

## SOME INDIGENOUS WEEDS.

G. HUNTLEY WILKINSON.

The following notes describe some of the "weeds" occurring on an estate at an elevation of 4,000 to 5,000 feet in the Dimbula district which may be found useful as cover crops.

*Cardamine hirsuta*. (Mustard Weed).—This was fully described by Mr. Cosens in the last issue of *The Tea Quarterly* and I agree with his conclusions. The roots are fibrous and do not impede forking.

*Cardamine trichocarpa* (Mustard weed).—This species has no petals in the flower, but is otherwise similar to *Cardamine hirsuta*, in which white small petals are present.

*Artemisia vulgaris*. (Chrysanthemum weed).—I do not advocate the establishment of this in tea.

It is not generally realised that this plant is common in the hedges grown around line gardens, where it may attain a height of four to five feet. Absinthe is obtained from a related species.

*Oxalis corniculata*.—This species is a creeper. It grows best in young clearings where there is not much shade.

*Oxalis latifolia* and *Oxalis corymbosa*.—These are introduced species and are distinguishable from *Oxalis corniculata* by their bulbous habit. It is practically impossible to eradicate them. On no occasion did any evidence of harm to the tea caused by them come before the Soil Erosion Committee.

*Drymaria cordata*.—Despite the valiant efforts being made to deal with this plant, and the thousands of rupees that have thereby been wasted, it is increasing its spread in the tea districts. Once it has obtained a hold it is very difficult to eradicate. It is best accepted and, if the weeder's day is not taken up with shifting soil with a karandy, he will have plenty of time to remove the *Drymaria* from around the bolls of the tea bushes once a month, with no extra cost to the estate. If treated in this way it does not get the opportunity of climbing up to the plucking table. The roots are fibrous in nature.

*Ranunculus wallichianus*.—This plant is to be found Up-country in damp, shady situations. With a little encouragement this makes a very efficient ground cover.

*Justicia procumbens*.—The same remark applies to this species.

*Laurembergia wangerinii*.—The same remark applies to this species.

*Centella asiatica*. (Violet weed).—I eradicate this species as I personally consider it forms too close a mat, unless very frequently forked.

*Desmodium triflorum*.—The same remark applies.

*Hydrocotyle javanica*.—This plant covers the ground well and as yet has shown no tendency to creep up the tea bushes.

*Biophytum proliferum*.—This is the best indigenous cover crop that I have to date, but I doubt whether anyone out to cover the whole estate with a cover would do it as quickly with this as with *Oxalis* or *Drymaria*; the "cover" of this species is light and feathery and, to my mind, ideal.

*Rungia elatior*.—This species may be safely established by the man who would like to be able to remove his ground cover at a later date, should he change his mind.

*Cassia leschenaultiana*.—This plant is leguminous, in distinction to the foregoing species, but is apt to grow too high.

*Paroquetus communis*.—This species is leguminous but is rather difficult to establish; when growing well it makes an excellent cover crop.

I am not yet convinced that prolific creeping roots of a cover crop are harmful to tea if the ground is properly and often forked. I am of opinion that, provided this is done, the channels formed by the steady decay of these roots are invaluable for keeping the ground below the surface well aerated. The effect might almost be compared with that produced by a charge of dynamite—a means of achieving this object which was much discussed in Ceylon before the war.

If *Drymaria cordata* is left alone except when the land is actually forked it will be found that its creeping propensities are very greatly curtailed. If it is continually "handled" by weeders it seems to assume a much more fighting attitude. I presume that this handling has the same effect as pruning has on the tea bush.

*Indigofera endecaphylla*.—Though this is not indigenous, some mention should be made of it. I have already explained that I am not convinced that prolific creeping roots are harmful and this remark applies closely to the above.

In Dimbula at any rate the control of this useful ground cover is not difficult—a very little attention prevents it from creeping through the bushes and it is an easy matter to prune off the foliage and bury it under ground when forking.

---