

SEEDS AND PLANTS IMPORTED DURING THE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER, 1905, TO JULY, 1906.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT.

This twelfth inventory of seeds and plants imported, prepared under the immediate supervision of Mr. Walter Fischer, represents the accessions of this Office between the dates of December 15, 1905, and July 27, 1906, a period of about seven months. It contains 2,260 items, which is as large a number as was represented by the collections of a whole year when this Office was organized in 1898, notwithstanding the fact that the present lists are the result of a more rigid selection than at the outset.

To the outsider it may seem strange that larger numbers of plants and seeds are not accumulated in so long a period. To these it may be said that it is not the object of the work of plant introduction to collect as many species and varieties of plants which may have some economic use in this country as is possible, but rather to carefully collect only such forms as can be put to a really practical use by American cultivators. This Office is informed of hosts of useful plants now growing in different parts of the world which are not yet on the program of practical plant introduction. At a small expense thousands of these useful plants could be gathered and placed in collections, but the cost of maintaining any one of them would in a few years far exceed the cost of procuring it anew for the definite experiments of the experts of the country who may want it for breeding purposes, as a stock on which to graft, or as a possible new crop for hitherto unused lands.

The principle, then, of systematic plant introduction, as it is carried on by this Office, is to get the seeds and plants that are wanted for the solution of definite problems in the establishment of new plant industries; import them in sufficient quantities for large and conclusive experiments, and place them as soon as possible in the hands of experts who will carry out at once such experiments.

Among the collections of new introductions included in this inventory there are some that are worthy of special mention here. Principal among these are the collections of our agricultural explorer