

INTRODUCTION

Cacao, an important crop and major source of agricultural wealth in many tropical countries is subject to a considerable number of diseases in the field. The loss effected by these are enormous. Wardlaw (53) tells how the thriving cacao industry of Surinam was completely destroyed within the comparatively short time of ten years by the ravages of Witches Broom, and combined with the effects of progressively low prices, this disease at one time threatened to exterminate the industry in other countries of the Western tropics. Black Pod causes a substantial loss in production in all cacao growing areas, while in parts of South America *Monilia* is causing a serious reduction in yield.

In old records of the West Indies references were made to "blights" that affected cacao in different localities, but it was not until 1898 that attention was specially drawn to any fungus disease. Subsequently many investigations were carried out but results obtained did not give a clear picture, and control under primitive standard was unsatisfactory. The identity of the organism primarily responsible for the disease was often in doubt, and the many names under which the causal fungus was known added to the confusion. After 1909 the situation became better. Griffon and Maublanc showed that several diseases said to be caused by fungi of the genera Diplodia, Botryodiplodia, Lasiodiplodia and others related to genera were identical. This was confirmed by the later works of Vanhall and Drost, Petch and Bancroft. In 1910, Rorer and Petch independently proved that Black Pod Canker and Chupon Wilt were caused by the same fungus, while in 1915 Stahel established the true cause of Witches Broom. During recent years improvement in the price of cacao has given impetus to the study of disease, and now intense investigational work is being carried out, thus greatly increasing our knowledge.

In this essay an attempt is made to give a survey of the

more important fungus diseases of cacao. It is proposed to treat the three most destructive diseases - Black pod, Witches Broom and Monilia Pod Rot - individually and in some detail, then group the others under sub-heads i.e. (1) Root Diseases (2) Stem Diseases (3) Pod Diseases.