

New Farm Plants

Work of the United States Department of Agriculture.

GUY ELLIOTT MITCHELL.

A feature of the work of the Department of Agriculture which holds out enormous promise is the work of foreign agricultural exploration and the introduction of new and rare seeds and plants.

American agriculture is a comparatively new thing. Our climatic and soil conditions are largely different from those of old countries whence our fathers came, and the bulk of our agricultural products have been introduced from abroad. Because our forefathers did it before us, is a sufficient excuse for the majority of men to go ahead planting and cultivating in the same old way, but as a matter of fact the original producers of any of our common crops, a hundred or two hundred years ago, may have started wrong or have started in some particular locality with some particular crop not very well adapted to that section. For two hundred years our ancestors may have been making a living by growing that crop, and yet it may be that in some section of France, or perhaps Turkestan, where the soil and climate exactly corresponds, a particular plant is being grown to-day which is far superior as a money producer.

This is not a mere theory, for every little while some agricultural explorer of the Department sends in a new species, or perhaps merely a new variety of some common grain, for instance, which upon trial proves to be a much heavier and better yielding than the kind that our farmers have been growing since the Indians occupied the land.

Secretary Wilson takes much stock in his agricultural explorers, and he has some energetic young men who are both botanists and linguists and have become almost as familiar with the agricultural productions of some little known and difficult to reach corners of the globe as they are with the farms of the United States. The writer is indebted to David G. Fairchild for an intensely interesting talk on foreign

plants, because we have only a very small supply of the new seed for test, and not enough this year for distribution, but our agents have tried it in various states, and in every instance, I think, where the experiment was intelligently made, the yield of the new variety was very much larger."

The Dates of Persia.

Mr. Fairchild has made plant explorations through many of the most interesting countries of the globe—Persia, where the Incas once practiced agriculture and irrigation on a splendid scale; Chili, a temperate country, where many plants were found suitable for our conditions; China, India, Chaldea, and numerous others. At the last place, near Bagdad, are found the immense date groves of the land of Babylon, where are produced probably three-fourths of all the dates of commerce. These vast date forests extend for a distance of seventy miles up and down the Tigris. Many fine date suckers were obtained by Mr. Fairchild and shipped to the United States, and are now growing in Arizona, and some day the great Colorado river of our Southwest, where the conditions are exactly favorable for date growing, may not only produce all the dates which America uses, but export this wholesome fruit. Dates picked, packed and shipped by American methods will bring a higher price than the imported products, which, if the history of their packing were known, might not be eaten with such avidity by the fastidious. The saccharine of the date itself cures or candies the fruit, and some of the trees which have already fruited in Arizona and California have yielded very fancy and fine dates. For a long time to come, all of the dates produced in the United States will come from the Tigris and North African trees, imported through the department, and their progeny—date suckers—will command fancy prices.

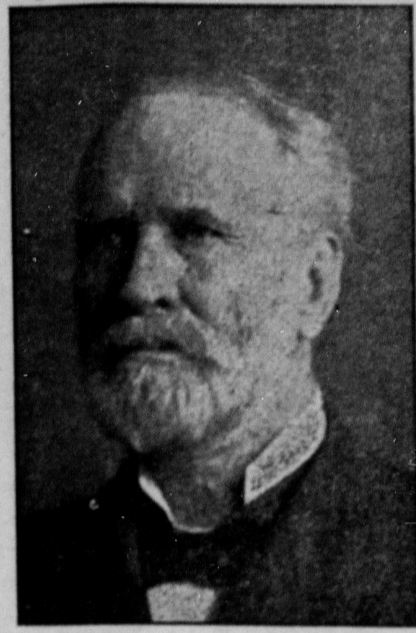
third of the United States. Herein lies the importance of this work. The finding of Japanese bamboo was no discovery; the importance lies in finding that they will thrive in our climate. Not only are they the most ornamental plant in the world, but they are probably the most useful wood in Japan, not only for the making of fancy furniture and knick-knacks, but for almost every use. "Tell me what you can use wood for," said Mr. Fairchild, "and I will tell you what use the Japanese can make of bamboo."

Better Than the Congressional Free Seed Farce.

Dozens of other extremely interesting and promising plants were found, quantities purchased and sent home for tests. The number of these discoveries and introductions is so great, and such an exhaustive test is in each case made by the Department before anything is recommended for introduction, that it is practically useless for farmers or fruit growers to write the Department for samples of the strange and interesting things which its agricultural explorers have secured, and which are described from time to time in the magazines. Until any product has been tested and is determined to be practicable for growth in the United States, it is not possible to secure any seeds or specimens. In fact, the Department has none. Those that are sent in are immediately distributed among the Government experiment stations and to a few practical growers who are especially able to properly attend to the experiments under the direction of the Department. However, the possibilities of these tests are very great, and Congress would be well warranted in diverting some of the immense annual appropriation for "free seeds" into this channel of introducing to American farmers something which may prove of real and national benefit.

No Resignation for Secretary Wilson

There are many good and sufficient reasons why Secretary Wilson whom the sensationalists have indirectly if not directly held accountable for the cotton scandal in his Department, will not resign. Whether or not Mr. Wilson is even indirectly responsible for the criminal doings of trusted employees, he is the man directly responsible for a most wonderful development and evolution in the Department of Agriculture. And a man who can revolutionize agriculture in an agricultural nation in a space of eight years and without win the confidence of the farmers generally can not be spared.



JAMES WILSON, SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the late President McKinley was his sound judgment of men and his ability to surround himself with the ablest counsellors obtainable. We owe to this keenness in recognizing unusual ability the introduction into the Cabinet of Secretary Hay of the State Department, Secretary Root of the War Department, Secretary Taft as Governor of the Philippines and later Secretary of War, and Secretary Wilson of the Department of Agriculture. All of these won marked success. Mr. Hay became our foremost diplomat, if not the world's; Mr. Root carried the burden of a war upon his shoulders and at the same time reorganized his great Department and the army; and Judge Taft's administration in the Philippines was so able and successful that it brought him a place in President Roosevelt's Cabinet. With Mr. Root he is now talked of for President, and if not that, a place on the Supreme Bench.

But of services rendered the country looking to its internal development, that of Mr. Wilson in the great and surpassing domain of agriculture has never been equalled. He came to the Cabinet both a practical farmer and a trained scientist. From the tall end of the Cabinet Departments he has raised the Ministry of Agriculture to a conspicuous position, outshining several of the other Departments, and American agriculture has come to have a new and greater world meaning because of his active constructiveness and never flagging energy.

Secretary Wilson is rendering the American farmer a notable service and he has won the confidence of the people to a great degree as is evidenced by the many tributes paid him since the recent trouble in his Department. Rather than being censurable for the "graft" discovered, it is to Secretary Wilson's high credit that so little of this sort of thing has occurred. It is impossible to build up such an immense organization as is the present Department of Agriculture without some evil creeping in and without some designing individuals getting onto the pay rolls for the purpose of private gain other than their salaries.

Secretary Wilson will not resign to meet the demands of a few sensation mongers, simply because the country which is benefitting so largely through his splendid work will not hear of it any more than they would agree to Secretary Taft's resignation following the disgrace of every army officer, or to President Roosevelt's retirement every time that one of his appointments turns out badly.

SOME AFTER THOUGHTS.

District Attorney Jerome, of New York, says he is a man of peace. He is putting up a pretty good fight, though, on the New York grafters.

Scientists are debating how long a man can live under certain conditions when his neck has been broken. Among the politicians there are a good many with necks intact who have been dead ones for some time.

In deciding a divorce suit, a Cincinnati judge has stated that "a man is entitled to some supper, and a hot supper at that, when he gets home." The evidence shows that this man got a great many hot suppers upon his return home, but not of the kind that he could eat.

"Why would you not get married in August?" asks Nikola-Greley Smith, in writing recently of summer weddings. The reason a good many of us would not is due to a disinclination to violate the law against bigamy.

Prices in Nebraska and Missouri are quite uniform. A Nebraska man claims to have killed six anti-trust bills in the state legislature for \$5,000. That's what they charge in Missouri, \$1,000 a piece—dozen rates, \$10,000.

A Hawaiian woman bore seven children at once. Photograph has been forwarded to the White House.

There are a great many tall bank cashiers who are so short at the banks that they have had to go abroad on health trips.

A London scientist has called the yellow fever authorities that he has something good for mosquitoes. What is wanted is something extremely bad—which will make them very sick at the stomach.

At what time shall a man retire from active life? asks the "Boston Globe." What particular kind? Automobile dodging or defending himself from insurance agents?

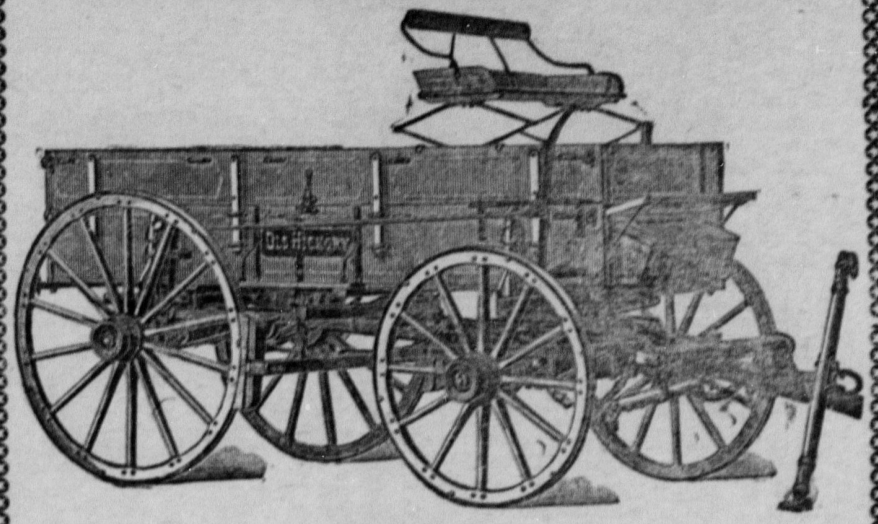
"Non possimus" simply means "nothing doing."

Chairman Shants says they "are working on the Canal with loyalty and zeal." The bids have been opened, however, for dredges and steam shovels.

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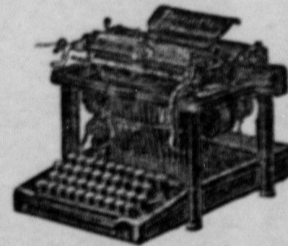
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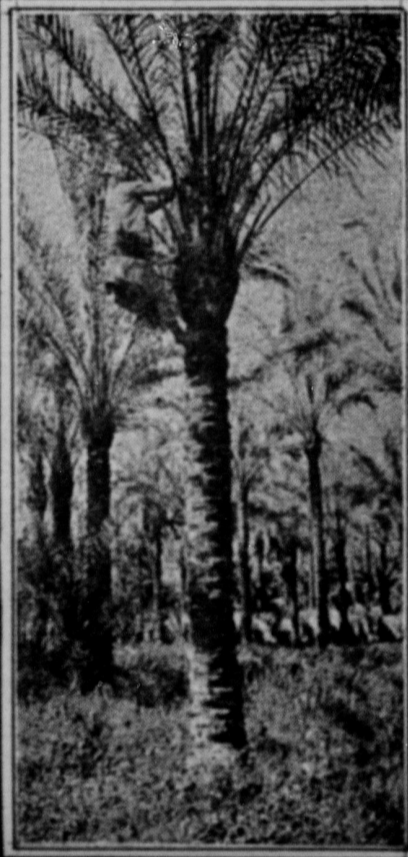
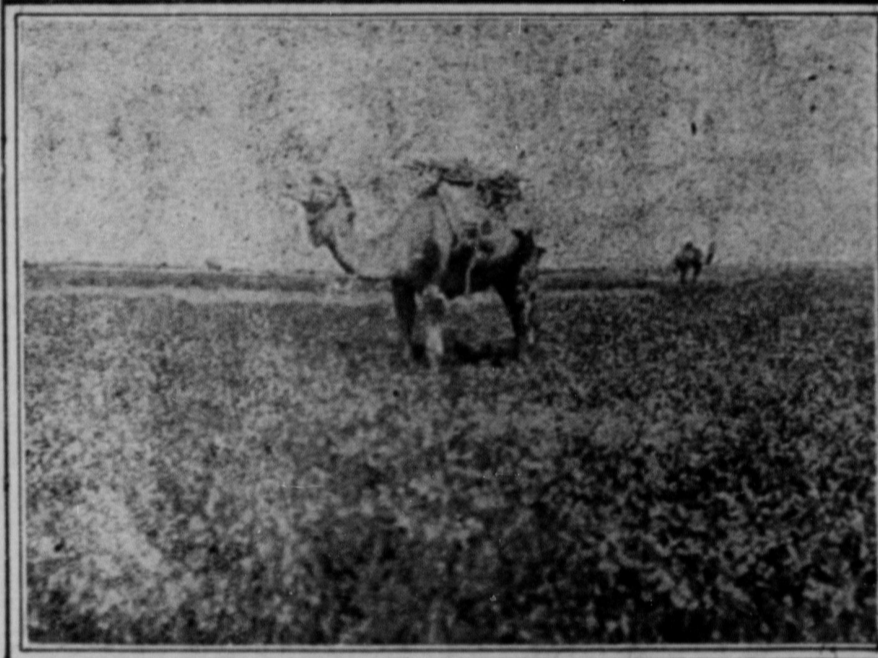
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VIEWS TAKEN BY AGRICULTURAL EXPLORER FAIRCHILD, SHOWING THE IRRIGATION OF A DATE GROVE; A NATIVE ARAB POLLENATING A DATE TREE; DATE SUCKERS BAGGED READY FOR SHIPMENT TO WASHINGTON, AND CAMELS BROWING IN A FIELD OF BEERSEEM OR EGYPTIAN CLOVER.

plants. Mr. Fairchild speaks five or six different languages and knows pretty nearly every plant that grows. He is one of Secretary Wilson's "bright young men," and he has organized and is in charge of the section of Plant and Seed Production, at present a modest branch of the Department, but one which is destined, in my judgment, to become one of its most important bureaus. This division already has some ten thousand plants new to America, which are being grown and tested all over the country.

New Plants of Promise.

"There is not a state nor a territory in the country," said Mr. Fairchild, "in which the crops, staple and subsidiary, are not capable in many cases of being supplanted by more successful ones. I have found new plants and new varieties of old ones almost everywhere I turned, in every one of the grand divisions of the earth, which somewhere in our own country will constitute an improvement upon the crops our farmers are already growing. Our farmers are growing perhaps barley or wheat or some other staple crop and are making money from it, and are satisfied, yet it may be that there is a variety or a strain more exactly adapted to their conditions of soil and climate which will yield them several bushels more per acre with the same labor. I could mention varieties of several staple crops which, upon the tests made in this country during the past year or two, have shown a very large increase over the ordinary yield of those crops. I will not name the kind of grain I

See Jess Grapes, Matting Barley and Luxuriant Hops.

On a tour of investigation through Europe, Mr. Fairchild secured many important fruits and vegetables. The Sultania seedless grape was sent in from Italy. The Huasco seedless raisin grape was another find. The best matting barley in the world was found growing at an old town in Moravia. Introduced under the name of Hanna barley, it has already proved of value to those regions where it has been grown, especially on the Pacific coast. It is not only earlier, but heavier yielding than other barleys; and if it is found that it can be generally substituted for the barleys now grown, its increased yield of from one to two and a half bushels per acre will add enormously to the aggregate output. A study of the hop regions of Europe disclosed the fact that the American hop is far inferior in quality to the best European varieties. The importation of young plants for the purpose of producing better American hops was undertaken by the Department as a result of this discovery.

Bamboo Will Thrive in U. S.

The Jordan almond, the finest variety in the world, was found growing in Spain, and at once recognized as far superior to the almonds produced in the United States, so a supply was immediately secured and shipped. A discovery which Mr. Fairchild thinks of great importance are the hardy bamboos of Japan. These are now being tested in California and the Southern States. Mr. Fairchild thinks they will thrive throughout the southern

A Peculiar Horse.

The excellence of the English Colonial educational systems is evidenced by the following interesting description of the horse by a Bombay student:

"The horse is a very noble quadruped, but when he is angry he will not do so. He is ridden on the spinal cord by the bridle and sadly the driver places his foot on the stirrup, and divides his lower limbs across the saddle, and drives his animal to the meadow. He has a long mouth, and his head is attached to the trunk by a long protuberance called the neck. He has four legs; two are in the front side and two are afterwards. These are the weapons on which he runs, and also defends himself by extending those in the rear in a parallel direction toward his foe, but this he does only when in a vexatious mood. His food is generally grasses and grains. He is also useful to take on his back a man or woman as well as some cargo. He has power to run as fast as he could. He has got no sleep at night time, and always standing awake. Also there are horses of short sizes. They do the same as the others are generally doing. There is no animal like the horse; no sooner they see their guardian or master they always crying for feeding, but it is always at the morning time. They have got tall, but not so long as the cow and other such like similar animals."