

Silk-producing Insects of West Africa.

THE following observations in connection with the wild silk-producing insects of West Africa may be considered of interest. In parts of Nigeria (Ibadan, Ilorin, &c.) the cocoons of *Anaphe infracta*, Wlsm., and *A. venata*, Butler, are used for the production of a cloth termed "Sanyan," which is woven from yarn, spun from the boiled cocoon masses, mixed with native cotton yarns. In a state of nature the silk from the cocoons of both these species is brown or yellow-brown, and is of this colour when exposed for sale in the markets, but another kind of silk, which is brought to Ibadan from Bauchi and Bornu (in N. Nigeria), is pure white in colour, and is called "Gambari," or Hausa silk. This is only obtainable as boiled cocoon masses, and the dried remains of the worms found in them seem to indicate that they are allied to *Anaphe*. The collectors of this silk are said to gather the worms from the trees, on which they find them, when they are prepared to spin, and to confine them in calabashes.

Experimenting with live worms of *A. infracta*, received from S. Nigeria, I found that, by confining them in the dark, they produced pure white cocoons instead of brown, although the original larval cocoon was of the latter colour. It seems probable that the "Gambari" silk is white by reason of the confinement of the worms in calabashes, as no *Anaphe* or allied species is known to give a white cocoon naturally. A similar result has been obtained by Lepper in the case of *Attacus ricini* (the "Eri" silkworm of India).

The pupæ of *A. infracta* and *A. venata* are eaten as a delicacy by the people of S. Nigeria. Both species seem almost omnivorous in the larva stage, but the first is said to feed, by preference, upon *Albizzia fastigiata* and a *Sterculia* sp.

A. Maloneyi and *A. subsordida*, the first of which has apparently a cocoon mass without an envelope, should, I think, be placed in another genus, by reason of the absence from their forewings of the lower radial vein (No. 5).

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