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## EDITORIAL NOTES.

THE local cultivation of tobacco, suitable for native use, is a subject which has been under consideration and discussion for many years. It seems agreed upon that a moderate quality tobacco can be grown in New Guinea but that the native prefers the imported product.

According to the history of the East Indies, tobacco arrived in Java and the Philippines about the year 1600. Many years before the European settlement of New Guinea, Malay and other traders visited the country and probably left tobacco seed here in the course of their trading activities. There are old Malay trade routes leading right into the Sepik hinterland. Later, the New Guinea natives used tobacco seed for trading purposes and eventually some of this seed found its way into Papua.

The natives in the neighbourhood of Madang now produce a heavy coarse-leaved tobacco which is greatly favoured for sale as local "Brus" or leaf tobacco. In most other districts, a native-grown tobacco of rather inferior quality is produced for local use.

The Germans conducted several experiments on the Gazelle Peninsula, New Ireland and Bougainville Island on the growing of tobacco. Samples of this tobacco sent to Singapore and Germany were favorably reported on. The Lutheran and Catholic Missions still grow tobacco leaf for their own use and also encourage natives to do the same. Some trade is occasionally done with small Chinese-manufactured cigars in Rabaul but such trade is of little importance.

Some of our most progressive planters have grown "Brus" tobacco for many years, both as an issue for their own labour and for sale. Such procedure has aided the cost of bringing some plantations into bearing with longer-term crops such as coco-nuts.

Several companies in Papua and New Guinea have grown tobacco suitable for native twist and, at various times, small factories have been erected with the object of producing a product which would replace the imported twist tobacco. In all cases, the natives showed definite preference for the "Beaconsfield" and "Plantation" brands of native twist introduced from America.

It would appear that this was due chiefly to the method of manufacture and the kind of dressing used, rather than to the type of leaf evolved, for the natives complained that the tobacco had a "bite".

In recent years, most planters who have tried tobacco culture have had only a limited idea of the necessary requirements. The type of soil chosen has been unsuitable and the curing sheds have shown much to be desired. On several plantations a good mahogany-coloured leaf has been produced but seldom a very light-coloured leaf. In many cases, the production of a dark leaf, resembling imported tobacco, has been intentional. There is every indication that good pipe tobaccos of the heavier sort can be produced in New Guinea but the production of good cigarette tobacco is doubtful except, perhaps, in very limited areas.

The Department of Agriculture in New Guinea has had considerable experience with varieties of tobacco introduced from other parts of the world and prospective planters of this crop would be well advised to consult the Director or read his recent article "Brus Tobacco for Natives" in Volume 6, Number 1 of this *Gazette*. Another article which should be of interest was published in the last issue of the *Gazette*.

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