

GOOD THINGS IN FOOD PLANTS

Contributions of Other Lands to the Plant Life of the United States.

SYSTEMATIC WORK OF THE GOVERNMENTS

Experts Searching for New Useful Species in Various Parts of the World—What Has Been Done in This Line.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 29.—(Correspondence of The Bee.)—Hardly a fortnight elapsed after the beginning of the settlement of Jamestown before efforts were under way to introduce new plants, and the work has been carried on so gradually that at the present time few people realize how many of the good things in the line of fruits, vegetables and other food plants have been introduced from abroad.

It is interesting to note in this bulletin that according to the researches of F. Hock, a German investigator, cultivated oats, barley and rye have originated from wild forms growing along the Mediterranean; the varieties of wheat have developed from a wild species in Persia; buckwheat is undoubtedly of Siberian or Manchurian origin; the garden bean (Phaseolus vulgaris) flourished in a wild state upon the slopes of the Andes; the percentage of our cultivated cabbage, lettuce, spinach, asparagus, celery and most root crops can be traced to the Mediterranean; the Orient has undoubtedly furnished civilization with the onion, horse radish, cucumber and melon; Peru has given us the Irish and sweet potatoes, egg plant and the tomato; Central Asia, the rhubarb, while our apples, quinces, pears, currants, gooseberries and California grapes are of European parentage, and our strawberries have resulted from crossing the native with a Chinese species.

The rapid growth of any new section of our country is due, not to the development of native species of plants or fruits, but to the introduction of species suitable to the soil and climatic conditions. California, so widely famous for its fruit, owes its wealth and development in this line to the cultivation of the European grape and the orange. Australia is largely dependent upon its fields of grain and its growing fruit trade. Its native food plants play no important part in its development. The wealth of Ceylon and the large majority of the cultivation of five or more exotic species, the Chinese and Assam teas, the Peruvian cinchona and the Arabian and Liberian coffees. South African civilization, from an agricultural standpoint, is not casually connected with the development of any native plant product.

Value of New Food Plants. That the development of a country agriculturally depends upon the introduction of new species of food plants has been recognized by all colonizing nations is attested by the fact that they have established botanical gardens in their new colonies, one important function of which is to secure and distribute exotic economic plants to the colony. This character of work was begun in our own government by Hon. Henry L. Ellsworth, when he was commissioner of patents, so long ago as 1837. When congress established a Department of Agriculture in 1862 the work was enlarged and made more prominent. Indeed, this character of work was the sole argument of that time for the creation of such a department. The records of this department show many valuable introductions. The orange growers of California expressed their appreciation of the efforts of this branch of the government when they said that the introduction of the Bahia, or Washington navel orange, had been worth more to the growers of California than the total cost of maintaining the Department of Agriculture since its inception. It must not be said, however, that the development of native plants has not been successful, for the contrary is true; but it is a noteworthy fact that the old world civilization has profited but little through the discovery of new food plants in America.

The first and most evident reason for the introduction of economic plants into any country, and that to which the ordinary mind at once refers, is the building up of new plant industries. To the most casual observer it is apparent that the number of useful plants, compared with those of which men makes use, is very small. The menu of an average American dinner includes the product of scarcely a dozen plants and yet the number which could be grown for the table would reach into the hundreds. It is stated that conservatism of taste among our people limits the food plants to so small a number. This conservatism is less fixed upon us than upon European countries. This is evidenced by our quick appreciation of such new fruits as the pineapple, or grape fruit, which has become almost as common with us as the orange, while in Sicily it has been cultivated for centuries and is not even now appreciated as a table fruit. The growing favor of the persimmon, the increasing consumption of the banana, the established appreciation of the sweet potato, which is still practically an unknown vegetable in Covent Garden, our fondness for the peanut and popcorn, as yet merely curiosities in Germany, indicate that such a state of stagnation is not yet reached as that of eastern Europe, at least, where even tomatoes are almost unknown and the sweet potato is one of the rarest and most costly of vegetables. On the other hand, the almost complete absence from American tables of the European artichoke (Cynara scolymus), something entirely different from the plant known by that name in America, which, when properly grown, is one of the most delicious of vegetables, indicates anything but a readiness to increase the list of available food plants.

Cultivating a Market. These being the facts, Mr. Fairchild is impelled to say that, in order to build up a new plant industry, it is not sufficient to establish the fact that a desirable species can be successfully cultivated, but it is equally necessary to bring the merits of the new product to the attention of the public for the purpose of cultivating a taste and creating a market. When we remember that the potato, upon which millions now depend for subsistence, was the discovery of an un-civilized race in the mountains of Chili, Peru or Argentina, that the development of the American grape and plum are products of the discovery and improvement of a civilized race—when we remember these and similar examples, it can hardly be doubted that the modern methods of extensive plant breeding will open the door for a rapidly increasing number of new food plants.

Cork oaks were introduced into the United States by the Department of Agriculture in 1838, and although their care was neglected, results were sufficient to prove that they will do well in our southern states and California. In 1893 corks cost us \$11, 993,025, and of course cost more now. That

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The two forces on the lines of the Metropolitan road are predicted to be in the near future electricity and compressed air. As the former has replaced and is replacing the cable, so is the latter to replace the horse on the remaining cross-town roads. The Metropolitan company has been interested in the new propelling force for the last two years and its adoption on the Twenty-eighth and Twenty-ninth street lines has only been after tedious tests. Should the operation of the new system show the expected merits, air as a motive power may make inroads in the field of electricity.

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All this requires the broadest scientific knowledge of plants and of soil and climatic conditions. If he is a benefactor to mankind who makes two blades of grass grow where one grew before how much more of a benefactor will he be who gives us twenty, fifty or a hundred food plants where we have but one now!

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The cashier then made an abject acknowledgment and fished a cigar box out of his desk. Stopped His Paper. "Once upon a time," says the Hottelale (Penn.) Journal, "a man got mad at the editor and stopped the paper. In a few weeks he sold his corn at 1 cent a bushel on the market price. Then his property was sold for taxes because he didn't read the sheriff's sale. He paid \$10 for a lot of frozen peas that had been advertised two weeks and the public warned against them. He then rushed to the printing office and paid several years' subscription in advance and had the editor sign an agreement that he was to knock him down if he ordered his paper to be stopped again."

PLAINITIVE PEAL OF BELLES

Gotham's Blooming Buds Weep and Refuse to Be Comforted.

FATHERS "TOO STINGY FOR ANYTHING"

Decline to Throw Money at the Bids—Daughters Said to Be Far More Extravagant Than Sons.

The new year of 1899 is ushered in with tears from the New York daughter. She has been hauled before an almost implacable jury, in the form of pacifist, enthroned on a giant pile of bills, and she has been condemned to six months, or in fact, an entire future, at hard economy because of her almost criminal extravagance. Some time ago we heard of the revolt of the daughters; it's the fathers who are revolting now and a girl who was confiding details of the awfulness of her interview with her father tearfully confessed to the straw that was too much for the patient camel. Nothing but a motor phanton. The other girls groaned delicately in commiseration.

COMPRESSED AIR LOCOMOTIVE.

Special Engine Built for Use in New York City.

Compressed air is soon to be added to the motive powers of street railroad cars in New York City. The adoption of this new propelling force is to begin soon after the first of the year on the Twenty-eighth and Twenty-ninth street lines, operated by the Metropolitan Street Railway company. Twenty compressed air cars are now nearing completion for these lines and they will be similar to the big cars on the Madison and Eighth avenue electric lines. The two-horse power compressed air engine will store the cars in a short time to be installed in the power house, near the Pennsylvania railroad Twenty-third street ferry house. The compressor stands sixty feet high and will have power enough to propel fifty cars. But this new force is not to be confined to street cars, reports the New York Herald, for the New York Central road is building a power plant at High Bridge and a specially constructed locomotive is already awaiting the power to be taken from the plant. Fifty-fifth street and Yonkers on the Putnam branch.

Experiments have been made for several years with a new application of compressed air, bringing results in practical fields, the most important of which are the use of compressed air in the propulsion of street cars, reports the New York Herald, for the New York Central road is building a power plant at High Bridge and a specially constructed locomotive is already awaiting the power to be taken from the plant. Fifty-fifth street and Yonkers on the Putnam branch.

Its advantages over the steam locomotive are said to be economy, cleanliness, retention of power and the even and regular manner in which this power is freed. With the same charge it is just as easy to run the compressed air engine sixty miles an hour as it is to run it twenty miles for three hours and the time in which the distance is to be covered is only limited by the character of the roadbed.

The two forces on the lines of the Metropolitan road are predicted to be in the near future electricity and compressed air. As the former has replaced and is replacing the cable, so is the latter to replace the horse on the remaining cross-town roads. The Metropolitan company has been interested in the new propelling force for the last two years and its adoption on the Twenty-eighth and Twenty-ninth street lines has only been after tedious tests. Should the operation of the new system show the expected merits, air as a motive power may make inroads in the field of electricity.

Other fields the new force bids fair to enter are those of the truck, omnibus and carriage. A single charge of air will propel a vehicle from fifteen to twenty-five miles. A compressed air truck can be stored with sufficient power to run it until noon and with another charge until evening, making forty miles for the day, or about twice as much distance as the ordinary horse truck can

ation and open contempt of the stern parent and a half a dozen of them at this confessional over the cups, who had had similar experiences, voted that the American father is losing all his charm and value and is undoubtedly imitating the cruel Englishman, who limits his women folk's allowances and then wants to pry into their pin-money accounts.

"As a matter of fact," said one sensible looking matron who had heard this talk, "the New York girl is the most extravagant creature on earth, and at the gal she is going now she will bring the richest sort of

ery and introduction of new varieties of the plants already cultivated here. The success or failure of a whole plant may depend upon obtaining a variety differing so slightly from others in cultivation that the ordinary observer would fail to detect a difference. The fact must not be lost sight of that to search out these new varieties and secure them requires the labor of trained explorers or specialists in the particular branches of plant industry. The chances of profitable return within a reasonable length of time are not such as to induce seed firms to undertake the work of exploration in the absence of laws protecting the importer of a new variety. If the work of this character