OLD WORLD PLANTS.

Government Importations Promise Much to Our Agriculture.

GUY ELLIOTT MITCHELL.

At the recent meeting of the National Board of Trade in Washington the report adopted from the committee on agricultural statistics presents many facts of great interest to the farmers throughout the country and those dependent upon them for their prosperity, showing the large scope of the work of the Department of Agriculture and the enormous actual benefit which its investigations have been to all of our producing areas.

After discussing the question of the Department's methods of gathering statistical information regarding growing crops, the National Board of Trade recommending a modification of the present methods, including the cutting down of the great army of farmers and others who are called upon by the Department for reports on conditions of their crops, and the reorganization of the Bureau of Statistics upon a basis of fewer but more reliable reporters, carrying greater individual responsibilities, and also in the cutting down of the free seed appropriations and the substitution of a practice of distributing only those seeds and plants which will be a probable benefit to the various sections of the country as a nucleus about which to build up a substitution of more valuable crops than those now grown by the farmers. In response to a request, the committee received a statement from Secretary Wilson bearing upon the work of the Department in the collection and distribution of experimental seeds and plants which contains much of interest. The Secretary says to the committee:

"I am pleased to give you a statement showing in a general way the importance of the work of seed and plant introduction to this Department and to the agriculture of the United States. The appropriation for 1906 is $290,000, which will be practically all used in this work."

In Touch With the Farmers.

Through the medium of the distribution of seeds and plants, the Secretary continues, the Department workers put into practice the discoveries which they may have made in the laboratories and in their field work. He mentions the distribution of disease resistant cotton seed to such portions of the south as are affected with the cotton wilt disease. The annual loss to the south from this disease will easily reach $500,000, and the Department has done much to reduce or prevent this loss at a cost of not more than $1,000 for the seed and experimental work. The introduction of some of the hardy oranges developed by the workers in the Bureau of Plant Industry is another similar illustration. By a series of cross-breeding experiments between the ordinary sweet orange and the hardy Japanese *citus trifoliata*, a very valuable and semi-hardy orange has been produced, which will probably grow almost as far north as Washington. It is expected that with several more generations of improvement, an orange practically equal to the ordinary type of Florida or California orange will be able to withstand comparatively severe freezing weather. Through the cooperation of the Laboratory of Drug Plant Investigation with the Office of Seed and Plant Introduction and Distribution, we are endeavoring to introduce into the United States the culture of a number of different drug plants the annual importation of which at the present time runs into millions of dollars in value. It is this principle of co-operation which renders the work of particular value to the Department itself and of course enables the Department to do better work for the country at large.

Great Value from Small Expenditures

"In regard to the value of this work to the United States, in my opinion," the Secretary says, "there can be no doubt that the distribution of seeds from the time the work was first begun, introduced in the early sixties at ance in the development of our agriculture. The rather hasty survey of the old records that the time at our disposal has permitted, shows that the Department has been helpful in the introduction of many of the crops that are at present considered the most valuable in the United States. Among these may be mentioned the Fultz and other varieties of wheat; Chinese sorgum, introduced in the early sixties at a cost of about $2,000 and now worth easily many millions of dollars annually to the country; Kaffir corn, the introduction of which cost the Department not more than $5,000, of which the annual value at present is estimated to be about $20,000,000; macaroni wheat, on which, during the past three years, we have expended about $10,000, and which has enabled the farmers of the arid west to grow crops worth from $6,000,000 to $7,000,000 on lands on which they could not grow the ordinary varieties of wheat; Japanese rice, which has been a large factor in the phenomenal growth of the rice industry in Texas and Louisiana. The acreage devoted to this has increased from 210,396 acres in 1898, to a total of 610,700 acres in 1904, raising the value of the land from between $1.00 and $1.50 per acre to from $35.00 to $50.00 per acre, and the output has been increased from 179,919,293 pounds of rough rice in 1898 to 869,436,800 pounds in 1904. In the matter of fruits, it will be remembered that the Department introduced the Bahia orange, known as the Washington navel orange, which has become the standard orange throughout California. More recently, the Department has expended in the neighborhood of ten thousand dollars in the introduction of the date palm into Arizona and California and although sufficient time has not yet elapsed to enable us to state positively what the outcome will be, there appears no reason to doubt that an entirely new industry will be built up in these sections as a result of the efforts of the Department. The present value of date importations is, roughly speaking, half a million dollars. This consists largely of the cheaper grades of dates, the finer varieties from the Sahara seldom coming to this country except in very small quantities. These can undoubtedly be grown in our southwest.

American Sugar Beet Seed.

"The introduction of the sugar beet, while not due primarily to the efforts of the Department, has unquestionably been greatly assisted by the distribution of seed by the Department, and the establishment of the sugar beet seed industry, in the United States, which, from the present indications, will be a question of only a few years, will have been due directly to the work of the Department. Seeing the importance of developing our own sugar beet and seed industry, plans were formulated three years ago to encourage the growing of this seed. The amount expended on this work, up to date, including salaries and the annual cost of American grown seed for distribution, will not exceed $15,000, while the value of the sugar beet seed used in the United States is at least half a million dollars annually, besides the much greater value to the sugar beet raisers of having seed adapted to American conditions. A conservative calculation shows that the value to American sugar beet growers of using higher grade seed than is usually sent here by German seedsmen will easily aggregate $1,000,000 annually. Our work along this line has progressed so far that we shall distribute during this year 15,000 pounds of American sugar beet seed and the growers will probably produce in the neighborhood of 300,000 pounds next year, all of which has been contracted for at the present time."

CAMEL LOADED WITH BERSEEM.
This is the Clover of Egypt and is Believed to Be of Great Value to Certain of Our Dryer Climates.

Most of the Money Wasted.

Although the amount of money which the Secretary may use, out of the annual appropriation for the distribution of seeds, for the discovery, collection and distribution of new seeds and plants is quite limited, and but a pittance of the amount authorized by Congress for the distribution of common cabbage, radish, tomato and other garden and flower seeds, the Department nevertheless is doing some remarkable work in searching, through its special agricultural explorers, the countries of the old world where agriculture has been carried on for centuries and tens of centuries and where its history of crops fades away into dim tradition, and from these countries some of the most useful and attractive plants have been introduced, which promise great things for American agriculture. It is a question among far-sighted plant breeders and growers whether this part of the work of the Department of Agriculture does not hold out the greatest possibility to the future of America of any branch of the government. Every now and then a new plant or new variety is discovered and introduced which may revolutionize that particular branch of crop production. The macaroni wheat which the Secretary mentions is a fair example. Extensive trials of this wheat have been made throughout the middle belt of the United States, just west of the producing area for ordinary wheat, and it is believed that a vast section of possibly a million square miles heretofore thought unfit for any agriculture, is capable of producing this new grain at the rate of from 15 to 20 bushels per acre. With such a startling showing as this due entirely to the experimental work of the Department who shall say when the food producing limit of the world may be reached?

JAPANESE BAMBOO TREE
The Bamboo is the Staple Wood of Japan and Its Uses Spell Legion.

Bringing Asia to Our Doors.

For every section of the vastly diversified soil and climate of the United States, says Secretary Wilson, there is a corresponding spot in some portion of the old world where agriculture has been successfully prosecuted for centuries. What we need is full and complete information regarding the old world agriculture and the intelligent application of that knowledge to our own country.

It would be possible to extend his letter almost indefinitely, the Secretary continues, were we to go into the various agricultural possibilities which are now being worked up by the Office of Seed and Plant Introduction and Distribution. We are now at work upon the introduction of the Japanese matting rush into the United States. There are imported annually into the United States something like five million dollars worth of matting. The owners of a newly invented loom guarantee that the value of the annual consumption of raw material to supply their factories will not be less than $2,000,000. We are working to establish the culture of this matting rush in the abandoned rice fields of the Carolinas and the work has already progressed far enough to justify a reasonable assurance of success. We are also working to introduce a disease resistant strain of Bermuda or Easter lily and with fair prospects of success. We are encouraging the growing of Holland bulbs in the Puget Sound region and believe it will be only a question of time when this industry will be established. The introduction of the mango into Florida; the introduction of new persimmons and other Chinese and Japanese fruits which are now being secured by our explorer in northern China, and the introduction of hardier or more prolific strains of alfalfa all promise in the aggregate many millions of dollars of increase in the value of plant products.

ARIZONA PROPAGATING DATE GARDENS.
Grown From Suckers Introduced by the Department of Agriculture.
YOUNG SAHARA DATE TREES.
Being Prepared for Shipment to the United States.

Touching on the question of the annual Congressional seed distribution, Secretary Wilson says that while there is undoubtedly some benefit attached to the distribution of vegetable seed each year the real value to the country of such distribution cannot be compared with that of even one good introduction like macaroni wheat, Japanese rice, an improved variety of cotton or various other articles which might be mentioned.

WHY FENCE WIRE RUSTS.

Department of Agriculture says Farmers Use Cheap Material.

A bulletin setting forth the results of an investigation made by the Department of Agriculture into the corrosion of iron and steel wire fencing was issued recently to the farmers of the country. Many complaints have been made to the department in the last year regarding the present quality of iron and steel wire used in fencing, and to improve these conditions, with the hope of determining some remedy for the corrosion, Secretary Wilson ordered a thorough investigation, and the experts came to the conclusion that the chief trouble is that the average farmer insists on using the cheapest wire for fencing, and the cheap wire naturally corrodes.

The department claims that some manufacturers hold that if it were possible to make a better grade of wire at even a slightly higher price, it would be useless to put it on the market, as the American farmer would not buy it, because he desires cheapness above other consideration.

The result of preliminary experiments made by the Agricultural Department pointed to the manganese in the wire as undoubtedly being the chief cause of the corrosion, and it is stated that the more manganese there is present in fence wire the quicker it will rust or deteriorate.

To show the possible causes for the corrosion and that manganese is at the bottom of all the trouble, the department quotes a number of steel, iron and metalurgical authorities on the subject.

MITSUMATA RAIN COAT.
Woven From a Japanese Plant Which the Department is Introducing in the South.

SOUTHERN FARMS.

Rapid Increase in Values Makes the Whole South Prosperous.

Manufacturers' Record.

While it is true that the industrial development of the South is going forward with amazing rapidity, it is nevertheless true that, by virtue of the extent of the agricultural interests in the South, agriculture is yet the foundation of the business of that section. A change from poverty to prosperity of the farmer, and a change from land without selling value to land in demand at an advance of 50 to 150 per cent. over the nominal price of one or two years ago, is the most far reaching development in Southern advancement of the last quarter of a century.

It is far-reaching in many ways. It means that within the last year or two Southern farm properties have increased not less than $1,000,000,000 in value, probably at least $1,500,000,000. But more than that, it means that under this improved financial condition the Southern farmer has gained new courage, new backbone; that he has learned how to market his cotton crop; that he has fought to a finish the great battle as to whether the producer or the speculator is to control the price of his staple. Having won this fight, the entire handling of cotton from the field to the factory, whether the factory be in this country or in Europe, has entered upon an entirely new stage in its history. It also means that land will be more thoroughly cultivated, for the successful man, whether he be a farmer, a merchant, or a manufacturer, is always better able to work to good advantage than the one who is fighting a losing battle.

More and more the diversification of agriculture has gone on and more and more have fruit growing and truck raising, "hog and hominy," with the meathouse at home rather than in the West, been developed throughout the South.

Briefs from Everywhere.

The United States exported last year $15,000,000 worth of oleo oil.

It is estimated that there are 4000 professional beggars in London and that they collect over $1,500,000 a year, women.

The United States sells nearly $200,000,000 worth of lard, cattle, fresh beef, bacon, hams and oleo oil annually to Europe.

Paderewski says he keeps his hands oiled nearly all the time and steeps them in very hot water before giving a piano recital.

It has been estimated that the average man winks about 4,000,000 times a year. No actual count has ever been made, however.

In the Breslau zoological garden there is a spider monkey which was operated on for cataract of the eyes, and which now wears glasses.

Copper prospectors and miners are opening up the ruined forts, villages and canals of a vanished race of men that once peopled the rock-walled meadows of southern Utah.

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