

## **The Influence of the War on Tropical Agriculture.**

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### COPRA.

Germany and France are two of the countries in Europe which have long been great centres for oil, Hamburg and Marseilles being two of the greatest oil crushing centres in the world. Germany imported 230,000 tons of copra per year of which 124,000 tons came from various parts of British Empire. Austria Hungary imported 34,000 tons getting 29,000 from British sources. France imported 153,000 tons getting 20,000 from British sources. That trade has been practically stopped altogether and copra is no longer exported from British sources into Germany and Austria, so that to a certain extent British coconut producers have lost important markets. A curious situation has arisen because, although Germany imported this large amount of copra, she also exported coconut oil to the extent of 41,000 tons per annum, no less than 30,000 going to the United Kingdom which imports from foreign countries to an extent equivalent to 82,000 tons of copra per annum.

If the oil-plants in England could readily be adapted to the manufacture of coconut oil from copra they could take over the very large amount which formerly went to Germany and Austria and for which the market has been lost. The Imperial Institute in London is interesting itself in the matter with its new Technical Information Bureau, and is endeavouring to put people who are interested in the manufacture of copra into touch with exporters in various countries.

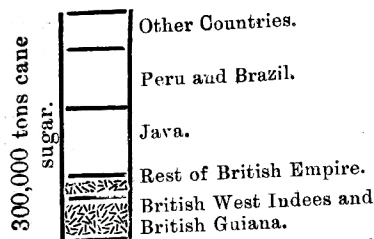
### SUGAR.

If you go back further, more than 100 years ago, we know that the sugar cane was the dominant plant and the sole source of sugar for the civilized world. Still earlier in 1747 a German chemist, Marggraf, had shown the possibility of getting sugar from the beet. In 1797 a French refugee, Achard, continued the work and about the

beginning of the last century the first experimental factory for beet was started in Silesia with a capacity of something like 525 tons of roots a year which could probably produce about 30 tons of sugar. The baby-hood of beet industry was greatly affected by continental wars. Napolean attempted to stifle England's commerce by a continental blockade, his main object being to keep out from Europe the products of British Colonies which at that time were chiefly cotton, sugar and Indigo. The result of this was a great impetus to beet industry and Napolean himself in 1811 ordered that 80,000 acres in France be planted with beet. The industry flourished for a time and in 1812 there were 40 beet sugar factories producing 10,000 tons of sugar per annum. After the Napoleonic wars the industry dropped again and in 1829 the beet sugar production was only 4000 tons. In 1835 Germany took up the industry seriously. By 1860 the world production of sugar was 1,500,000 tons, cane sugar 1,250,000 and beet 250,000. In 1871 the roots in both France and Germany contained 6% sugar; in 1884 those in France had not improved whilst in Germany it rose up to 11%. This was due to the German system of taxing the roots that went into the factories and not the out put of sugar as in France. France then adopted the German system of taxing with the desired effect of raising the sugar content to 11 per cent. and increasing the out put of sugar to 1,500,000 tons against 1,850,000 tons of German sugar. By that time the sugar content of Germany had risen up to 12.66 per cent. In 1892, Germany altered her system from duty on roots to duty on sugar with a direct bounty or bonus of £ 5/- per ton on exports. The other continental countries worked on more or less similar lines and as a general result the beet industry increased to 6,000,000 tons in 1903. During the same period the sugar cane production had grown up to 5,800,000. Brussels convention of 1902 abolished the beet sugar bounty in 1903. By 1914 beet had only gone up to 6,800,000 whereas cane sugar had progressed from 5,800,000 to 9,000,000.

At present Germany and Austria produce more sugar than the whole of the British Empire. The total amount of sugar used in the United Kingdom is 1,800,000 tons; beet 1,500,000 and sugar cane only

300,000 of which only a small amount comes from the British Empire; the relative proportions are shown in the diagram.



Since 1903 beet and sugar cane have competed on equal terms. Beet has got the great natural advantage that it is produced near the great centres of consumption and thus has a natural protection in the form of 'Cheaper Freights.' The one great disadvantage is that beet sugar impurities are very objectionable compared with those in cane sugar. Mr. Aspinall, the energetic Secretary of the West India Committee had a bottle of raw cane sugar and another of raw beet sugar on his office shelf. After keeping the latter for a short time it developed a most offensive odour.

At the outset of the war the Home Government purchased 900,000 tons of Sugar at £20/- per ton—the biggest sugar deal ever made in the world. It stopped imports to avoid German sugar coming through neutral countries. The war has not up to the present seriously affected the French output of beet sugar except in Northern France. Therefore the immediate difficulty in Europe is not so much the production of sugar, as getting rid of it. Accordingly much is being stored, causing demand for proper storage facilities as there is lack of suitable warehouse accommodation for very large quantities of sugar. Supplies in England are said to be sufficient to last till May but an early peace will liberate large quantities of sugar with a consequent drop in prices. Speaking in the House of Commons in February, Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, announced that any change in the price of sugar in the next few months is likely to be downward. If the struggle should be between cane and beet on equal terms then we have to aim at producing sugar at as cheap a rate as the best cane sugar countries i. e., Java and Cuba. This can only be done by the exercise of unremitting care and attention to all branches of the cane industry, the selection of canes, their cultivation and manufacture.

(Extracted by K. U. K. M).