

(II). THE USE OF INSECTICIDES

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Twice in recent numbers of the "*Tea Quarterly*" we have issued warnings about the indiscriminate use of insecticides. I only wish now, in the fewest possible words, to emphasise the importance of this warning.

Agriculture is in itself an interference with the balance of nature, and pests, diseases and weeds are all signs of *imbalance*. Once a perennial crop, such as tea, is firmly established, some form of equilibrium in the insect population is established. Introduced pests are normally the greatest source of potential danger. Any really serious indigenous pest will usually prevent the establishment of a perennial crop, or make it uneconomic in the early stages of its history.

Interference with any indigenous pest, causing loss of crop but not making the crop entirely uneconomic, is fraught with great dangers, because the whole balance of the insect population may easily be upset. In deciding upon the use of insecticides the insect population as a whole, and not only the pest itself, must be studied. Many modern insecticides are very powerful weapons but none is capable of killing all insects. The use of one insecticide too often necessitates a follow up with another to control insects normally checked by predators which have been killed by the first insecticide. The expense of such a chain of operations can be very high indeed.

Further troubles are developing, for there are frequent examples of resistant strains of pests surviving the first control measures and breeding up to replace the susceptible strains of the same species thought to have been brought under control.

The study of insecticides is a highly specialized occupation and I urge you not to meddle with these highly dangerous substances.