Where Coffee is King.

All About the Great Crop Which Supports the Inhabitants of Brazil.

It is Worth $140,000,000 a Year and the Most of It Goes to the United States—Behind the Scenes in the Coffee Warehouses—How the Berries Are Polished and Fattened Up for the Markets—Mocha Coffee Which Comes From Brazil and How it Differs From Some Cent Rio—Coffee Detectives and Coffee Thieves—The Factories in Which the Stuff is Bagged for American Markets.

(Copyrighted, 1899, by Frank G. Carpenter.)

RIO JANEIRO, BRAZIL, April 3, 1899.—I have spent a day among the coffee shippers of Rio Janeiro. This is the place to famous, the great coffee port of the world. Millions of bags are here shipped every year and the chief business of Brazil's vast coffee crop is done here. Rio Janeiro lives upon coffee. For that matter it is the mainstay of Brazil. In 1895 the total exports of the country amounted to $216,000,000 and of this $140,000,000 came from coffee. The rise of a cent a pound means prosperity or the reverse to these people, and the enormous fall the past few years has made things tight in Brazil. Just how much the fall has been few people know. The truth is that coffee has been steadily dropping for the past six years, and today it is not worth much more than one-third what it was in 1893. With our new possessions in Cuba, Porto Rico, Hawaii and the Philippines it is likely to still lower, for it is reported that the Yankees will establish large coffee plantations, and if so the Brazilians will have to look elsewhere for a market.

BRAZIL AND THE UNITED STATES.

It is an outrage that Brazil has not done more for the United States. She should give us the bulk of her trade and all her fat contracts, for we have been practically supporting the country for years. We are the greatest coffee drinkers of the world. In 1897 we used 826,000,000 pounds of coffee, which was 18,000,000 pounds more than was consumed in all Europe. We have increased our consumption during the past year at the rate of more than a pound per person, and we now use about fifty pounds annually for each person in the United States. The amount spent for this coffee is enormous. During the past ten years we have paid $913,000,000, or $97,000,000 annually, for coffee alone. The bulk of this money has gone to Brazil. Some of it has found its way into the pockets of the coffee planters, a large part has gone into the hands of the shippers and dealers, and 11 per cent of the export price has been paid to the government. Brazil charges an export duty of 11 per cent on every pound of coffee that is shipped. This is, of course, paid by the consumer, and each of our people as engage in coffee raising will have the advantage of 11 per cent over those to start with, for they will of course not have to pay duty. Some years ago there was talk of taxing coffee, but the demagogues of our Congress set up a howl about taking a poor man's luxury, and coffee was admitted comparatively free. It was not allowed to be free, however, for Brazil at once put on the extra export duty and the poor man's luxury was taxed just the same. The only difference was that the Brazilian government got the money and not Uncle Sam.

BRAZIL THE LAND OF COFFEE.

Coffee is raised in nearly every one of the provinces of Brazil. The country produces the bulk of the world's crop. It raised 16,000,000 bags last year, and it is planting new fields now. I described in a former letter my travels through the state of Sao Paulo, the richest coffee-raising region of the world. The states north of Sao Paulo also produce vast amounts, and Rio Janeiro back of the capital is one of our chief coffee centers. The kinds of coffee produced here are known in the United States as Rio and Santos coffee. These names come from the ports at which the coffee is shipped. The Santos coffee is grown almost entirely in south central Brazil. It is carried over the railroads to Santos and exported from there. It comes from a colder climate than does the coffee which is raised further north, and is generally conceded to have a milder and finer flavor than that shipped from Rio. It is estimated that we take about 30 per cent of the Santos crop and about 70 per cent of all shipped from Rio, so that the bulk of the coffee used in our country is Rio coffee.

At both Rio and Santos the great coffee houses of the United States have their agents, who buy the coffee of the dealers and ship it direct to their houses in New York, Baltimore and Chicago. They have large establishments for preparing the coffee for shipment, and some of the brightest coffee men of the United States are here watching the markets and buying by the thousands of bags.

HOW COFFEE IS BOUGHT.

Coffee is handled in different ways at the two great ports. During my stay in Santos I spent some time among the dealers and watched them shipping the vast quantities of coffee which come to that port. The coffee is put up in bags of 132 pounds each, and in this shape it is sold to the exporters. The buyers in Santos deal directly with the planters' agents, taking the coffee as a usual thing in bulk.

In Rio the coffee first comes to commission men. They dispose of it to the wholesale coffee dealers, who grade it and put it into the bags for the exporter. In this case the coffee has passed through three hands before it starts for New York.

Since the remarkable fall in the price of coffee, however, the big exporters have sent agents out among the planters, and they are now buying their coffee direct. As it has been the commission man has had to pay a half cent or more profit on every pound of coffee. In the first place he has had to keep the planter, then the commission merchant in Rio, then the wholesale dealer in Rio and the New York manager's agent here. He has had to pay the cost of shipment to New York, the wholesale dealer or jobber there, the commercial drummer, the railroads and lastly his retail dealer at home. With all this he is able to buy coffee for 4½ cents and has a pound, the same coffee, costing here not much than 4 cents, and delivered in New York at 6¼ cents a pound.

If he is particular about his coffee he will pay from 35 to 40 cents for some of this same coffee which here sells for a trifle over the amounts above mentioned. The only difference being that the beans are of a little different shape or larger size and that they have been graded into certain so-called well-known varieties.

MORE ABOUT MOCHA AND JAVA.

I have already written of the Mocha coffee of Brazil. A large part of the Mocha used in the United States is grown here. Indeed, there is practically no genuine Mocha coffee in our markets. The Mocha coffee fields of Arabia are so small that very few of the berries are sent outside the Mohammedan countries. W. G. Palgrave, the well-known oriental traveler, says that two-thirds of the Mocha crop is consumed in Arabia, Syria and Egypt and that the rest is almost altogether taken by the Turks. The coffee is sifted over grain by grain, and the best is taken out for the Mohammedans.

The Rio coffee which is sold as Mocha is largely made up of the little round beans which are found on nearly every tree. In many places they grow near the end of the stalk, and they are to some extent imperfect berries, a coffee cherry containing only one instead of two berries. They are known as peaberries by some of the dealers.

There is another class of berry which is flat. Some of these are very much like the Java and are often sold as such. At Santos I saw a man who he thinks he is having real Mocha and Java may actually be drinking Cent rio or Santos, although he pays 25 cents a pound for his so-called Mocha and Java mixture.

PAINTED COFFEE.

This statement will probably be denied by some of our grocers. They will tell you that they can tell Mocha and Java by the smell or the color of the grain. Don't you believe them. The coffee as it comes from the plantation, the sun-dried, genuine article, is often far different from that which goes away on the ships. I have visited here in Rio enormous establishments which make a business of painting coffee and dressing it up for the markets. In South Africa, for instance, the people want black coffee beans. It seems that the coffee they have been buying is of that color. The bags that come from the plantation are filled with olive green beans. They are turned into a great mill and coffee dust and liquid is mixed with colored powder. I did what it is, the Lord only knows, but when the beans come out they are as black as any coffee that can be grown in Africa. Other grades are given a tinge of yellow by the use of other colors, and others are varnished in different shades of green. Some of the coloring stuff is unhealthy and the men who glazed the beans wore gloves when they handled it. In one Portuguese house I saw them coloring Java bags for the Cape of Good Hope, and in another they were coloring coffee for the Argentine market. This is on Rotten. I saw it myself, although I was told that the bulk of the coffee sent to the United States goes there in its natural color.

And what is the natural color of coffee? That I saw on the plantations and the most of that which comes to Rio is of a rich olive green. It grows slightly paler as it becomes older, and the older the coffee is the better coffee it makes.

IN THE COFFEE FACTORIES OF RIO.

These big coffee factories are interesting places. Some of them are as full of machinery as a Minneapolis flour mill. You walk under a network of moving belts through floor after room filled with machines for dressing the berries to suit the different tastes of the world. Each market seems to have its peculiar desires. The Germans, for instance, demand that the husks be on the beans when they arrive in Hamburg. The Germans prefer to do the shelling themselves, and the coffee is sold as washed coffee, bringing a much higher price.

Other countries want their coffee polished. It is shined up as you shine silver, being rubbed by the most delicate machines, which do not injure the grains. The coffee which goes to the United States is sold much as it comes from the plantation. It is passed through the separators and graded, but as far as I believe there is no demand in our country for polished coffee or for any other than that of the natural color. A great deal of our coffee is bought by the great roasting companies. It is shipped directly to the roasting mills in New York and Chicago, and the average citizen will see it until it is handed out to him by his grocer in fancy packages at so much a pound.

IN THE EXPORTING SECTION.

There is no busier place in the world than the coffee exporting section of Rio de Janeiro. There are great warehouses near the wharves which are filled with coffee and into which coffee is being brought by the thousands of bags. The streets of this section are narrow and dirty. They are filled with wagons and carts loaded with coffee.

You can hardly get through the streets. There are scores of half-naked men trotting from the carts to the warehouses with great bags on their heads and scores of negro women down on their knees sweeping up the coffee out of the cobblestone streets where it has dropped in order that they may wash it and sell it again. Each of these street cleaners has a sieve, in which she puts the coffee beans as she picks them up, shaking out the dirt as she works. I am told that many of the women make a good living by gathering these stray coffee beans.

Stop a moment and watch the men as they unload the coffee. Every bag is tested before it is taken into the warehouse. The tester has a little tin pipe as big as a lemonstick, with a sharp point on the end. He lets the pipe in a bag and in it brings out a handful of coffee. A sniffer at the bags samples, and, if all the rest of the bags whether they are according to load is carefully watched.

Notice how the men carry the great bags on their heads. Each bag weighs 132 pounds, but they stand straight as arrows under them and walk off as briskly as though they were carrying feathers.

BAGGING THE COFFEE.

But let us follow them into the warehouse. The car load which is now being handled is in all sorts of bags. I saw the piled on each side from the floor to the ceiling and come into a hall where the floor is covered with great piles of green coffee beans.

At each pile are a dozen half naked negroes in their bare feet. They are scooping up the coffee in boxes much like a flour bowl and pouring it into the bags. We hear the scratch, scratch, scratch of the boxes as they touch the floor, varied by the sound of the laughter of the men at work. Now they burst out in a song, keeping time with their scoops as they sing. As soon as a bag is filled it is dragged off to a pair of scales to be weighed. It is next handed over to the sewers, who sew up the bags, leaving enough material over at the top that it may pack well in the steamer.

In other factories the bagging is done by machinery, and in all the work goes on in a business-like way.

Each of the big American establishments of Rio handles vast amounts of coffee in a year. Its manager must have good business ability and be a sharp trader. He must be a good judge of coffee and must know how to take advantage of the rise and fall of the markets. Each coffee house has an coffee expert, who can tell by the eye and nose just what the coffee is worth. He judges it mainly by smell, tasting, grinding or burning the berries. Samples of about a pint each are spread out on brown paper, and the coffee expert will put his price on each grade by looking at, handling and smelling the samples. During my stay here I have gone through a number of the American houses, and among others have been much indebted to John F. Keough, the manager of an American warehouse at Rio.

AT THE COFFEE WHARVES.

The most of the coffee is shipped from what are known as the coffee wharves. The scenes about these are among the most interesting of Rio. Come with me and look at them. We jump upon a car containing about three tons of coffee. It is handled by two men, who drag it over the street railroad through one narrow street after another down to the bay. We stop at the wharves, where a gang of negroes stand ready to take in the bags. They back, therefore, up against the car and balance the great sacks on their heads. They carry them in on the run, and we hear the thud of each load of their bare feet as they go over the floor. They run, for they are paid by the piece and not by the day. Each man receives one cent and a half for every bag he brings in, and the best of the coolies can bring in many pretty dollars a day, which are very high wages here.

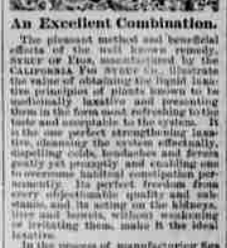
THE COFFEE STEALERS OF RIO.

What a lot of policemen there are everywhere. At the ends of the wharves there are soldiers by uniform to keep order. A custom house officer is always on hand to see that nothing goes on or off the ship without paying duty, and there are many private detectives. A close watch has to be kept to guard against stealing, for the wharves are great places for thieves.

The detectives have to look out for stealing before the wharves as well as above them. For instance, thieves come to boats under the wooden floors and stop just below one of the big piles of bags. With an auger they make a hole through the floor, then a pipe or pipe is stuck up through the hole and into a bag of coffee. The coffee pours down through the pipe in a stream to the boat. In a short time a half dozen bags can be emptied, and if this is done from a large pile no one will be the wiser without the detectives spy the men under the wharves.

Stealing is also done by the negroes who load and unload the coffee. They cut holes in sack with pieces in their scoops. They, by a surreptitious thrust, they drive the pieces into a bag as they are carrying it in on their heads and allow some of the coffee to run down their sleeves to their waists. This they do with one bag after another as they come during the day, gulped, as they say, for a drink now and then to secrete their stealings. Such thefts, however, are well known, and the men are carefully watched. Some of the men work half naked and others have their sleeves rolled up to their shoulders. Thieves are at once arrested, and the factors pay large sums. I am told, for detectives to watch such matters.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.



An Excellent Combination.

The pleasant method and beneficial effects of the well known remedy, SYRUP OF FIGS, manufactured by the CALIFORNIA FIG SYRUP CO., illustrate the value of obtaining the liquid laxative principles of plants known to be medicinally laxative and presenting them in the form most refreshing to the taste and acceptable to the system. It is the one perfect strengthening laxative, cleansing the system effectually, dispelling colds, headaches and fevers gently yet promptly and enabling one to overcome habitual constipation permanently. Its perfect freedom from every objectionable quality and substance, and its acting on the kidneys, liver and bowels, without weakening or irritating them, make it the ideal laxative.

In the process of manufacturing figs are used, as they are pleasant to the taste, but the medicinal qualities of the remedy are obtained from senna and other aromatic plants, by a method known to the CALIFORNIA FIG SYRUP CO. only. In order to get its beneficial effects and to avoid imitations, please remember the full name of the Company printed on the front of every package.

CALIFORNIA FIG SYRUP CO.

LOUISVILLE, KY. SAN FRANCISCO, CAL. NEW YORK, N.Y.

For sale by all Druggists.—Price 50c. per bottle

Z. C. M. I. Special Money Saving Inducements

FOR NEXT WEEK,

COMMENCING MONDAY, MAY 8, 1899.

See These Rich Bargains.

Our entire line of fine

French Challies.

Will be on sale Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday only for—

40c Yard.

For these dates only.

Ladies' White Lawn Aprons,

Trimmed with good quality wide embroidery; special for this week only—

25c Each.

The newest, neatest, best and most reliable

Wash Dress Goods,

25c to 50c Per Yard.

Ladies' dark colored Percale

Shirt Waists

All neat, desirable patterns; well made and this season's style, for only—

50c Each.

Ladies' Night Gowns

Trimmed with insertion and embroidery. Pretty clusters of tucks, made of good quality muslin; an unusually nice garment for the price asked during this week, only—

$1.00 Each.

Z C M I

Cloak Dept.

In this department we have made Reduced Prices This Week on

Ladies' Tailor-made Suits and Separate Skirts.

One lot of about 15 or 20 Suits taken from our regular stock, ranging from $12.50 to $20. Your choice this week—

$10.00

Another lot ranging from $17.50 to $21.00; your choice this week—

$15.00

Just received an elegant line of yard wide printed

Cambrics

Just the thing for Ladies' and Boys' Waists, as we guarantee them to give entire satisfaction; only—

15c Per Yard.

An uncommonly nice line of

SUMMER QUILTS.

Soft as Down; each made of one solid sheet of cotton batting and covered with Silkoline. Call and see them; you will find the PRICES ALL RIGHT.

See our elegant line of

SCOTCH ZEPHYRS,

The Finest in the West.

Z. C. M. I. T. G. WEBBER, Supt.