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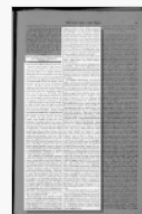
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THE PLANTING ENTERPRISE IN JOHORE AND THE MALAY PENINSULA GENERALLY.

(From the Ceylon Observer Special Correspondent).

There are several groups of coffee estates in Johore, but those visited on this occasion lie at the southernmost point of the Malayan Peninsula. Having been told by the proprietors that there was nothing in the way of soil, it was an agreeable surprise to find that, compared with the majority of the estates visited in Perak and Selangor, there was some very fair soil in parts of the property in Johore. The coffee is Liberian and planted on undulating ground, close to the seashore, a narrow belt of coconut palms and native gardens separating it from the open sea. The highest points are probably a couple of hundred feet above sea-level, and the higher you go, the worse the soil and the greater proportion of cabook gravel. This is exactly the opposite to what may be found in the hills of Perak, where the higher you go the better the soil as a rule, of course there are pockets of fine surface soil in the hollows. Amongst these little hillocks and sloping fields in Johore there are great stretches of swamp with black soil, and in these positions sago palms flourish, and great numbers (some hundreds of acres) have been planted up. The Liberian coffee is very much exposed to the winds from the sea, and is without

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shelter from the tropical storms that come tearing across the Straits. Very bad weather prevailed at the time of our visit. In spite, however, of this drawback and the want of richness in most of the soil, the coffee bushes looked very well—fine fields of dark-green trees, bearing a good crop. They had been a long time growing before they gave any appreciable profit, but there were many other reasons for this, apart from the conditions of soil and climate. The coffee is peeled on the estate by means of hammer pounders, working in mortars, and the superintendent could well be congratulated on having obtained the highest price for Liberian in the London Market. This estate can boast of an engine and steam-worked machinery.




These properties are unfortunately completely isolated from civilization and society, being some sixteen to twenty miles by sea from Singapore. Considerable extensions have been made and are still in progress, and before long the company to all appearance will possess a very valuable property. A number of Javanese coolies are employed, as well as Tamils, Malays and Chinese. Large numbers of nutmeg trees are planted at intervals through the coffee, and the produce is now coming in. Another source of revenue is cubebs, the vines of which appear to be flourishing and doing well. Ipecachuana is also grown on the estate and is said to prove a profitable cultivation. As regards the common enemy leaf disease with the green bug—these estates are no better off than those in the protected states, in fact are to all appearance rather worse. It may be mentioned that the green bug can be seen in Penang on a guava tree right in the middle of the town.



Speaking generally of the impression received during a trip through Perak and Selangor and a short visit to a small portion of Johore, it would appear that the Liberian variety of coffee is admirably adapted to the soil and climate of the country throughout the Malayan Peninsula, and that the Arabian coffee does very well on the higher




slopes of the hills in Perak. With present prices the estates are paying well, and future prospects are very brilliant. The great question at the present day is that of labour. Present prices may admit of a daily wage of twenty-five cents of a dollar, but that amount is a very heavy one on which to estimate the working of the estates as a general rule for the future. Railway and road communications will shortly be such as never at any time





advantaged the opening of any new district in Ceylon. The terms on which jungle land is offered to *bona fide* investors are extremely favorable more to what has obtained in Ceylon during the present generation of planters in the island.


There are many other products for which suitable land can be found in these settlements, such as sugar, pepper, tapioca, sago, tobacco, gambier, rice, coconuts, &c.

Of these the favorite amongst Europeans seems to be pepper. The method of supporting the vines adopted by Europeans usually differs from that of the native planters, who train the vine up the stem of a living tree. As a rule the *dadap* (*Erythrina indica*) is used for this purpose, it being a fast-growing tree and easily propagated either by seed or cuttings.




The European custom however, is to train the pepper vines upon pieces of roughly split hardwood timber, which is said to withstand the weather and the attacks of white ants as long as will be required for use as supporters to the vine, that is to say as long as the vine can be made to give profitable crops. In one Chinaman's garden we saw some very old pepper vines said to be twenty years old clinging to these supports; though in many cases it seemed as if the vine supported the remains of the decayed posts rather than the posts supporting the vines. It is moreover advanced by the advocates of the post support system, that the vines are more prolific when exposed to the sun than when grown under the shade of living trees, and it may well be that there is a good deal of truth in this statement. Pepper vines have their natural enemies like every other product. A little beetle lays its eggs in the knot from whence the new shoots spring. The egg develops into a maggot which bores its way into the young shoot, and a foot or more in length of course dies away. Gangs of coolies are employed cutting off the affected shoots and putting them into buckets of boiling water. Some of the pepper fields are bearing heavily and should give a handsome return. They are mostly treated with manure of various kinds. The bats' dung guano found in the Batu limestone caves is said on analysis to be wanting in phosphates, but however this may be it seems to be very suitable for manuring pepper vines: some that had been treated with this guano were bearing a very heavy crop. An experiment was being tried on one estate. Dipping the clusters of pepper berries into boiling water before drying them is a common practice, but this experi-





ment consisted in exposing them for some minutes to the smoke from a wood fire. It has not transpired what has been the result, but one would suppose great care about the selection of the wood should be exercised, especially if it were in a green state. Many woods produce a disagreeable pungent smoke—sometimes of a very disagreeable odour, and the pepper might become unpleasantly tainted either as regards taste, or smell, or both. In Selangor large extents of land covering thousands of acres in the aggregate have been opened up by Chinese principally for the cultivation of pepper, tapioca and gambier. Their success has been great and a large trade has sprung up, so much so that an enterprising firm of Chinese at Singapore are running small steamers to bring out the produce and carry it to the markets at Singapore to be thence transhipped probably to other parts of the world.



There can be little doubt that in the course of time the whole of the Malayan Peninsula will become a British province including all the protected states and probably Kedah and other districts nominally under the King of Siam. At present life and property in the protected states are just as safe as they are in Ceylon or Burma: in fact more so. Consequently investors of capital need not fear anything beyond what is naturally inherent in any unopened country.

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