

Cuban Sugar. The stories of extreme destitution and absolute starvation in Havana and its environments, and the supposed destruction of all the sugar plantations by the combatants in Cuba, are hard to believe in face of the following estimate of the value of the sugar crop of this season. It is said that the total yield of the island will be between 225,000 and 300,000 tons.

The number of plantations grinding, at present, are 103, whereas last year they were only 64. The visible production of sugar to March 2nd is said by well-informed local merchants to be 150,000 tons, against 50,697 tons at corresponding date of last year.

Japan versus Russia. If there is truth in the dispatch from China, to the *London Daily Mail*, that Japan has demanded a prompt and explicit statement from Russia on the question of the continued occupation of Port Arthur, there is good reason for a feeling of uneasiness among the great nations of Europe. If the complications arising from the extraordinary success of Japan in her conflict with China are not followed by war between some of the European powers, it will be a great triumph for modern diplomacy by which so many threatened attacks upon the peace of the world have been averted.

The opening of the ports of China to foreign commerce is a matter of so much importance to those now having commercial intercourse with the Chinese Empire that it is hardly likely any one country will be permitted to exclusively occupy any important port.

British Beer Bill. Workers in the cause of total abstinence will find very little to comfort them in an announcement made in the *London Times*, that the consumption of malt liquor and spirits in the United Kingdom for 1897 averaged for each man, woman and child of the entire population, £3. 16. 5 3/4, an enormous increase in the amount of the national liquor expenditure for the previous year.

The *Times* makes no reference to the Queen's Jubilee with its attendant drinking to Her Majesty's health as being the possible cause of the startling thirst in the British Isles during 1897.

Chinese Playing Cards and the U. S. Tariff. High Hing Lung, a prominent Chinese merchant of New York, has found that it is almost as difficult to import Chinese playing cards into the United States as it is to import Chinese men and women. When a stock of playing cards which he imported from China reached the New York Custom House the other day, they were marked Chinese paper, value eighty cents. Playing cards are very cheap in China, even cheaper than men, and merchant Lung expected to make a good profit on his stock, for the duty on Chinese paper is only twenty per cent. *ad valorem*. But when High Hing Lung produced sixteen cents to pay the duty, the Customs official presented to him the following bill:—

Customs duty at ten cents a pack on 400 packs of Chinese playing cards	\$40 00
Internal revenue tax at two cents a pack	8 00
Fee of one-half cent a pack for affixing revenue stamps	2 00
	\$50 00

The cards are still in the possession of the Customs officers, and it is probable that New York Chinamen will use cards of American manufacture hereafter.

Canadian Butter in Japan. It is indeed cheering to exporters of dairy produce to receive the news from the Department of Agriculture, at Ottawa, that the first consignment of butter from the Government Creameries in the North West Territories shipped to Japan arrived in good condition, found ready sale, and was declared to be the finest butter which has ever reached Japan. The price realized was 35 cents per pound.

Crossing Railway Tracks. Herbert E. Hamblen, whose "Life of the Railroad Man" is now running in McClure's Magazine, quotes the advice of a yardmaster to a young man commencing rail-roading. "Be careful," he said, "never under any circumstances, no matter how big a hurry you are in, step upon a railway track *anywhere* without first looking both ways; and, if you see anything approaching near enough, so that there is any doubt about your being able to cross in perfect safety at an ordinary walk, don't go; always give everything on wheels the right of way." This is good advice for others besides railway men, and, if followed by everyone, many dreadful accidents on city streets as well as on railroads might be avoided.

Gold in the Salts of the Sea. One of the best of American humourists has told how he obtained an apple from his little sister by promising to give her the first fifty cent piece found floating down the river on a grindstone. The humourist adds: "In all ages of the world this eminently plausible fiction has lured the infantile mind to financial ruin and disaster."

The infantile mind is observable in some people long after the period of childhood, and the promise of gold or dividends is still the most attractive bait used by some promoters of companies with wild-cat schemes.

Evidence of this can be found in the formation of a Company at Lubec, Maine, styled the *Electrolytic Marine Salts Company*, for the purpose of obtaining from the waters of Passamaquoddy Bay gold and silver in sufficient quantities to pay a dividend of 78 per cent. on an outlay of \$50,000.

Although the story, with full particulars of the invention by which a reverend gentleman will extract gold from salt water, has been printed in reputable papers, we decline to take stock in the salmous story or the Company, especially as the prospectus states that work on a most extensive scale will be commenced on April 1st (All Fools Day).