

## DROVES OF LYCÆNID CATERPILLARS HERDED BY ANTS.

BY MRS. WYLLY, OF INDIA.\*

The larvæ of *Tarucus theophrastus* Fabricus are cultivated and protected by the large, common black ants of Indian gardens and houses. The caterpillar, which varies in colour from light pure green to a dark reddish tint [this is a common variation in Lycenid larvæ], is about three-quarters of an inch long, louse-like in shape, and slow in movement, and it feeds on the *Zizyphus jujuba*, a small, thorny bush of the jungles with an edible, astringent, yellowish fruit, the "Byr-coolie" of the natives. Some Lycenidæ larvæ have the power of protruding and retracting at will two small, fleshy tentacles or horns, each tufted with a brush of fine hairs, from the upper surface of the tail segments. Between [on the next segment anteriorly] these tentacles is a small slit, from which they exude a small drop of a juice of some sort eagerly sought by the ants, and which they can generally procure by stroking the larvæ gently with their antennæ. The ants set up what appears to be merely a temporary nest at the foot of the tree, the better to carry on their operations. Just before the rains set in, about the middle of June, great activity among the inhabitants of a *Zizyphus* tree may be observed. The ants are busy all day long running along the branches and leaves in search of the larvæ, and without fail an ant will come to one full-grown, and meditating on the choice of a snug retreat [in which to turn to a pupa]. A friend or two turning up, the ants set to work to guide and drive their caterpillar in the direction they wish him to go, *i. e.*, down the stem of the tree towards their nest. This is not always an easy business if the prisoner is refractory and would prefer going somewhere else; but as a rule they are docile and easily led. Having kept guard over him until they get him safely into his proper berth in the row, and he has accepted their ultimatum as final, he drops off into a preliminary doze and undergoes his transformation into a pupa. If you gently scrape away the loose earth piled up at the base of the tree you will see some hundreds of larvæ and pupæ in all stages of development arranged in a broad even band all round the trunk and lightly covered with earth. The ants object to their being uncovered, and will immediately set to work to re-cover them, and if you persist,

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