,000,000; Canada, 29,000,000; Roumania, 24,000,000; India, 15,000,000; Japan, 8,000,000; Germany, 7,000,000; Peru, 3,000,000; and Italy about 1,000,000 gallons. While the United States and Russia furnish the bulk of the world's petroleum and stand almost abreast in the quantity of crude oil produced, the amount of refined illuminating oil supplied by the United States is more than double that furnished by Russia. This is due to the fact that a given quantity of United States oil produces three-fourths of its bulk in refined illuminating oil, while the same quantity of Russian oil produces only about three-eighths of its bulk in refined illuminating oil. Sumatra, next to Russia, is the most formidable competitor of the United States, because of the fact that its crude oils produce half their quantity in refined illuminating oil, and the further fact that they are much nearer to the Orient, the countries of which form an important part of the world's markets for this class of exportations. Up to the present time, however, the quantity of oil produced in Sumatra is small compared with that of the United States or Russia, its figures for 1897 being but 72,258,000 gallons. The United Kingdom is the largest consumer of mineral oils exported by the United States, our total export to that country in the last fiscal year being 212,265,563 gallons, against 155,203,222 to Germany, 53,398,115 to Japan, 44,523,552 to China, 20,561,084 to Brazil, 20,495,398 to British Australasia, 12,835,631 to France, and 260,431,316 gallons to other European countries. The total exportation of refined illuminating oil from the United States in the year 1898 was 900,998,875 gallons, while Russia's exportation amounted to less than one-third this quantity.