

21667 to 21683—Continued.

21681. CODONOPSIS TANGSHIEN.

"(No. 269, Oct. 31, 1907.) *T'ang shen*, bastard ginseng. A climbing herb, 3 to 6 feet, with bluish purple flowers, greenish without; very abundant in the margins of thickets (sometimes cultivated also), 4,000 to 7,000 feet. Roots supposed to possess valuable tonic properties. Also considered a mild aphrodisiac. For full details see Kew Bulletin No. 1, 1907.

"Vast quantities are exported from Ichang in three grades, valued, respectively, by the Imperial maritime customs at 20, 15, and 10 haikwan taels." (*Wilson*.)

21682. RHUS VERNICIFERA.

Lacquer tree.

"(No. 123, Sept. 4, 1907.) A tree 25 to 40 feet high, cultivated around the margins of fields between 3,000 and 7,500 feet and in wild woods above 4,000 feet. Branches more or less whorled, ascending at an angle of about 45°. Leaves unipinnate, five to many foliate, 1 foot to 2½ feet long, clustered at the ends of the branches. Flowers small, greenish white, borne in large, axillary panicles. Fruit small, flattened, straw colored.

"*Rhus vernicifera*, the *Che shu* of the Chinese, is the source of the well-known 'Ningpo' varnish, at least that of central and western China. What the 'Ningpo' plant may be is a matter of doubt, since no specimens have ever been collected there. It is, however, more than likely that 'Ningpo' is merely a trade name adopted by fruit growers in China to signify this particular varnish. Throughout the mountains south of Hupeh the trees are multitudinous, and enormous quantities of varnish are obtained and exported to all parts of China.

"The trees are first cut when about 6 inches in diameter; if too young the cutting kills. The average age of the trees is said to be above 60 years. The wood is useless save for fuel. In the woods the trees naturally grow taller than in the open. The tree is the property of the owner of the land, not of the tenant, and the varnish belongs to the former.

"Cutting the trees commences at the lower altitudes about the 20th of the fifth moon, but is general during the sixth moon. This is the time when the flowers are just opening. Oblique incisions 4 to 12 inches long and one-half inch to 1 inch wide are made in the trunk and main branches in the early morning and the varnish collected in bamboo tubs, shells, broken basins, etc., in the evening. These incisions are more or less spirally arranged along the stems. The varnish exudes for 7 days and then a thin slice of bark is cut away from the edge of the original incision. This is repeated seven times, the whole operation of collecting the varnish lasting about 50 days. The varnish when it first exudes is whitish, but quickly becomes dark almost on exposure to the air. A large tree yields 5 to 7 catties (6½ to 9½ pounds). This varnish is fit for use as soon as it is gathered, but there are several grades on the market, and it is probable that it subsequently undergoes some kind of preparation.

"The fruits when ground up, steamed, and submitted to pressure yield an oil used for culinary purposes, but more so for candle making. This oil is more abundant in the pericarp than in the seed." (*Wilson*.)

21683. ANGELICA sp. (?)

"(No. 201, Oct. 9, 1907.) *T'ang kuci*. An umbelliferous herb 2 to 3 feet high, with fine dissected decompound leaves, white flowers, and some short, thickened roots. This medicine is plentifully cultivated in the mountains of western Szechuan above 5,000 feet and more sparingly in the mountains of Hupeh around 6,500 feet. It requires deep rich loam and a good supply of manure—pig dung by preference. So far wild specimens are unknown.

"This medicine is in great request among the Chinese, especially in the more southern parts of the Empire. It is said to possess valuable but mild tonic properties.

"At Ichang the customs' valuation is 15 haikwan taels per picul, first class; 9 haikwan taels, second class. Large quantities are exported from here. I am not at all sure of the generic name, and it may be a *Ligusticum*." (*Wilson*.)