

THE MARKETING OF COFFEE IN INDIA

AMONG the many lines along which the problem of low prices of coffee is being attempted to be solved by the Indian Coffee Cess Committee is a survey of the present marketing conditions of coffee so that the scope for practical action in this all-important branch of the industry may be determined on reliable and accurate data. The survey has been conducted as part of the marketing surveys of the Agricultural Marketing Officer of the Government of India and the result is now published as *Bulletin No. 21—Marketing Series*. As about one-third of the coffee produced in India is exported abroad the survey gives relevant particulars regarding the marketing methods in these foreign markets also. The survey relates also to Burma, although the industry there is a very small one and Burma is in any case no longer in the picture as an Indian province.

The area under coffee in India is estimated at a little over two lacs of acres and the production about 5.8 lacs of cwt., valued at about 1½ crores of rupees. The import of raw coffee is forbidden and this embargo acts as an efficient measure of protection. The export market absorbs the best grades and its value is nearly a crore of rupees or about two-thirds of value of the total crop though the quantity is only one-third. The core and centre in the situation is the extraordinarily low *per capita* consumption in India and the fact that even this is confined to some of the South Indian districts leaving the rest of this province and practically the whole of Upper India untouched by the coffee habit. The *per capita* consumption for the whole of India is only about 0.13 lb.; the Report rightly says if this could be increased by even so small a quantity as 0.15 lb. per head the entire coffee produced in India could be easily absorbed in this country itself. The development of the home market is indeed the most promising line of action and there is much useful information in the survey which indicates what practical steps can be taken towards this end. We refer especially to the development of the trade in ground coffee and even some of the manufactured products, not to mention the excellent propaganda of the Committee which is already proving successful. A guarantee of purity such as the AGMARK standards imply should be a primary requisite and one may hope that the legislation against adulteration passed in recent years in all the provinces will have the desired effect and ensure this important requisite. About 70 per cent. of the packages sold as "pure coffee" were found to be adulterated, to degrees ranging from 0 to 68.5 per cent. and most of them were found unfit to be sold as coffee at all. No wonder this is the greatest impediment to the expansion of the sale of coffee! The Report describes in great detail the packing methods in vogue including the CO₂ inert gas pack which ensures the best method of preventing oxidation and rancidity. The growing tendency even for the housewives of South Indian homes to

prefer the ease of the tinned powder to the trouble and nuisance of roasting and grinding at home deserves to be taken note of.

The marketing conditions themselves present as unsatisfactory features as can be met with in any other agricultural product in this country notwithstanding the fact that the coffee industry is largely in the hands of a far better class of people than the ordinary cultivator. Statistics of acreage and production are both hopelessly inaccurate, the difference between the published and correctly estimated figures being over 35 per cent. Market grades are far from standardised; a case is quoted of two curers classifying one and the same lot of coffee exactly reverse of one another! Estates and standing crops are largely mortgaged and interest charges vary from 7 to 25 per cent. Marketing charges on hypothecated crops (including interest) are said to be double those on non-hypothecated crops. The margin between wholesale prices and the grower's share is excessively large, the latter ranging from 55 to 66 per cent. of the former. Mixing of grades, colouring of the beans and similar malpractices also exist; the report offers suggestions to improve matters and secure for the grower a better share of the price. Growers' organisations for effecting direct sale have been few and even those were failures. One hopes that the newly formed Coffee Curing Company in Chickmagalur will afford material relief in this direction and really benefit the grower.

Considerable attention has been devoted to the subject of improvements in the preparation of "parchment" and "cherry" and the suggestion is made that growers should be helped to produce more of the former as the returns on "parchment" are much higher. Mention is made of the efforts made to improve coffee intended for the English market by making it approximate *Costa Rica* in appearance and the writer remembers reading with not a little disappointment at that time that the London market would prefer Indian coffee in its natural imperfection clad in its silver skin. Much space is also devoted to the question of "quality", especially for the London market and despite commendable scientific work, specific gravity and the liquoring test hold the field. It may perhaps be worthwhile to employ temporarily a taster to help in selecting coffees intended for the London market; the matter deserves consideration by the Committee at least as an experiment.

The Report deals with the whole question of marketing in the comprehensive manner which we have learnt to associate with these marketing surveys, and is full not only of information on the various aspects of the industry but also of valuable suggestions for effecting improvements. We congratulate the Indian Coffee Cess Committee on its commendable enterprise in initiating this survey and the Marketing Officer on the care and thoroughness with which the work has been done.

A. K. Y.

CENTENARIES

Carlisle, Anthony (1768-1840)

SIR ANTHONY CARLISLE, a distinguished British surgeon, was born near Durham in 1768. The early part of his medical education was at Durham under Mr. Green, founder of the hospital of that town. He completed his education under Mr. Watson of the Westminster Hospital where he succeeded him as surgeon in 1793. He continued in that post till his death. From 1808 he also held the post of professor of anatomy to the Royal Academy.

Carlisle was a good surgeon. His introduction of the thin-bladed, straight-edged amputating knife, in place of the old clumsy crooked one, and his use of the simple carpenter's saw make his name worthy of note. The number of papers he contributed after 1800 were 17. The last one entitled *Some observations tending to demonstrate the dependence of vascular organisation upon physical causes* appeared in the *Reports of the Guy's Hospital of 1840*, the year of his death. In 1804 and 1805 he delivered the Croonian lectures on *Muscular motion* and *Muscles of fishes* respectively.

Carlisle contributed to other fields of knowledge also. For example, in 1800 he collaborated with W. Nicholson in his researches on voltaic electricity and is credited to be the first in observing the decomposition of water by the electric current.

The chief of his published books are *An essay on the disasters of old age, and on the means of prolonging human life* (1817); *Alleged discovery of the use of the spleen* (1829); and *Physiological observations upon glandular structures* (1834).

Carlisle was very early elected on the Council of the College of Surgeons. In 1800 he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society. He was surgeon to George IV, when he was prince regent, who conferred knighthood on him at the first levee he held after he became king.

Carlisle died at his house in Langham Place November 2, 1840.

Brashear, John Alfred (1840-1920)

JOHN ALFRED BRASHEAR, an American instrument maker, was born of a saddler at Brownsville, Pa, November 24, 1840. His maternal grandfather who had a passion for astronomy taught the boy the constellations by the time he was eight; he also presented him in 1850 with a set of Dick's *Works* and paid

for a first view of the heavens through a telescope. About this Brashear wrote later: "Young as I was, the scenery of the moon and the rings of Saturn impressed me deeply". From 1856 to 1881 he was engaged in various pieces of hard work. But the memory of the beauty of the first vision of the heavens persisted so much that he decided to make a telescope for himself as he was too poor to buy one.

He knew nothing about the polishing of lenses, but he brought a glass for a five-inch lens and some books on the grinding of lenses. After toiling in the factory throughout the day Brashear would spend long hours in the night in polishing the glass. This he did for three full years and at last he realised his ambition. From this modest beginning he rose to become the peer of any maker of astronomical and other instruments of precision.

This telescope he made for himself brought him into touch with astronomers and in 1881 he set up independent business as maker of astronomical instruments. It is impossible to estimate accurately the progress in astronomy due to his mechanical genius. To-day his glasses are still in use in most of the observatories of the world.

Brashear's mastery of the art of making a plane surface was marvellous. The speculum metal plates from which the famous Rowland Diffraction Gratings were made required a very accurate surface. The error had to be less than one-fifth of a light wave or one two-hundred-thousandth of an inch. Surfaces of such evenness were produced by Brashear.

Another great contribution to science is the Brashear Method of silvering mirrors, which was of immense use in the design and development of the spectroscope.

His personality even overshadowed his mechanical genius. To literally thousands of people he was known familiarly as "Uncle John". The force that dominated him was a sincere desire to share the beauty of the universe with all mankind. He was one of the three men selected by Andrew Carnegie to draw up plans for the Carnegie Institute of Technology. When Henry C. Frick decided to make his gift of half a million dollars to establish the Frick Educational Commission, he stipulated that Brashear should direct the organisation. Such was his geniality and the confidence that his conduct had induced in others.

Brashear died April 8, 1920.

University Library,
Madras.

S. R. RANGANATHAN.