

**CONCENTRATED TEA SLABS.**

BY L. LODIAN.

Compressed tea is common enough in Siberia, but so far as I know an unknown commodity in this country. It is an ordinary black tea, which is very widely



SLABS OF TEA USED BY THE RUSSIAN ARMY

used by the Buriats of the trans-Baikal region, by whom the herb thus prepared is drunk, flavored with salt and sour cream. Sugar would be preferred, of course, but it is either unattainable or too high-priced, costing, as it does, from seventy-five cents to one dollar a pound.

The specimen of compressed tea that is here pictured is of a very good quality. Just now it is of interest because it is used by the Russian officers in Manchuria. The tea is compressed by superb modern machinery, evidence of which is afforded by the splendid specimen of die sinking on the tablet itself. Such has been the pressure employed, that the formerly soft and yielding leaves assume the appearance of a hard tile, which can with difficulty be cut with a knife. As a general rule, a mallet or hammer is used to break off a piece, very much as if the tablet were of stone.

The tea employed is a straight Suchong, which needs no cream because nature has given it a slightly creamy taste, and also one that is feebly saccharine, so that it requires less sugar than other teas. In flavor this compressed tea cannot be compared with the natural herb. It is much flatter in taste, but possesses the same stimulating properties. A piece the size of a thimble is sufficient for a large, strong cup. No teapot is necessary. Scalding water is poured on the nugget in the cup, and in a few minutes the tea is ready.

No cementing agent whatever is used in compressing high-grade teas—not even sugared water nor artificial heat. The little heat that is generated in compression starts the tannic acid in the leaves, which is all the adhesive required to hold the block together. A tablet thus compressed may be exposed to soaking rains with little danger of injury. As a general rule, however, compressed tea is kept in worsted bags.

The official Russian compressed tea, of which the tablet here illustrated is a sample, is not obtainable in Europe outside of Russia.

**A CURIOUSLY DISTORTED LOCOMOTIVE.**

Two trains figured in a collision near Suisin, Cal., in which one engineer was killed and both locomotives slightly damaged. The front end of one of the damaged locomotives was driven in. When it was taken to the repair shop, some mechanic with a sense of humor saw his chance for playing a joke. With a few chalk lines he gave the wreck a weird, dragon-like appearance, which is excellently shown in the accompanying photograph.

**Gilbert's "De Magnete."**

An unusual circumstance has arisen in that two different London booksellers are offering for sale copies of the rare Latin first edition of Gilbert's famous book. This book is much rarer than the first folio Shakespeare, for while of that work no fewer than 156 copies are known to exist, there are only 68 copies of the first folio Gilbert known, and only two have been sold in the book auctions during the last twenty years. On the last occasion, nearly three years ago, an inferior copy fetched £15 10s. A year ago a West End bookseller offered a copy

at £24. Now Messrs. Maggs Bros. offer a copy at £19 19s., and Messrs. H. Sotheran & Co. another copy, formerly in the library of the late Prof. Williamson, at £21. This latter is a remarkably fine clean copy with broad margins, the page measuring 11½ inches by 7¾ inches. It has the usual emendations in ink on pages 11, 22, and 200; but as it lacks the usual emendation on page 47, where "Non" is altered into "Aut," it is presumably an early copy from the press. The title page is clean and free from any inscriptions. It is to be hoped that this copy will be secured for some British library, and not pass, like many literary treasures, into foreign hands.—Electrician.

**A VERY RARE BRONZE CASTING.**

BY J. MAYNE BALTIMORE.

Mr. Andrew Rudgear, a wealthy art connoisseur of San Francisco, Cal., has recently brought from Europe a magnificent bronze door which has attracted wide public attention. It is not divided into panels, as is the case with some of the famous bronze doors of the best period of Florentine art, but appar-

ently is cast in one whole piece, the subject being a wild rout of Bacchus. The upper portion is occupied by dancing nymphs and Mænads, or bacchantes. The center female figure holds aloft a wine cup, and presents a most graceful attitude of abandon to the spirit of the grape and the dance.

The lower portion is similar in character, though more sedate in action. The center of the door consists of a satyr led in bonds by roystering bacchantes. These figures are in strong relief, the satyr bending forward, his feet resting upon a garland of flowers and clusters of grapes, which carry the decorative motive to the sides, where two other bacchantes are bearing vases of fruit.

The composition is exceedingly bold and free, a great many figures being employed; some holding aloft the thyrsus, or staff, entwined with ivy and surmounted with a pine cone; others entwining their arms and bending in the dance, standing out from the background almost completely detached; while others, with pipe and cymbal, disappear amid the profuse ornamentation of scrolls, vines, and flowers. Still, there is no confusion in the design—everything lending itself to the general effect of graceful movement and decorative unity.

The casting of this door is not the least part of its attraction. The modern method of casting bronze by piece molds is pretty generally understood; and almost anyone may perceive the great technical difficulties of casting such a large and very intricate work as this door. It is quite probable that what is known as the *cire-perdue* or wax process was used. A more careful examination of the bronze, and especially of the back, which at present is covered by the wooden part of the door, may throw more light on the subject.

So far as its origin or date of construction is concerned, there is every reason to believe that it is of

very considerable antiquity—belonging to the fifteenth or sixteenth century. The surface, or *patina*, has taken on a beautiful hue of mingled green, dark brown, and gold, proclaiming its age and adding to the general effect.

Just how Mr. Rudgear came into possession of this treasure of art is quite interesting and—accidental. He was traveling through Italy. When about twenty miles outside of Florence, he came upon some workmen who were wrecking an old villa. While talking to them, he incidentally learned of the bronze door that had been stored in the cellar.

He immediately entered into negotiations, which resulted in its purchase. As the government is determined to allow as few as possible, if any, rare works of art to leave the country, Mr. Rudgear had much trouble in securing his beautiful treasure from the



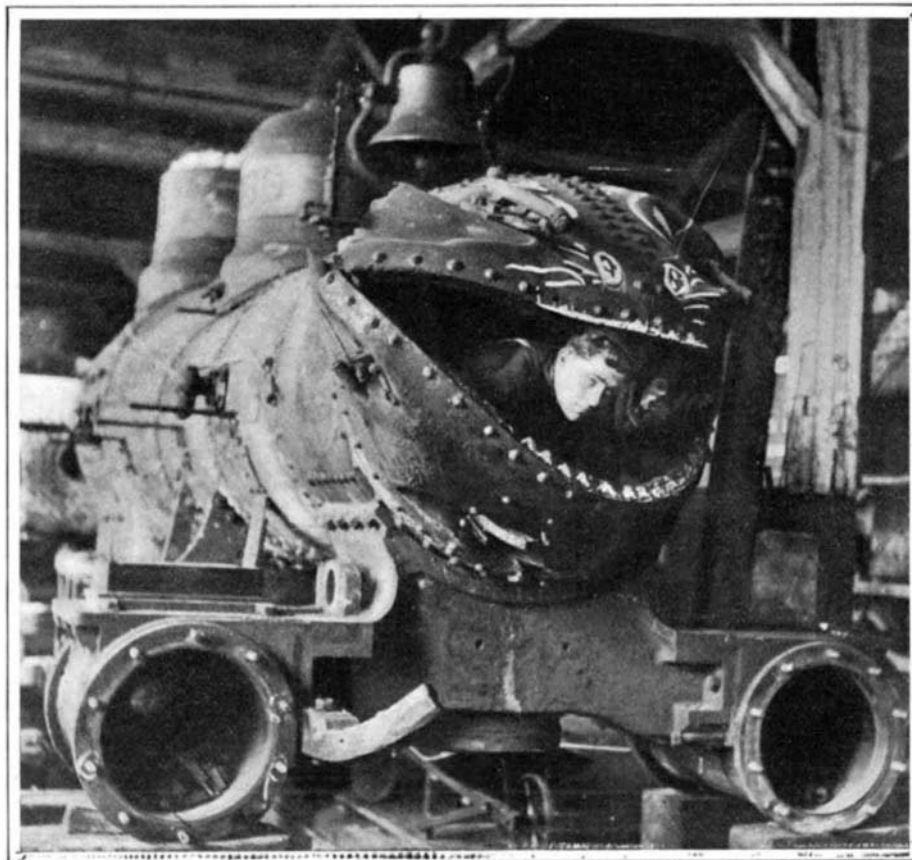
A VERY RARE BRONZE CASTING.

authorities. To make certain the genuineness of the door, Mr. Rudgear had it examined and passed upon by Prof. Italo Mario Palmarini, government inspector of the Royal Galleries of Florence. Prof. Palmarini pronounced it a magnificent specimen of the bronze art of the fifteenth or sixteenth century.

**Forest Fires Over Former Battlefields.**

Forest fires are under ordinary circumstances sufficiently dangerous to any one so unlucky as to be caught within their circuit, but the following statement proves that there are certain localities where they may be attended with unsuspected peril. Some days ago, says an exchange, the woods in the mountains known as Loudon Heights, opposite Harper's Ferry, took fire and burned with great intensity. After burning for some time a series of explosions were heard which startled the inhabitants, and the concussion was so great that it broke windows in some houses in Harper's Ferry, across the Shenandoah. The explosions were caused by the bursting of shells, which were thrown on the heights at the time when General Mills surrendered to Stonewall Jackson in 1862. These had failed to explode when they were fired, and had remained there for more than forty years.

Berlin has passed the two million mark in the population of the city proper. On Nov. 27, 1904, according to the police, the register contained the names of 1,998,436 persons, and during the fortnight following, allowing for the ordinary rate of increase, the population had risen to about 2,001,500. The adjoining suburbs have a population of nearly 750,000 persons.



A WRECKED LOCOMOTIVE THAT BEARS AN UNCANNY RESEMBLANCE TO A DRAGON.