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# MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

**Government of Madras.**

*Public*

**DEPARTMENT.**

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**Not to be folded or roughly handled**

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,  
7th March 1868.*

No. 44. Read the following letter from the Commissioner for Investigating the Ravages of Borer in Coffee Plantations of Mysore and Coorg, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George; dated Mercara, 19th February 1868, No. 23.

I have the honor to send, herewith, for the information of the Government, copy of a monthly Report of progress forwarded by me to the Commissioner for Mysore and Coorg.

From the Commissioner for Investigating the Ravages of Borer in Coffee Plantations of Mysore and Coorg, to the Secretary to the Commissioner of Mysore and Coorg; dated Mercara, 8th February 1868, No. 22.

I have the honor to inform you, for the information of the Commissioner, that I have concluded my inspection of the Coffee Estates in Coorg, and will now proceed to Munzerabad. The work in Coorg has occupied me longer than I anticipated, the estates being so numerous and scattered, and a good deal of time having been consumed by the observations and inquiries necessary, in order to arrive at a correct knowledge of the natural history of the insect—enemies of the Coffee.

2. The white Borer does not appear to be on the increase, although its appearance in two year old Coffee, on an estate in the Bamboo-district, has created some alarm. It is a very unusual thing for the insect to attack Coffee so young, the instinct of the beetle probably leading it to avoid trees in which the larva would not find space for its operations, and sufficient food. In the Bamboo-district, however, the Coffee develops wood very rapidly, a two year old stem being of considerable size, and this probably accounts for the Borer appearing in it at so early a period of its growth. Another instance of the same kind was brought to my notice some time ago, and in this case, too, the plants were unusually large for their age. These two incidents, taken in connection with other facts, have enabled me to determine that the larva of the Borer beetle continues less than one year in that stage of its existence, although nearly the whole of the other members of the same family live from two to three years as grubs. I have not, during the month of January, although I have opened quite a hundred stems, found more than half a dozen Borer beetles in them, they being all on the wing. The larvæ however, are still abundant, and vary in size according to age, from the diameter of a knitting needle to that of a small quill. The insect is evidently, therefore, much more regular, as to the periods of the year in which it is to be found, in the various stages of its life, than we were at first led to believe. The subject of re-planting portions of estates on which the trees have died out from Borer, is now causing some anxiety to owners, as they are not quite certain whether the pest will disappear, and the planting up of ground on which Coffee has been grown before is always a matter of considerable expense and difficulty. The opinion that shade is necessary on estates in the eastern part of the province, where the droughts are often very trying, appears to be rapidly gaining ground, and on most properties the growth of every forest tree, springing up spontaneously amongst the Coffee, is encouraged. About ten days ago I inspected, with much interest, a small estate, some 20 miles south-east off Mercara on the banks of the Cauvery, completely under the shade of the Charcoal tree. The land was cleared of forest, and planted up in the usual manner, and thereafter the Charcoal tree seedlings, which generally come up plentifully in such clearings, were permitted to grow and gradually thinned out. At present they are from 12 to 15 feet high with fine umbrella-like tops, and the Coffee below is perhaps the best and most promising for its age that I have seen in Coorg. There is a great advantage gained by cutting down the forest and allowing the shaded trees to spring up in this manner, instead of planting under the shade of standing forest, as in the former case the trees come into bearing as soon as if in the open, whereas in the latter no crop need be expected for the first four years. The only question is whether the shade that comes up spontaneously in clearings will last, most of the trees being soft-wooded, rather short-lived, and easily injured by gales. This and other questions relative to shade, now engaging the attention of many Coorg planters, I hope to settle after visiting the estates that have for years been under shade in Munzerabad, &c.

3. On the 25th of last month, and two or three succeeding days, heavy showers fell throughout the whole of the district, and the result has been that the Coffee has come out in full blossom

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on many estates now, instead of in the month of March as is usually the case. Should showers fall in this month the prospects as to crop will be highly favorable, but otherwise a good deal of the blossom must perish. The rain has somewhat retarded the drying and despatch of the crop now on hand.

4. In a former communication I stated that my observations regarding the larva called the red Borer, led me to think that it belonged to the wood leopard moth or zenzera, and an imago just emerged from the chrysalis confirms this opinion. Although the larva is pretty common, the moth is a very rare insect, its color and slow flight perhaps enabling its enemies to discover and catch it with ease. The moth is rather pretty, and very peculiar in its appearance, the wings looking much too small for the size of the body. The antennæ in the male are beautifully feathered for about half their length, and the wings of a dull white color, spotted with black.

5. In a previous letter I stated that the Coorgs believe that the bamboos in their country die out regularly once in sixty years, and that in consequence of that event taking place in 1866, the Borer, which used to live in the bamboo, left that plant and took up its abode in the Coffee. From inquiries made in various directions, I have come to the conclusion that the life of the bamboo is not characterized by any such periodicity, and that the general death of the plant arose simply from the unusual drought that prevailed here, as elsewhere in India, during that season. I have also secured specimens of various insects that infest the bamboo, and although one grub has a considerable resemblance to the white Borer, it is a totally different insect. I may also remark that the habits of the white Borer are such as to preclude the idea of its being able to live in the bamboo. I have found recently in the Orange tree, and also in jungle-wood, a Borer so like the white Coffee Borer in habits and appearance, that I strongly suspect they are the same. Several larvæ of the Orange Borer are now being watched, in hopes that they will duly attain the imago state, and enable me to settle this question.

No. 45. To Surgeon G. BIDIE, M. B., Commissioner for Investigating the Ravages of the Borer, Mercara; dated Fort Saint George, 7th March 1868, No. 300.

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 19th ultimo, No. 23, with its enclosure, and to inform you that the Government await your report on the result of your intended inquiries in Munzerabad.

(Signed) R. S. ELLIS,  
Chief Secretary.

*Public Department*

*No. 300.*

*To Surgeon G. Bidie, M.B.*

*Commissioner  
for investigating the ravages of the  
Borer  
Mercara*

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zerabad.*

*Wm*

*Fort St George  
7th March 1868*

*MR*

*224-10-10*

Public 1868 Department.

\$1,300.

To P. D. Thompson for  
the transportation of  
the material for  
the work of the  
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of the  
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Dated March 1868.

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