

## FACTS ABOUT SUGAR.

When we know that only four centuries ago, during 1497, appeared the first authentic account of sugar being introduced into England, we cannot but marvel at its cheapness of production and universal use by all classes and peoples.

Like many other things in everyday use, its early history is very vague; and though ancient Jews are credited with having knowledge concerning it, yet no mention of sugar whatever is found in the Scriptures. All writers seem to agree that the candied or granulated particles, resulting from boiling the juice of a reed or grass—sorgho, now known as sorghum or Chinese sugar cane, *sorghum nigrum*—were first used in the Celestial Empire, and date back prior to all records, and was in use many centuries before it was in use in India or Arabia. Among the Grecians, at a very early date, it was used in medicine, and spoken of as the very costly drug "Indian salt."

Later on, sugar confections were received from Arabia and Persia, at Rome and Greece, but were held at so high a value that they were only used on very rare occasions by the most wealthy citizens. It is said Nearchus, one of Alexander the Great's admirals, while in the East Indies, 325 B. C., discovered large quantities of sugar, which he brought over with him.

Pliny also mentioned sugar, in his writings, as "a kind of honey from cane," and many curious stories have come to us regarding the penetrating into the jungles of Arabia and by the early explorers, in the hope of finding "honey grass."

As early as A. D. 625, sugar was brought from Asia, and in 1150 it is mentioned as being received in larger quantities in Europe. It is supposed that about in 1138 seed cane was introduced into Sicily, and in 1420 cultivation was attempted in Spain and Madeira. Early following the discovery of America, seed cane was sent to San Domingo, where it was successfully raised, and in 1510 plantings were sent to Brazil and to the Barbadoes.

The introduction of sugar cane into the United States, or that part of it known as Louisiana, must be credited to the Jesuit priests who came from San Domingo in 1751. In 1758 the first plantation and sugar mill was established on the present site of the city of New Orleans by Monsieur Du Breul.

No material progress was made until 1791, when the revolution in San Domingo brought to Louisiana a number of refugee planters and their slaves, and with them a superior species of cane, known as the Creole, which was only grown in the French Islands. To these men we owe the first progressive movement in this industry.

In 1805 plantings of sugar cane were made in Georgia by General Oglethorpe, whose success drew the attention of planters throughout his State and Florida.

The name "sugar" is Eastern in its origin, as shown by: Persian, shakar; Hindostanee, schukar; Arabic, sakanr, sokkar.

At the time of its early introduction

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into England, sugar was written *sugre*. True sugar is largely produced from sugar cane—*saccharum officinarum*; sorghum, *sorghum-nigrum*; sugar beet or mangel-wurzel, *beta-vulgaris*; sugar maple, *acersaccharinum*.

We use the term "true sugar" in distinction to the chemical results produced from many different materials, as, for instance, starch, changed by and to a sweet substance, and called glucos or grape sugar, and others known as sugar of lead, sugar of milk, sugar of malt, sugar of manna, etc.

The growing sugar cane in the Southern States is not unlike the common field corn, with its tall stalks and long, waving green leaves. It is planted in rows about four to six feet apart, from cuttings of the cane—not from seed.

During the last part of October, the cane is ready for harvesting; then the exciting period of a sugar plantation life begins, for as frost is expected at any moment, and as it kills the cane as far as sugar-making is concerned, all work is done with a rush. At daybreak, swarms of negroes enter the fields, each armed with a sharp, cleaver-like knife; with its back they break off the tough leaves, and then, with a quick stroke, the stock is cut close to the roots and thrown to the ground, where it is picked up by the women, whose duty it is to gather and to carry it to the teams, which wheel it away to the grinding mills. The grinding consists in running the stalks of cane between huge iron rollers, and is conveyed through pipes to the boiling rooms, where the first process of sugar-making is begun.

From the time the first cane is cut and until all has been carted in, there is a fever of excitement among the workers,

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which seems even to stir into action the sleepy mules. Every one is happy, the sick and convalescent, both white and black, all throng to the boiling room to drink the sweet, delicious juice of the cane and also the warm syrup liquid from the kettles, which is supposed to kill all the ills that are known to be.

ROBERT MITCHELL FLOYD.

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