CITRUS INSECTS OF HONDURAS

In two recent letters, one to the editor and one to Mr. W. W. Yother, Mr. R. L. Mestmoreland, Jr. gives some interesting information concerning the citrus insects of Honduras.

The most interesting piece of information he gives is the presence of the Citrus Aphid (Aphis spiraecola Patch) in that country. Specimens were sent to Mr. Yother and were identified by the specialists in the U. S. Bureau of Entomology. As to the severity of the infestation he states:—"So far the Citrus Aphid does not seem to be so hard on the new growth as in Florida. They appear not to curl the leaves half as badly as they do in Florida. We have new growth on the trees most all months of the year except possibly two in midsummer. Apparently some fungus is keeping the aphid under fairly good control, as dead ones are frequently seen covered with a fungus-like growth. One of the oldest grove men here is from Wildwood, Fla. He is a very good citrus man and has been in this country for nearly thirty years. He states that he has observed the citrus aphid for ten years to his clear knowledge."

Another citrus insect is the Purple Scale,—"Very severe in some old groves especially some that suffered severely from a three months' drought last summer. I have noticed some Red-headed Scale fungus on this scale but it does not appear in large quantities as you see it in Florida groves. From November to February we have four months of continuous rain."

"In the woods of this country you find the sour orange, bitter sweet orange, key lime and rough lemon. They are similar
in every way to the native or wild ones in Florida. Also you find a sweet orange growing in the dense woods and as far as I can see it is the same as the seedling type you see in Florida.”

“Limes and lemons from this country are allowed to enter the States, but the line is drawn on oranges and grapefruit on account of the Mexican Fruit Fly. So far I have not been able to find any of these flies around. Most of the fruit now goes to England by ice boat.”

“For the past month we have been very busy fighting the flying locust, which is about a third smaller than the Lubber Grasshopper of Florida and about the same color. They seem to hatch out west of us and they travel east in swarms so thick they darken the clouds. When they settle down, the ground looks like autumn leaves have covered it. They may stay for a day or two, or just a few minutes. If they do stay and are not ready to breed, they will eat everything green in sight. They will completely defoliate a very large citrus tree in a few minutes. If they are ready to breed, they will eat very little and will copulate for several days, and all the time this process is going on, the female is laying about sixty eggs, in the ground. The eggs hatch in three or four weeks and millions of little hoppers are in great droves and if they are not killed immediately they will in a few days begin to feed upon the foliage of the citrus trees. They do not seem to have any preference as to food. They eat all the leaves off bananas, cocoanut palms and everything green they can chew on. So far our best method of control is to use knapsack sprayers and spray the colonies of young ones with distilate. It is very expensive, but efficient for the ones that hatch out in our groves, but we have found no way to control the adult which flies into the grove without a minute’s notice and eats all the leaves off the trees.

Ten years ago this same kind of locust came thru this country and nearly ruined it, but at the end of the first year of its appearance, a parasitic fly completely controlled it. Now the fly is becoming very abundant here and a research department has an entomologist breeding the flies in cages and letting them loose in heavily infested areas. This fly is very similar to the one that parasitises the green pumpkin bug in Florida. So far as we can determine, there appears to be two species of these flies, and specimens have been sent to Washington, D. C. for identification.”