Abacá Will Make Good Rayon?

While Japanese prepare Yen 2,000,000 for the venture, our plant industry bureau dilates upon abacá for sacks.

Can you remember from one depression to another, or are you too depressed to want to? Anyway, if you will think back to the dismal year of 1921, you will recall that silk was the first commodity to break and Japan was the country that bore the brunt of the fall. Silk had been sky-high during and after the World war, but it tumbled with a fearful crash and brought down cotton and all other textiles with it. The Japanese yen tottered in sympathy with silk, indeed has not yet reconciled itself to stability; for silk still drugs the market and plays frequent havoc with Japanese foreign exchange.

So too with cotton. Who wants cotton? Pooh! Of course, the Philippines do valiantly and buy millions upon millions of yards of cotton every year, but on the theory that one swallow does not make a summer, one customer doesn't make a textile market; notwithstanding which, a cotton crop exceeding last year's is being ginned in America's cotton belt, and silkworms still spin their enticing cocoons in China and Japan. Why wouldn't farm-relief boards in Washington put up a rueful face to Hoover, why wouldn't the yen be skittish?

No sooner had silk drawn cotton into the depths of failure, than rayon came on and claimed the spotlight of popularity. People nowadays have no yen for cotton and very little for silk, they are rayon-minded.

That fact has made Japan rayon-minded, apparently she thinks that where you lose money is the place to find it—she has gone in for rayon and may redeem in this commodity the fortune she lost in true silk. Word comes that a Japan company has turned to abacá as a source of rayon, that abacá tow is the raw product, and that the capital ventured in the industry is Yen 2,000,000. What started so quietly in a German laboratory has boisterously leaped the Pacific, a little to the benefit of the Philippines—whence the abacá for Japan's new rayon must come.

It has long been persistently reported, too, that Japanese chemists know how to split the shell off abacá fiber and liberate the cotton-like fibriles within, producing a textile material which is practically cotton itself. This has been done experimentally at our science bureau, where the *cotton* of abacá was found to be of extraordinary textile strength. As to rayon, abacá (which is Manila hemp) should be ideal for it because it dyes so satisfactorily. But if in Japan, why not in the Philippines? and why not in America?

But at least here in the Philippines

there is some thought about abacá. A competent layman reports that the fields in southeastern Luzon and the eastern Bisayas will peter out unless machines for the stripping are introduced and modern cultivation is practiced, as the industry is being handled in Davao. The plant industry bureau, on its part, reports that the 30 to 40 million sugar sacks used in the Philippines yearly could be made of abacá. Jute sacks are now used, a product of India.

The plant industry bureau says a peasant woman and 2 girls working a week could make ₱2.50 worth of abacá sacks, if the price were ₱0.10 apiece; the price of imported jute sacks runs about ₱0.16 apiece, higher to others than sugar-mill buyers. The abacá-sack idea seems to be principally just an idea. It is the resale value of the jute sack that counts; it is necessary to spin an abacá yarn successfully, and make of it such a fabric as will have the qualities of the jute sack—no one-day task. The logical place for the experiment is at the science bureau, not the plant industry bureau; and there, instead of at their desks reeling off industrial conjectures, the plant-industry experts might be profitably employed. If Japan is launching an abacá-rayon industry, good solid chemistry research is at the bottom of the enterprise; and if we are to have abacá textile business, applied chemistry must indicate the way for capital to follow.

What Value . . . .

(*Continued from page 7*)

growing of quinine is another forest industry that has been neglected in the Philippine Islands. It has been estimated that ⅓ of the world's population suffers from malaria. Health experts have estimated that 26,000 tons of quinine a year would be required to treat these people. Yet the production of this drug is a virtual monopoly of the Dutch East Indies. The price of the drug is fixed at well over a pound sterling for a pound of quinine, and the world's supply is about 600 tons a year. A small percentage of the amount needed to supply the sufferers with a remedy. Malaria is a poor man's disease, and its cure only a rich man's privilege.

Attempts have been made to grow cinchona in the Philippines, and the experiments have been successful. On October 5, 1927, the Governor General set aside 378 hectares of land in Barrio Impalutao, Bukidnon, as timber land to be used for the growing of quinine trees. At present there are about 12,000 quinine trees growing. About 10,000 are four years old. In three or four years these trees will be ready for cutting to determine the alkaloid content of the bark, and the quinine derivatives for combating malaria, a disease prevalent in the islands.

In view of this experiment it is safe to say that quinine can be produced in the islands on a commercial scale for we have both the soil and climate necessary to its growth. Java with a very similar climate has extensive plantations where cinchona is grown and that country at present controls 97% of the world's supply of quinine.

NOTE.—The notes and data for the above article were supplied from articles written by Luis Aguilar and Juan Fontanoza, rangers of the Bureau of Forestry.

HERE FOR SPAIN

Republican Spain has sent to Manila as her vice-consul in the Philippines a man eminent in her public life, and of course prominent in the republican movement, Don Andrés Rodriguez Ramón, who arrived in Manila on the s. s. *Trier* and was met at the pier by Acting Consul General Ricardo Muñiz and a delegation representative of the Spanish community. Newspapers interviewers learned from Consul Ramón that Spain has not gone scathless in the business depression. She has been perceptibly affected by it. But he feels her overseas commerce will be prosperous under the Republic, brought about so largely by the industrial element of the population.

The new consul general, Don Luis Ariño Rodriguez, is sojourning in London and will arrive in Manila later this year. The Republic of Spain is formulating a foreign policy favoring commercial progress.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND COMMUNICATIONS

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