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## Tropical Cultivation in Selangor Straits Settlements.

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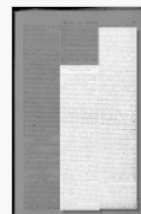
### TROPICAL CULTIVATION IN SELANGOR, STRAITS SETTLEMENTS.

Kwala Lumpur—Liberian Coffee Cultivation—Soil and Climate—Handsome Returns—Geological Formations—A Greatly-felt Want—Coffee Pulpers—Leaf-disease and Green Bug—Arabian Coffee—Forests and Labour Supply.

Selangor adjoins Perak on the East and South, lying nearer Malacca and Singapore. As yet tin mining has constituted the principal industry of Selangor, but large tracts of land have been taken up for cultivation of various tropical products—coffee, pepper, sugar, tobacco, tapioca, &c., &c.

To begin with, however, reference will be confined to coffee and what was learnt about it from personal observation. Kwala Lumpur is the capital town of Selangor, reached by nineteen or twenty miles of railway from Bukit Kuda. In the neighbourhood of Kwala Lumpur there are two Liberian estates in bearing and a number of promising young properties lately opened. The largest of the two estates in bearing is Weld's Hill, some two hundred acres more or less in bearing and some young clearing. The lay of the land is (generally speaking) of an easy gradient on both sides of a valley. The oldest coffee, a few acres, is about ten years old, but the bulk of the bearing coffee is from six to seven and is planted rather too close to allow of the trees doing their best in crop say seven and a half to eight feet square and topped at five to six feet. The fields of dark green coffee, covering the slopes of the valley, are really a fine sight for a planter, who has seen the

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best estates in Ceylon. It is difficult for an outsider not accustomed to Liberian coffee—to make an estimate of the crop on the trees, but it must come to a great deal, considering the picking goes on all the year round. There has been some correspondence in the Singapore papers about this estate and others belonging to the same proprietors calling in question certain statements which had been made about the crops. You have doubtless utilized this correspondence for your *Tropical Agriculturist*. There can be no doubt that large crops have been gathered, but there was no hesitation in admitting that they were produced by the aid of manure, so that putting them forward as an example of what the land is capable of producing in the way of coffee is not altogether a fair proceeding. Manure of the right description and properly applied can be made to produce almost anything you like in the way of crop, provided the experiment is made under favorable conditions of climate, position, &c. What capitalists want to know is what the land will do by itself unaided by manure and stimulants.


The soil of Selangor taking it all round is no better than that of Perak especially as regards low-lying undulating country where new clearings are being opened up. In all probability a better soil will be found further away from the coast, at the foot or on the lower slopes of the higher hills. The railway is now being pushed on twenty-seven miles or so beyond Kwala Lumpor, and would be available by the time estates came into bearing, were any now commenced in the direction in which the line is being made.

In spite of the poor appearance of the soil on the knolls, the young Liberian plants are coming on




fast and doing extremely well. In fact the younger estates are very promising indeed and should give handsome returns in a few years. The other property in bearing is Batu Cave estate, and here again large crops have been taken off a twelve-acre field. In the present year, as far as could be learned from inquiry on the spot, the yield will be about eight hundred weights an acre or thereabouts. It must not be forgotten that this little field is about five years old, and lies at the foot of an enormous limestone rock, in which are the famous caves full of bats' dung manure. One of these caves is open at the top, and the rain washes out the manure into the jungle at the foot. In fact this field may be said to be a "pocket" of the best possible soil, most favourably situated, with only one drawback, if it may be so termed,

and that is, its being on a level instead of on a slope. There are no long spells of very wet, cold weather in Selangor as there are on the hills of Ceylon; if there were, in all probability, the coffee in the field now under reference would die from "wet feet." The younger coffee on this property promises to do as well as that which is now in bearing; but in the same way as Weld's Hill the Batu estate has been manured, and the yield can hardly be quoted as a fair sample of what coffee should do unaided. On the principle of taking advantage of a favourable market manuring in order to insure handsome returns cannot be taken exception to; with present crops and current prices, a few years should give the proprietors a very handsome profit and indeed. The greater part of the soil in Selangor is laterite, in various forms and stages of decay. There is plenty of limestone in huge masses cropping up in various directions. The principal rock is the white and grey granite, which seems to be present in all parts of the Peninsula. It may be added that the limestone of very close, fine grain without presence of other gritty material; some is pure white and some of dark slaty blue. It seems rather unfortunate that the authorities at Selangor do not see their way to the appointment of a Superintendent of Agriculture, part of whose duty it would be to report upon the agricultural capabilities of the several districts of the interior of the country, with notes of climate, trees, indigenous products &c., &c. Such reports would be of interest to all who had any wish to make investment in the country. It will be remembered that the Ceylon planters found such difficulty in pulping Liberian cherry, that it was said no pulper that had been invented was of any real use. This difficulty arose from the absence of the juicy saccharine matter so abundant in the berry of the Arabian variety. On the estates at Selangor and other places in the Straits this difficulty does not seem to exist, at any rate in the same degree as in Ceylon. It naturally requires more powerful pressure to break the tough, thick skin of the Liberian berry than the Arabica does; but when the skin is broken, the bean easily separates itself, there being a sufficiency of juicy mucilage to admit of its being squeezed out. Consequently an ordinary pulper, especially adapted for the larger berry, is made use of, and the bean can be sifted out in the ordinary Ceylon method. The pulper at Weld's Hill



is an adaption of the "Gordon's Breast" principle, the movable grooves being adjusted by screws. Leaf-disease and green bug are by no means conspicuous by their absence, and on some of the fields powdered lime has been sprinkled over the trees, and acts in a double capacity at the same time being a manure and an agent for destroying the insects and fungus. There is but little *Coffee Arabica* in the vicinity of Kwala Lumpor, a few trees only in a native garden having fallen under observation.



It would certainly be wise before entering upon any venture of the kind in Selangor to wander further afield than the pioneers in coffee cultivation have ventured to do; that is, of course, if a permanent settlement is required. If it is thought sufficient for the coffee to last ten or fifteen years, and to get as much as possible fruit by manure or otherwise, after which it may be sold or abandoned, then, of course, by all means take the best piece of land you can get close to the source from which supplies can be drawn, say immediately around the Batu caves and on the neighbouring hills. There is plenty of fine jungle in that direc-

tion which the Selangor Government is prepared to lease or sell on easy terms, and there are roads of various kinds either made or in course of construction in all directions. Labour, no doubt, is dear, but not so much so as it was at one time, and a number of old Ceylon coolies are taking employment for a cultivation they have been accustomed to and which they prefer to learning something new, as they have to do in Ceylon at the present day.—*Ceylon Observer*,

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