

A GLIMPSE AT A BRAZILIAN COFFEE PLANTATION.

Written for UPS AND DOWNS by A. BERRY.

"Coffee, which makes the politician wise."—POPE.

"Familiarity breeds indifference," is a slight change in the old tag which insists on "contempt" as the sequel of familiarity, but it expresses more accurately the state of feeling of the average, easy-going, non-enquiring human being in relation to many things with which we come into familiar daily contact, and which are very essential to our comfort, but about which, except to the extent of securing what we deem our fair share, we are not apt to concern ourselves very much.

A feeling of absolute indifference is engendered in regard to the origin and production of, let us say, articles of diet, owing to the ease with which we obtain them, notwithstanding that about almost everything that we consume much could be written and learned that is both interesting and instructive. Take for example the cup of fragrant coffee without which the matutinal meal of many of us would be painfully incomplete. Is it not a fact that the knowledge of their favorite beverage possessed by a very large number of its consumers is limited to the name of the grocer from whom they obtain their supply; the price they pay for it; and, perhaps, the not very explanatory terms "Java" and "Mocha"? And yet the story of this household staple from the time its seeds are planted until it appears on the breakfast table is decidedly interesting, and leads us to an acquaintance with places and people no less so.

In attempting to give some idea of the processes which coffee in its various stages undergoes we shall confine ourselves to coffee growing in Brazil, as the two chief coffee exporting cities of that country, Rio de Janeiro and Santos, practically control the world's coffee market. For much of our information upon the methods of the Brazilian coffee planter we are indebted to Signor J. C. Alves De Lima, Consul of Brazil for Canada, who two years ago gave a most interesting and comprehensive account of many of the political, geographical, commercial and other features of the country of which he was well qualified to speak.

The coffee tree, which is a native product of Mocha, Arabia, was first introduced into the northern States of Brazil by their Dutch rulers in the early part of the seventeenth century. From Pernambuco some seeds were sent south to Rio de Janeiro and S. Paulo, and their cultivation proved so profitable that, says Signor Alves, "it has almost absorbed the whole agricultural activity of the State."

We have already made mention of the importance of Santos, which is the second city in Brazil, and the chief seaport of the State of S. Paulo, in which the great bulk of the coffee of Brazil is grown. To enable our readers to realize to what vast dimensions the coffee industry has so rapidly risen in Brazil, we will enlist the aid of figures which will tell the tale briefly but eloquently. The exportation of coffee through Santos in 1825 did not exceed 2,000 tons. In 1867 it reached 30,000; in 1887, 150,000 tons; and, in 1892, coffee weighing no less than 220,000 tons, and valued at 100,000,000 dollars, was gathered from the plantations.

In the eyes of the well-to-do Brazilian, a good-sized coffee "farm"—plantation—consists of from 1,500 to 2,000 acres, on which will be raised from 240,000 to 300,000 trees, the average yield of a tree being 2½ pounds. The coffee tree being one which must yield its cultivator a return every year, it is very desirable that the earth should be as rich in fertilizing properties as possible.

The intending coffee planter has to face many of the tasks which call forth the powers of the pioneer farmers in Canada. Acres of land are cleared, his underbrush and small trees with a scythe and the large ones with an axe, and in one month from the time this work is done fire is set to it, burning about one-half of the timber lying on the ground. It would be impossible to clear out the land with so many stumps and vines and have it ready for cultivation without resorting to the burning. The best that can be done under the circumstances is to leave all the timber half burnt lying there, which, in the course of years, becomes decayed, making a good fertilizer for the coffee trees.

The planting comes next. The different rows are made parallel to each other, and in

buildings it is spread very thinly over a very large area of ground, well paved with bricks, and there the grain stays until completely dried by the sun. If there are pebbles mixed with the coffee it is thrown into a big tank, the stones going to the bottom and the coffee rising on top. It will not take more than a day to have the coffee dried again and ready for hulling. The coffee in shell is taken to the machine, and in two or three minutes it is hulled, ventilated and assorted into three different grades. There are a great many machines used for hulling, ventilating and separating the big berries from the small ones, making in all three qualities of coffee, the superior, the regular and the preto (black), the last being the berry gathered in a green state.

There is another quality of coffee of insignificant amount for the market, not any better than the superior, so far as its flavor is concerned, but which looks better to the eye; it is the Mocha coffee, a small round berry which grows more on the top than on the lower branches of the trees.

After the hulling process is done, the coffee is put into sacks to be shipped to Santos or S. Paulo, or sold to customers right on the plantation.

From the seaports the coffee berry is shipped to every corner of the world, but what a change, never contemplated by the grower, it undergoes before it is finally transferred to the coffee pot. While in the hands of the Brazilians every attention is paid to keeping the coffee as much as possible excluded from the air, so that it may retain its delicious flavour to the full extent; but in Canada we see the grain exposed to the atmosphere without any regard apparently to the deleterious effect of the exposure which, as a matter of fact, reduces the strength and value of the coffee fifty per cent.

Although coffee can be grown all over Brazil, still it is not every spot where a plantation can be run profitably. The most experienced planters have come to the conclusion that the best zone for coffee production lies between the parallel of 22½ to 21 degs.

south of the equator, in which latitude S. Paulo is situated. Below 22½ the coffee trees have no difficulty in growing, their leaves being brilliant dark green, that shows the strength and fertility of the soil, billions and billions of berries covering almost every limb of the tree. Such is the sight in some coffee districts of Brazil, and even in Mexico, Guatemala and other Central American States. But instead of having only one gathering, as it is the case in S. Paulo, the planter is obliged to have two, and instead of clearing at once the limb with both hands, in these districts planter does more picking than dragging down the coffee so as to prevent him from bringing to the ground the ripe and green berries at the same time. Above 21 degrees the coffee trees die very easily through the rise of the temperature.



GROUNDS FOR DRYING COFFEE AND HOUSES FOR STORAGE.

each of these seeds of coffee would be thrown, ten to twelve feet apart, in holes about twelve inches deep. The trees now grow even and healthy, owing to improved methods of planting, and it is really a beautiful sight to look from the windows of a railroad car on the thousands of coffee trees of different ages.

There is between the coffee trees plenty of room for sowing corn, beans, rice and all sorts of cereals and vegetables. While the laboring man is weeding the coffee, he is at the same time helping his plants to grow, for the "hired man" on a coffee plantation has a very different arrangement from that under which his brother on a farm in Canada earns his yearly income. The laboring men cut down the forests, clean the land, plant the coffee in rows, and the planter at the end of four years will pay them so much for every tree, according to the different zones. After the trees are more than four years old no more cereals are allowed to be sown between the trees, and another arrangement is made between the planter and the hired man. The men sell all their products to the planter, and about the towns, at very good prices. In fact, they are to-day about the only farmers in Brazil.

When the coffee comes to the plantation

Boys for Farm Help.

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