"Whereas it is provided by "The Destructive Pests Ordinance 1908" that the Governor in Council may from time to time make such Orders as may to the Governor in Council appear expedient for preventing the introduction into the Colony of any insect, fungus or other pest destructive to agricultural or horticultural crops, or to trees, or plants and for preventing the spreading in the Colony of any such insect, fungus, or other pest"

"AND WHEREAS information has been received to the effect that a disease of the coconut palm, believed to be the disease known as "WHITE FLY" (Aleyrodicus destructor) has apppeared among coconuts in the Philippines Islands."

"NOW, THEREFORE the Governor in Council in exercise of the powers conferred on him by the aforesaid Ordinance prohibits until further notice the landing in the Colony of any palms, alive or dead, or any stems or foots or parts of stems or roots of palms or of any products of palms other than such as are expressly exempted from the operation of this Order, from the Philippine Islands, and authorizes the destruction of any such article, if landed in the Colony from the Philippine Island. This Order does not apply to dried copra or to oil expressed from coconuts."

(Sd.) M. S. H. McArthur,
Clerk of Councils.

Council Chamber,
Singapore, 28th May, 1912.

THE CASTOR OIL PLANT.

Having received enquiries from Planters as to the suitability or otherwise of the Castor Oil Plant as a "Catch Crop" for Rubber, it may be helpful to others with like ideas, if a few of the details of this plant are enumerated for their guidance.

The Castor Plant (*Ricinus communis*) is probably well known to many Planters in the Peninsula, as scattered plants are generally to be found growing round Tamil Coolie Lines, the coolies sowing a few seeds in order to obtain the oil from the plants thus sown.

Belonging to the Natural Order Euphorbiaceae, it is thus related *Hevea brasiliensis* and many other plants yielding valuable oil seeds. It is generally believed to have been originally a native of North Africa, but the plant is now largely cultivated throughout the world, in Tropical and sub-tropical and occasionally in Temperate regions.

It is said to occasionally attain a height of from 20 to 30 feet, but it rarely if ever attains a larger size than from 5 to 7 feet in the Peninsula.

As a purely decorative plant it appeals to many and is largely cultivated in temperate countries for this quality alone, but the chief product derived from this plant, as perhaps every one knows, is the valuable oil obtained from the seeds.

There are many varieties of this plant—the seeds varying in size and shape, but for all practical purposes, the numerous forms may be grouped into two classes, *i.e.*, the large-seeded and small-seeded kinds. The former are more prolific in yield of seeds and the oil obtained from them is largely used as a lubricating oil, and in India it is used as an illuminant and is commercially called " Lamp Oil ". The latter, *i.e.*, the small seeded kinds, yield a much finer oil and this is preferred for use in medicine.

The soil best suited to the Castor Plant is, a rich well-drained sandy or clayey loam. Owing to its well developed root system the Castor plant demands a deep rooting medium. The Castor plant soon exhausts the soil and if virgin land is not available for the crop, natural or artificial manures are necessary. It will be readily seen that round coolie lines is an ideal situation for this plant, in so far as food is concerned as decaying matter of all kinds is ever to be found in such places.

One of the most valuable manures for this plant is the residual cake left after the expression of the oil from the seeds.

In the tropics the cultivation of this plant seems to be restricted by excessive rainfall, while in Malaya it is attacked and often denuded of leaves by a Caterpillar (Ophiusa sp.).

Before sowing the seeds it is advisable to steep them in slightly warmed water for about 24 hours. This treatment soften the hard seed coat and tends to ensure quick and uniform germination. The large seeded kinds are generally planted in rows from 5 to 5 feet apart with a similar distance between the plants in the row. The small seeded kinds are planted closer, *i.e.*, about 3 feet between the rows and 18 inches from plant to plant. It is advisable, to secure an event crop, that 2 or 3 seeds be planted at the distance mentioned above.

After germination, the weaklings one be removed and the strongest one in each case allowed to continue its growth.

In India the Castor Plant is seldom grown as a pure crop, it being usually interplanted with cereals or some leguminous crop. It is often planted as a border to cotton or sugar fields, when planted as a pure crop, about 10 lbs. of seeds of the large seeded varieties are required to plant an acre and about 14 lbs. in the case of the small seeded kinds.

After thinning, it is advisable to slightly mould up the plants by drawing the soil up round the stem, this preventing moisture from collecting at the base.

The capsules of the small seeded varieties commence to ripen in from 4 to 6 months from the time of sowing and those of the large seeded varieties from 7 to 10 months according to variety and the prevailing climate conditions. Owing to the irregular ripening of this crop, the harvesting is a somewhat tedious process, but as the work involved is not laborious, it could be done by women and children.

As the capsule dehisces and scatters the seed immediately they are ripe, it is necessary to look over the plants at least once a week, collecting those sufficiently ripened. The seeds after collecting require drying and may then be stored in bags in a dry place until sold or pressed for oil.

The average yield per acre (pure crop) is given as 4 to 6 cwt. of seeds average good crop.

From the foregoing it would seem that it is not altogether a suitable Catch Crop for rubber owing to its habit of exhausting the soil. When practical, however, this plant could be planted as a border to rubber, but this is largely a question of the quality of soil in individual Estates.

J. W. A.

MR. H. A. WICKHAM COMING OUT TO CEYLON WITH A CURING MACHINE.

The father of the plantation rubber industry, Mr. H. A. Wickham, is due in Colombo towards the end of the month, the chief purpose of his visit being to introduce a machine which embodies his ideas, acquired in the home of Hard Fine Para, as to the curing of rubber. Mr. Wickham has every hope that his machine will have a great effect upon the plantation rubber industry. During his stay in England, Mr. Wickham has been making arrangements with regard to the machine, but owing to the time it has taken to settle matters, has been delayed longer than he expected, otherwise he would have been in the Island now.

We understand that Mr. Wickham claims that his machine imitates the well-known smoking process employed by the natives on the Amazon, each layer of rubber being smoked and the article consequently thoroughly permeated by the disinfectant fumes. It is Mr. Wickham's contention that under the present processes some of the best qualities of the rubber are lost, carried away in the washing, and it will be interesting to watch how far he will be able to substantiate his claim by the production of samples of superior resiliency and tensile strength than the present first quality rubber turned out on estates. It is also claimed that the machine will turn out a perfectly uniform quality, whereas at present the rubber from the same estate varies considerably. *(Times of Ceylon 6th June, 1912).*