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The Bermudas and Their Onion Industry

Helen Lounsbury

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westward, the best quality being produced on the south slopes of the ridges in the westernmost province. The cause of the superiority of this tobacco has always been a puzzle and attempts to raise the same variety elsewhere have failed. The city of Key West, built largely by Cuban cigar manufacturers, affords an interesting example of tariff control. In order to avoid the heavy duty on imports of manufactured tobacco goods, the tobacco is shipped to the nearest point in the United States, about one hundred miles distant, and manufactured there as Havana cigars.

W. O. BLANCHARD.

THE BERMUDAS AND THEIR ONION INDUSTRY

WHAT does the word "Bermuda" suggest? If we look in an atlas we can find this is the name given to a group of coral islands in the west Atlantic, about 700 miles southeast of New York. About one-half their population is composed of blacks, who are the ordinary servants and manual laborers, while the rest of the population consists of Portuguese, usually employed as tradesmen, farmers, etc., and English, who make up the ruling class. But of possibly more interest than this is the fact that the widely known onion which we prize for its mild flavor, and which bears the name of Bermuda onion, is cultivated upon these islands.

For scores of years, the inhabitants of Bermuda experimented with onion seed to get a variety which would produce a bulb of mild flavor early in the spring, when our domestic onion is too strong for use in its raw state. Seeds from onion fields of Egypt, and from Spain, whence thousands of crates are shipped annually to European and American markets, were taken to Bermuda, but none produced just what was desired. Finally, the experimenters went to the Island of Teneriffe, off the coast of Africa, where the natives grow an onion which was found to fulfill the requirements. It was found necessary to import the seed every year from Teneriffe in order to get the desired results; for something in the condition of the Bermuda soil affected the onion so that its seed would not produce the juicy, mild bulb that the fresh seed from Teneriffe produced.

This species of onion must have a warm, almost frostless climate. Since the temperature in Bermuda ranges from sixty to seventy degrees in winter, and is seldom above eighty in summer, this is the ideal spot for the onion's growth. Small patches of ground, many not more than one-fourth acre in size, are cleared on this coral formation for planting the seed. Each

square foot of ground accommodates a half dozen bulbs. The first crop, which is planted in November and harvested in February or March, is not of such a fine quality as the second crop of April or May. These onions are packed in crates and shipped to our eastern ports for distribution throughout the country. Up to 1903, this was the only onion that could bring a high price in the American markets. Then a man in Texas discovered that by planting the Teneriffe seed in favorable places in Texas, he could obtain almost as good results as were obtained in the Bermudas. He called his onion the "Texas Bermuda," and it has become an active competitor of the ones from the Bermuda Islands. However, it is said that the coral soil of these islands gives a distinctive sweetness and mildness to its onions which has not been duplicated upon other soil.

HELEN LOUNSBURY.

JAMAICA THE ISLE OF BANANAS

WITH the completion of the Panama Canal the traffic routes between the West Indies and the coasts of the United States have been shortened and the traffic from these islands is becoming of greater importance. A new commercial era is dawning on these islands as they tend more and more to concentrate on the production of a few tropical products. Jamaica's industries were almost paralyzed until she found relief in the raising and exporting of bananas. Abandoned sugar estates were turned into productive banana plantations. Jamaica now stands at the head of banana-producing countries both in quantity and quality. Her exports in 1916 were valued at almost four million dollars.

The banana tree attains about twenty feet in height, and with its long, broad, gracefully drooping leaves is exceedingly beautiful. It is not difficult of cultivation and the plant bears fruit, one bunch in twelve months, when it gives way to its successor, springing from the same roots; which process may continue for several years. Bananas are set in avenues, sometimes, irrigated, according to the character of the district, and run from two hundred and fifty to three hundred and fifty plants to an acre, with a gross yield of fifty or seventy-five dollars. The banana is also used a great deal as food for the inhabitants. The fruit is never allowed to become ripe on the stalks; its degree of ripeness when cut depends on the time for transmission to the user. The standard "bunch" of commerce has nine "hands" of twelve bananas each. As only one day is allowed between cutting and shipping, the greatest activity prevails on the days when ships are receiving cargo.