

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE ON THE PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF THE LAC INSECT INTO CEYLON.

BY E. E. GREEN,
(Government Entomologist, Peradeniya.)

Mr. Wickramaratne's paper gives, in a concise form, a useful account of lac culture in India, and clearly shows that—if established in Ceylon—it should lead to a profitable industry peculiarly adapted to the capabilities of the native cultivator. When once the initial difficulty of introducing the insect shall have been overcome, I see no reason why the culture of lac should not be undertaken successfully in Ceylon. The differences in our climate and temperature are insignificant, though some slight alteration of seasons may have to be adopted. A very closely allied species (possibly merely a local race) of lac insect already occurs in Ceylon. It frequents more especially the 'Kön' tree (*Schleichera trijuga*); but the same species (*Tachardia albizziae*) occurs—though less frequently—upon the following Ceylon trees:—

<i>Albizzia stipulata</i> ,	'Kabal-mara';	(Indigenous)
<i>Fulicium decipiens</i> ,	'Pehimbiya';	Do.
<i>Croton aromaticum</i> ,	'Keppitiya';	Do.
<i>Harpullia cupanioides</i> ,	'Na-imbul';	Do.
<i>Mangifera indica</i> ,	'Mango';	Do.
<i>Nephelium litchi</i> ,	'Litchi';	(Introduced)
<i>Theobroma cacao</i> ,	'Cacao';	Do.

and, probably, upon many other species. Of the trees mentioned. *Schleichera*, *Harpullia* and *Nephelium* belong to the same natural order (*Sapindaceae*), and it is probable that the insect would flourish upon such allied species as *Sapindus erectus*, *S. laurifolius* ('Kahapanela'), *Nephelium longana* ('Mora'), and *Dodonaea viscosa* ('Eta-werella'),—all of which are indigenous plants in Ceylon.

Our Ceylon lac is already utilized locally for the ornamentation of ceremonial staves, native furniture, toys, etc.; but the industry is a very small one, and none of the product is exported. *Tachardia albizziae* does not produce such a plentiful incrustation of lac as does the Indian form (*T. lucca*). It is principally on this account that the introduction of the Indian lac insect is desirable. My attention was early directed to this subject, and repeated unsuccessful attempts have been made to import living lac insects from India. These attempts date from the year 1900.

The failure has usually been attributable to delay in transport, resulting in the premature emergence and death of the swarm of young insects.

In July last, however, a consignment of living brood lac, collected from 'Kon' trees, was received from the Forest Officer, Raipur Division, India. The insects were just commencing to swarm, and the bundels of encrusted sticks were immediately attached to branches of 'Kon' trees (*Schleichera*) growing in the Peradeniya Gardens. The young larvæ quickly migrated on to the living branches and formed dense clusters at various points. The clusters, however, gradually decreased in size, and no growth of the individuals was observed. Within two months the insects had completely disappeared. A few sticks were attached—as an experiment—to a 'Peepul' tree (*Ficus religiosa*) and to *Filicium decipiens*, with no better result.

I can offer no explanation of this failure. The insects were received in good condition; they were transplanted on to trees of the same species from which they had been collected in India; and the young insects successfully transferred themselves to the living branches and showed good promise of establishing themselves; but no further development occurred. The trees upon which they were placed were infested by 'Red Ants' (*Ecophylla*), but these ants do not usually prey upon Coccidæ. On the contrary, they are in the habit of conserving such insects for the sake of the sweet liquid that they excrete, and they might have been expected to assist in the distribution of the young lac insects.

But such failures should not be accepted as final. Repeated attempts will surely prove that the difficulties are not insuperable; and the probable benefits of the introduction should outweigh any question of initial expense. It is possible that the proposed efforts to inoculate our 'Inga Saman' trees may be more successful. Should the transport of living insects upon sections of branches be again unsuccessful; it may be possible to import young trees upon which the insects have been already established.

Care should be taken to eliminate the parasites that commonly attack the insect in India, though similar parasites already infest our local lac insect in Ceylon.