

8133.bb.28 – TRACTS ON TEA BOUND TOGETHER

TRACT 1

A LETTER ON THE DISCOVERY AND CHARACTER OF THE INDIGENOUS TEA PLANT IN ASSAM TO ALEXANDER ROGERS, ESQ.,<sup>1</sup>

BY JAMES LEONARD, (Member of Royal College of Surgeons, London etc)

London, Smith, Elder and Co., 1839

*1. A Letter etc etc*

18, Craven Street, Strand

5<sup>th</sup> Jan 1839

1; Sir,

Most truly does McCulloch observe in his valuable work ‘The Dictionary of Commerce’ that “the late rise and present magnitude of the British tea trade” are among the most extraordinary phenomena in the history of commerce.” It is no less extraordinary that upto the present time no other source has been discovered than China, from which we could draw those supplies, which the progress of civilization has converted from a luxury to a necessary of life, from the palace to the cottage...I may observe however, that the territories in which the tea-plant has been discovered have been added to our possessions since 1824; but these being so near, it excites our wonder that an active inquiry into the existence of this treasure had not been agitated by government sooner.

7...Nor is the tea-plant confined to these districts only (of Assam); it is found in all the frontier provinces of the Burmese territory to the northeast-wards, and also in Siam, not in a state of cultivation, but growing spontaneously.

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10; I shall offer no remark, Sir, upon evidence of such high character...The immense wealth that has flowed for a century and a half from Great Britain and her colonies to a foreign country, with henceforth be distributed among British subjects, and a new source of lucrative employment opened up to millions...

11; it almost ceases to deserve the name of a *speculation*, and becomes rather a prudent investment of capital which at the same time that it offers to all concerned in it, the *certainty* of a fair profit, develops the vast resources of a country hitherto unproductive and will add another to the many fine examples of British mercantile enterprise which no less than the brilliant achievements of her Nelson or her Wellington have placed Our Country in the eminent position she occupies in the rank of Nations.

I am Sir,

James Leonard, 10 Jan 1839

PS – At the sale of teas which has taken place this day, such has been the avidity to obtain samples of the Assam tea, that it has brought from 25s to 32s per lb, exclusive of

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<sup>1</sup> Rogers becomes part of the Assam Company’s founding Committee.

duty. Of course the small quantity in the market compared with the intensity of the public interest in this nationally important article, explains the cause of these extraordinary prices, but the fact speaks volumes.

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2)

*Extract of a letter from Lt Col Burney, late British Resident at Ava, addressed to A. Rogers, Esq.*

13; I am not surprised to hear such favourable accounts of the tea, lately brought to England from Assam. Whole forests of tea-trees are growing in various parts of Upper Assam, particularly in the territory inhabited by the wild tribes called Singphos, on the frontiers of Yunan in China, and of Burmah; and a Mr Pilkington of Calcutta ascertained, some time ago, by a comparative analysis, that the soil of these portions of Assam is precisely the same as that of the Bohea districts in China. Du Halde informs us that one of the best kinds of tea in use in China, grows without cultivation in the province of Yunan, and is made up into balls, and that the shrub is tall and bushy, and the leaves more long and thick than those of the common plant; and Sir George Staunton, in his account of Lord Macartney's embassy, also mentions that this species of tea from that province is highly prized in China, and that its being made up into balls serves to preserve its original flavour...**The principal description of tea...used by the Burmese, is what our travelers call pickled tea...the leaves are plucked rudely, and either boiled, or scalded with boiling water, in order to soften them; and then pressed down, and kept moist and damp in pits dug in the earth. Portions weighing fifty viss, or about 170 lbs, are afterwards cut out and packed in baskets, which are brought to Ava...**

**14; It is not an infusion which they use, but the leaves themselves are prepared with fried garlic and oil, and eaten after meals** as we eat cheese. Besides the tea before-mentioned, brought by the Chinese caravans, all the Shans from Mogaung, round to Taung-bain, bring hard semi-globular balls of tea...the leaves are subjected to steam, and then rolled up by the hand; and dried in the sun: when thoroughly dry, portions of one viss weight or more, are made up into these balls with a strong congee made of paddy. It sells for something less than the tea brought by the Chinese caravans, and has a peculiar smoky harsh flavour, which I at first thought proceeded from some mucilaginous substance with which the leaves might be united into balls; but I found afterwards that simple congee is used for this purpose, and that the peculiar flavour must be owing to the manner in which the leaves are prepared. Both Halde and Staunton notice a peculiar flavour in the Yunan tea. All the Shan tea I saw had this flavour, and consists of a long thick leaf (I have seen leaves more than four inches long) with a considerable portion of woody fibre, and mixed up with stalks and impurities, clearly shewing that no care or selection was used in the preparation. The infusion is of a dark, reddish brown colour, but the quality of the tea appears to me to be the same as that which is termed coarse Bohea in England. The Burmese near the capital scarcely know the tea which we use, and which they call "Ship" or "Ship-country Tea." This Shan tea is used also by all foreign traders, and even by English traders at Rangoon where the exportation of this article is increasing.

15; The tea brought by the Chinese caravans to Ava, I believe to be precisely of the same species as that brought from the Burmese Shan provinces, excepting that the leaves are gathered and prepared with a little more care and selection, and the flavour is not so harsh and smoky...Shortly after I went to Ava in 1830, I sent examples of both...to the Bengal Govt with the following report –

I send here...samples of the black tea brought here from China...in large quantities...Some of the Mogul traders here have lately conveyed a good quantity of this tea to the Tinnasserim provinces, and did the Company's exclusive privilege admit of it, I conceive that this tea would form a good article of exportation from this country, for the consumption of the poor both in England and India.

## TRACT 2

### INFORMATION ON THE DISCOVERY AND CHARACTER OF THE TEA PLANT IN ASSAM,

(London, Smith, Elder and Co., 65, Cornhill, 1839)

#### 1. *The Tea of Assam* (reprinted from Asiatic Journal) (pp.1-7)

The consequences likely to flow from the discovery of the true tea-plant in Assam are so important, that we are surprised that the event has excited so little emotion at home. If but a portion of the capital, which is now jeopardized in China, be carried to the British provinces in Assam, the transfer will give an impulse to agriculture in those provinces, which will develop (sic!) many of its other resources, and at the same time, do more to teach the Chinese sounder notions of political economy than even the cannon of a British man-of-war...

The letter of Captain Jenkins to Lord W B, appended...

An account of the mode of manufacturing the tea at Sudeeya...by Mr Bruce...is now before us...this once mysterious and still curious process....dialogue btw himself and Chinese tea-makers...

2. *Untitled account of Griffith, Wallich and McClelland's arguments about origin/botany of tea plant* (fr 5<sup>th</sup> vol of Transactions of Agri and Horticultural Society of Cal)... (reprinted from Asiatic Journal) (pp 7-9)

3. *Extract letter from Jenkins to Bentinck, 6 May 1838 (pp.9-10)*

The first batch of tea made by our China manufacturers has just been sent home...Should our teas be considered of good marketable qualities, I hope some capitalists in England will join to farm our tea tracts.

4. *Extract of a letter dated Suddeah, Sept 8 (pp.10-11)*

The manufacturing of tea is now finally over for this season, with treble the quantity of tea made last year...We shall have enough to do in the cold season in converting our shady tea colonies into sunny...and if we do not receive coolies from Cal or elsewhere< I sadly fear we shall not have hands to manufacture next year, for the people here are then engaged in sowing their rice crops, and will not work for us. I had great hopes that the China-men now coming would have been here in time to give us a fair specimen of green tea; but they have not made their appearance yet...it is also the intention of Govt I hear to send us 300 or 400 families of Dangurs to assist in the tea cultivation...

5. *untitled*...(reprinted from Oriental Herald) (pp11-12)

...In 1837, a list was given in of 52 barees or tracts of different sizes, none being of any great extent, and they are scattered over different parts of the country...hqs located at a place called Jeypore or Diggollee Ghat, a position which is central, and the site of the neighbouring low hills well suited to the growth of the tea-plant.



### TRACT 3

On outer cover -TEA-PLANT, &C. of ASSAM.

(Price Two shillings and sixpence)

1. Map of the Burman Empire showing also the States on the Eastern Frontier of Bengal – by John Walker

After map, Inner Cover, full titlepage –

#### **ASSAM:**

SKETCH OF ITS HISTORY, SOIL AND PRODUCTIONS,

WITH THE DISCOVERY OF THE TEA-PLANT,

AND OF THE COUNTRIES ADJOINING ASSA.

[WITH MAPS]

(London, Smith, Elder and Co., 65, Cornhill, 1839)

#### Chapter 1 –

1-2; Where is Assam? What is the extent and character of the country? What do we know of it? When did it come under British rule? Is the Tea-plant indigenous there? What probability exists of its being cultivated to any considerable extent, and of its yielding Tea I quantity and quality to render it a marketable commodity, with the promise of an advantageous return to proprietors? Are there any, and if any, what other productions likely to form articles of commerce in that country?

...some of the questions put by shareholders and others interested in the Assam Company...Many parties have joined at the express recommendation of members of the Provisional Committee, and others by seeing names in that list which give ground for a belief that they wd not support a *bubble*...

(author's sources -) - ..official documents regarding cultivation of tea in Assam...EI Co, most ready to afford access, relating as they did to a question of great national interest...

works of Capt. Boileau Pemberton

McCosh

McClelland

#### ASSAM -

9; Singphos -.12 principal tribes or gaums of which Beesa is the chief...over 19 villages...a man of superior understanding and was entrusted by the late Mr Scott...with much confidence.

10; Valley – 18,900 square miles and a population of 602,500, revenue of 4,40,000 rupees (fr Pemberton)

12; Water-carriage is the universal conveyance. The canoe is the only boat peculiar to the country. Many of the canoes are of an enormous size, and although cut out of the solid trunk of one single tree, are capable of carrying one or two hundred maunds.<sup>2</sup> In descending the stream, they are propelled by oars, or more frequently paddles; and in stemming the current, they push along the shore with poles. When bulky cargoes such as cotton are brought down, it is a common practice to fasten two canoes together with transverse beams, so that the canoes remain three or four feet apart, and the platform so formed is loaded with cotton or straw, thus admitting of bulky cargoes being carried by boats so united.

During all seasons of the year the post is conveyed by little canoes rowed only by two men, who are relieved every fifteen or twenty miles. The Calcutta Dawk takes about a week to reach Goalpara, ten days to Gowhatti, thirteen to Bishnauth and many more to Sudiya.

13; The number and magnitude of the rivers of Assam probably surpass those of any other country in the world, of equal extent. They have been estimated at sixty-one. They are in general of a sufficient depth at all seasons, to admit of commercial intercourse in shallow boats; and during the rainy season, boats of the largest size find depth of water.

What a field is presented here for steam-navigation, and of what important benefit its introduction wd prove to the country, by opening communication with Bengal!

13-4; The existing state of agriculture is not, of course, very advanced; but there is no scarcity of provisions, nor is more produced than is required for consumption; but numerous tracts of country are lying waste, that might be brought into advantageous cultivation.

14; Rice forms one of the principal crops but it is of an inferior quality.

The sugarcane grows well.

Cotton wool is cultivated by the hill tribes.

Opium appears to be grown to a considerable extent; the seed is sown in November.

In March, when the flowers fall, the juice is collected from the poppy-heads which are scarified diagonally on strips of cloth about three inches broad; and when fully saturated and dried, they are tied up into small bundles. In using it, about two inches of the cloth are infused in water, and drunk as a draught: the cloth is afterwards chewed like tobacco, till its virtues are extracted. The infusion of the poppy-head, on (sic!) the powdered capsula, mixed with water, is also drank.

Lack is prepared in large quantities.

Silk is grown of an inferior quality.

Coffee, it is stated, might be cultivated in abundance, and with care, of good quality, and made most productive.

India Rubber is indigenous to the country.

Gums, many valuable, are found in the forest, but the most important is Gum Copal.

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<sup>2</sup> A maund is 73 lbs.

Timber of a valuable character abounds in Assam, calculated for a variety of purposes: ninety distinct species are given, some of which may be fitted to make tea-chests.

15; Iron is abundant in almost all the hill-countries.

Coal has been discovered in several places.

Limestone is also found.

Salt is manufactured at Berhauth.

Petroleum has been found in small quantities in some parts of Upper Assam.

Gold Dust is found in all the mountain-streams that flow into the Brahmaputra, and even in that river itself, down to the hill Nughurbera.

This description of the products of Assam is not given with the view of raising any unfounded expectations on the part of shareholders in the Assam Company, or to allure others to join in a project, which is to be carried out in so valuable and productive a field. There is no doubt such products have been, and are still found; and with care and judicious application of means, very beneficial results may be anticipated, in addition to the principal article of production, viz. Tea... These facts justify the Company in assuming the general designation of Assam Company, rather than restricting it to the Assam *Tea* Company, although that article will probably form the chief parts of their co-operations, for as Mr M'Cosh remarks, "Articles more precious than silver and gold grow wild upon its mountains, uncultivated and till lately uncared for."

19; Mr M'Clelland, referring to various authorities who have passed through China, in support of the fact, states that in China, as in Assam, the Tea-plantations, even in the provinces most celebrated for the production of the article, constitute little colonies or spots seldom more extensive than in Assam.

In conclusion, Mr M'Clelland remarks, that from zoology, which he brings in support of those views which the sister sciences afford the Tea-plant in Assam, thus associated with the natural productions of Eastern Asia, "is not to be looked upon as an alien estranged from its own climate, but as an indigenous plant, neglected, it is true, by man, but in the full enjoyment from nature of all those peculiar conditions on which its properties will be found, under proper management, to depend."

SECOND MAP – shewing the Tea districts.

## CHAPTER II -

### 1823 – Discovery of the Tea-plant –

It appears that Mr Robert Bruce went into Assam in the year 1823, with an assortment of goods. He was the first British merchant who penetrated so far beyond our then eastern frontier. The country was known little more than by name, and was occupied by the Burmese. He visited Rungpore, then the capital, and formed an acquaintance with a Singpho chief, Beesa Gaum, with whom he made a written engagement, to be furnished with some Tea-plants, which Mr Bruce had discovered growing in his country in a state of nature.

Mr CA Bruce (the brother of Mr Robert Bruce) left England in 1809, as midshipman on board the Honourable Company's ship Wyndham, Captain Stewart. He was twice captured and after two hard-fought actions was marched across the Isle of France at the end of the bayonet, and kept a close prisoner on board ship, until that island surrendered to the British. He afterwards went as an officer of a troop-ship against Java, being present at the capture of the colony, in 1811.

22; At the breaking out of the Burmese War, in 1824, he offered his services to Mr Scott, the Governor General's agent, and being appointed to command a division of gunboats, was ordered up to Sudiya. After the capital had surrendered Beesa Gaum came down to pay his respects, when Mr CA Bruce, speaking to him of the Tea-plant, the chief produced his brother's agreement. In 1832 Captain Jenkins was sent by the Right Hon. Lord William Bentinck, the Gov Gen, to Sudiya, to report on the resources of the country. The subject of the Tea-plant was brought to that officer's notice by Mr Bruce, who gave a description of the method of making tea by the natives.

22; Bentinck's minute of Jan 1834...his attention had been on tea since his appointment as GG in July 1827.

23; In Feb 1829, his lordship visited the Company's settlements in the straits of Malacca and Singapore, when he had an opportunity of observing the character of the Chinese adventurers there. Their superior energy, their industry, their spirit of speculation and calculation of profit is quite equal to that of any European nation. "Had I not been to the eastward," his lordship states, "I should never have entertained the conviction which I did, from that moment, that this or any other scheme was perfectly practicable through Chinese agency. I therefore now most strongly and confidently recommend that the attempt should be made...My own idea is that an intelligent agent should go down to Penang and Singapore, and in conjunction with the authorities there, and the most intelligent of the Chinese agents, concert measures for obtaining the genuine plant, and the actual cultivators, who upon inspection of those spots, that upon their representation of the requisite soil and climate shall have been selected as the most eligible, shall then be employed, under the promise of liberal remuneration, to carry on the cultivation. I know of no one better qualified to select the best means adapted to the end than Mr Gordon of the late firm of M'Intosh and Co."

24; Mr Gordon... proceeded in June (1834), by the Water Witch, to China, with instructions to obtain a supply of Tea-plants and seed: he reached Macao, in July, and went to the coast in company with the Rev. Mr. Gutzlaff, in fulfillment of his instructions.

But by Dec 1834, the May reports on tea from Jenkins/Charlton received.

25; March, 1835...The Tea Committee considered that the discovery of the growth of Tea in Upper Assam and the reports which they had received of the facility of multiplying it to any extent by seeds, rendered the detention of Mr Gordon in China needless, and they accordingly directed him to return to Bengal with the least practicable delay. That gentlemen, after some fruitless attempts from the boisterous state of the weather to reach Ning-Te-Hyen, determined to proceed to Ankoy; and in accordance with

the result of Mr Gutzlaff's enquiries, to land from a deep bay in the province of Fokien, laying between the bay of Lucu Chenfu on the north, and that of Hya-Men, or Amivi, on the south. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of Nov they landed, and set out on their expedition, from which they returned on the 13<sup>th</sup>. A consignment of seeds was sent round to Calcutta, and divided between Kumaon, Sirmore and *our own* provinces in Assam; some seeds being likewise sent to Madras, for distribution in Mysore and the Nelgherries.

Mr Gordon returned from China in Sept 1835, after making arrangements for dispatching emissaries to the Bohea country to gain information regarding the best Black Teas, and to obtain the parties who were qualified to superintend its cultivation and manufacture. This point was deemed of so much importance, that Mr Gordon, under the sanction of the supreme government, was authorized to revisit China immediately, to ascertain the result of the foregoing measures. Having succeeded in procuring persons qualified to cultivate and manufacture the black Tea, and feeling that there was no longer occasion for the undivided labours and services of a secretary...tendered his resignation.

27; Sept 1835 – Wallich –wrote on 3<sup>rd</sup> March (CHECK DATES HERE WITH PARL PAPERS) – “No scheme was ever entered upon with such a progressive accumulation of favourable and confirmatory circumstances as our Tea scheme.”

From Bissenath, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the same month, he enumerates places where he examined the Tea in its natural or wild state, and observes, that when he left Calcutta on his tour, the Committee were not in possession of any date (sic!) on which they could found a supposition that Tea existed anywhere in this province, except on its remotest

28; frontier to the southward and eastward of Sudiya, and that it was not until he reached Sudiya, that he heard, from Captain Jenkins, Tea-forests were to be met with lower down the Brahmaputra, in countries *subject to British control and influence*. He maintains that under proper treatment they would be made to yield a very valuable supply of potable Tea, which would *before long repay all the expenses of the preliminary trials*, provided the leaf is made to undergo the same sort of manipulation which is practiced in China.

30-1; Bruce's report on Muttuck country...appeared to approach the superior soils in which green Tea is cultivated in China.<sup>3</sup> The Tea Committee remark, that had they anticipated this discovery while Mr Gordon was in China, they should have directed him to engage the services of persons practically acquainted with the process of manufacturing the green tea-leaf for the foreign market...expense of 1150 Spanish dollars sanctioned after some reluctance by Auckland...arrangements authorized in Nov for introduction of green tea-manufactures and tea-chest makers from China....

32; (Bruce supported by Tea Committee in his request for)...still further aid...attachment of apprentices...as from the state of the climate, and other causes, boys of an early age seemed best calculated to become valuable instruments in the growth and manufacture of Tea.<sup>4</sup>...(but) indisposition manifested by the supreme government to incur even the moderate expense proposed for the maintenance of additional Chinamen...and apprentices...arose from the matter being viewed as one simply of experiment, and under the full impression that the more extended cultivation and manufacture of Tea would become a matter for *private enterprise*...

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<sup>3</sup> PP p.78

<sup>4</sup> PP93-6

33; The sooner they (Government) can abandon the proposed Tea plantation to private enterprise, the better. (Capt Jenkins, PP, p.70)

37; Assam Company...accordingly formed... (in Feb last, i.e. 1838) with a present capital of 500,000 pounds, in 10,000 shares of 50 each; 800 shares were set apart for allotment in England, and 2000 for allotment in India.

54; the poet was prophetic when he wrote:-

The whole globe  
Is now of commerce made the scene immense  
Nor is there wheel in the machine of trade  
Which Leeds or Cairo, Lima or Bombay  
Helps not with harmony to turn around  
Though all unconscious of the union act,  
Pursue,  
Ye sons of Albion, with unwielding heart,  
Your hardy labours; let the sounding loom  
Mix with the melody of every vale,  
Increasing commerce shall reward your care,  
*A day will come*  
*When through new channels sailing, we shall clothe*  
The Californian's coast, and all the realms  
That stretch from Anian's strait to proud Japan.<sup>5</sup>

54-5; But to look beyond the mere commercial advantages...it will be Britain's privilege to attempt to diffuse that knowledge which shall liberate them from the thralldom...

56; It is to be hoped that the reader will pardon this digression from a treatise on the cultivation of the Tea-plant, in the remembrance that the enjoyment of the grateful beverage it yields – though the writer is no Teatotalist – will be the best accompaniment to those schemes which have for their object the welfare and improvement of our fellow-species of whatever colour or whatever clime.

London, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 1839.

The End.

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<sup>5</sup> Dyer's Fleece, 1750