

OTHER PESTS.

Parasites are slowly gaining the master hand of numerous other pests attacking fruit-trees and vegetation. Lacewing and syrphus flies are doing excellent work in controlling aphids. During the past sixteen months this pest has been reduced to such an extent as to make the securing of specimens from citrus trees a matter of some little difficulty. Of the many scale pests attacking fruit-trees *Mytilaspus* (mussel or orange scale) and the family *Dactylopidae* (mealy-bugs) do most damage. A delicate white fungus is doing good work smothering the former, and with the assistance of a minute parasitic fly has the pest under control. The introduction in liberal numbers of a suitable ladybird would greatly assist in controlling mealy-bugs. Attention has been directed to pests attacking the coconut, beetles in particular. The habits of the beetles are being investigated. I fear their energies are not confined to coconuts.

EXPERIMENTAL SHIPMENTS.

During the hot months some considerable risk is entailed in shipping bananas. It is contended that bananas packed in "hands" carry better during this period, and can be placed on the market in good condition if shipped reasonably full. To determine the merits of this system against the usual method of single packing, experimental shipments were inaugurated in January. Four shipments have been despatched to date; the result to my mind is very conclusive in favour of the usual method of packing. It can be observed from the reports of the Fruit Inspectors that fruit packed the ordinary way carried equally as well as—in fact, slightly better than—the cases packed in "hands." The average price realized is greatly in favour of those ordinarily packed, and represents difference between profit and loss to the grower.

PARTICULARS OF SHIPMENTS.

Consignments were shipped as ordinary cargo; half were packed in "hands" and half by the usual method. Bananas used were fully matured; this permitted a full opportunity of testing the advantage, if any, of "hand" packed. The cases were well packed. No special supervision was given to this work. With one exception, different Natives were secured to pack each consignment. I mention this to show the experimental lots were placed as nearly as possible on an equal footing with the general cargo. The fruit was packed the day before shipment. Average gross weight of thirty-nine cases ordinarily packed, 85.9 lb.; Average gross weight of thirty-nine cases "hands" packed, 79.5 lb.: in favour of usual way of packing, 6.4 lb. Thirty cases ordinarily packed realized 6s. 5½d.; thirty cases "hands" packed realized 4s. 6½d.; in favour of ordinarily packed, 1s. 11d. Separate returns are not available for eighteen cases shipped to Auckland. These were repacked and placed in one grade.

I am indebted to Mr. George Harnett, Fruit Inspector, Wellington, and Mr. Lloyd Williams, Fruit Inspector, Auckland, for full reports of the condition on arrival. The following extracts cover the shipments:—

"Aorangi," to Wellington—26th January: "There is no difference whatever in the condition of the two lines, E.X.P. hands and E.X.P., both lots arriving perfectly green and in good order."

"Maitai," to Wellington—21st February: "The four different lots of bananas Marked E.X.P. arrived green and in good order. I should say there was no difference in the condition of the four lines."

"Talune," to Auckland—1st February: "Both the ones packed in 'hands' and those the ordinary way appeared as if shipped too full, the latter being well on the turn and some quite ripe, whilst I regret to say that the 'hands' arrived in very poor condition. Some of the cases containing 'hands' were quite rotten, and I doubt whether after repacking they will make more than three or four cases of sound fruit."

"Talune," to Wellington—1st March: "E.X.P. arrived in very poor condition. E.X.P. hands: The same may be said of this line—there was not much to choose. Of the two, E.X.P. arrived in worse condition, but there was more bruising on the 'hands.'"

OUTLYING ISLANDS.

During my term of office as Fruit Inspector for the Cook Islands only one visit of inspection was paid to the outlying islands. My full report and recommendations were submitted on the 20th and 26th September last. Subsequent to furnishing the report, oranges have been condemned for fruit-fly in New Zealand from Mangaia and Mauke. I am not aware of any previous condemnations from any island of the Group excepting Rarotonga. This emphasizes the importance of enlisting at an early date a proper system of inspection, not only export, but particularly plantation, the basis of the trouble. If not checked in its infancy, the fly is likely to increase to such an extent as to be the same menace to the industry as it is in Rarotonga.

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