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Dieffenbach on Blue Mountain Tea, June 25, 1956

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1.
Blue Mountain Tea.

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Among the colonists almost any beverage was a rarity, so, in the Fall of the year they would go to the mountain and gather enough of the leaves of the sweet-scented goldenrod— (Blow Barriger Tea) in the P. D. dialect.

It is found mostly on top of the mountain, in semi-shade, and oft-times in close proximity to a spring or watercourse. It has a pleasing sweet scent, much resembling anise. It looks very much like the ordinary golden-rod, but is finer in the stems and has long, narrow leaves. It grows to about two feet high to a maximum of thirty inches in rich soil and a very wet season. Only the leaves are used for tea as a beverage. So as to save space in the container, and also to avoid carrying excessive weight, the leaves were stripped of the stems and put in a grain-bag slung over the shoulder.

Once we reached our home we would place the leaves in a dark room, spreading them in thin layers on newspapers until they were dried out, then they were put in metal containers or glass-jars for use during the winter. A hand-full of leaves would be put in a tea-pot and boiling water poured over

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it, and then left for an hour or so. Some, who preferred it stronger would boil it and have a very dark and pungent brew.

If taken while very hot, it was good for sweating out a cold. Some old-timers claimed that applied as a massage it would relieve lumbago and arthritis.

Nowadays, when coffee is $\$1.00$ to $\$1.25$ per lb. this concoction is a good outch to the working-man's wallet.

Years ago it was customary for the backwoodsmen to set fire to the nearby woodland so as to consume the brush and briars and thus have a better crop of huckleberries and mountain-tea.

I have been told by folks who had the wanderlust of roaming the country side, that they have found this plant in the mountains and ridges of nearly every state where mountains are to be found; hence I prefer the name "Mountain-tea", dropping the prefix of Blue - for, not all mountains are blue, nor do they bear that name.

It was highly esteemed among the early settlers who were informed of its medicinal qualities by the friendly Delaware Indians. When Conrad Weiser, the great

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Pioneers and Indian-interpreters had a store in Reading, Pa., on the site of the Stichter Hardware Store, he sold Blue Mt. Tea.

A very old neighbor-woman would tell the writer of these lines over threescore years ago, of how her own grandmother gathered some of this sweet smelling herb in the hills adjacent to Valley Forge, and that some time it was the only beverage of Gen. Washington's soldiers.

My own Grand-mother would add some leaves of mint to it, thus stretching out a meager supply of mountain-tea and also greatly improve the flavor.

The entire plant, when crushed and then boiled until soft, would be applied as a poultice for a bruise, or to cause a boil to come to a head.

Doubtless there were many and various modes of using and applying the herb.

June 25-1956

Victor R. Hoffmann