

Something about Cedar.

One of the most valuable trees in the entire vegetable kingdom is the Spanish cedar. It is likely to remain so as long as people smoke regallas and the Queen of the Antilles yields the tobacco of which to make them. Just as anthracite is found everywhere in the regions of frost, so Cuba not only supplies the world with the finest segars, but with the material in which to pack them. There are various species of cedar. The white gives us capital "wooden ware," the red is indispensable for the manufacture of pencils and vermin-proof trunks. The Spanish cedar is equally necessary for the making of segar boxes. The reason is that in wood of no other kind can segars be kept without deterioration. The longer a regalla is kept in a box of Spanish cedar the finer becomes its flavor.

The best Spanish cedar is indigenous to Cuba. It attains a size beside which the cedars that we see hereabouts would be dwarfs. The war in Cuba is so affecting the supply that manufacturers are thinking seriously from whence they shall derive it after the exhaustion of the existing very slender stock now in the country. The trees are cut in the mountains by the most primitive process, run down into the ravines, and there lie until the rains swell the streams and drive them down to tide water. Sometimes the streams become torrents, and drive vast quantities of logs far out to sea. In order to pack the hold of a ship to better advantage, the logs are squared, wasting probably one-third of their entire contents. Even squared as they are, the sticks run all the way from twelve to thirty inches in thickness.

Before the segars are packed in the boxes the wood is deliciously fragrant. Its odor is changed when segars come in contact with it, very decidedly to the advantage of the latter. The wastage is eagerly sought for by smokers of fancy, hams, to which it imparts a flavor communicated by nothing else. The finer saw dust being used for that purpose.

The cutting of the trees in Cuba is now stopped, and it is feared that no logs for shipment can be prepared for a long time to come. The breaking out of the Cuban revolution found large stocks gathered at the various ports of shipment, for which the Germans were active competitors with the United States. The consumption of Spanish cedar in Germany is very large indeed.

Most of the correspondence of Cuba with Philadelphia houses predicts the entire success of the revolution. There is not likely to be a single year's suspension of the crop of sugar, but that the woodsmen can or will at once return to the mountains and resume operations in cutting timber is deemed very doubtful. Sometimes two successive years elapse without sufficient rain to create the freshets necessary to bring out the logs from the ravines into which they have been hauled or thrown.

Such being the case, until we get Cuba we shall be in a strait for segar boxes. As it is now, a very large proportion of our lower grade of domestic segars are being packed in poplar and in some cases paper boxes. The utmost care is being taken everywhere of the stock of wood remaining on hand. The "dummies" in the segar stores must feel an increased degree of respectability when we remember that during the war the rebels were obliged to put a premium even upon the corks of bottles.