

INVENTORY OF SEEDS AND PLANTS IMPORTED BY THE OFFICE OF FOREIGN SEED AND PLANT IN- TRODUCATION DURING THE PERIOD FROM OCTO- BER 1 TO DECEMBER 31, 1922 (NO. 73; NOS. 55814 TO 56144)

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

To many it may not be apparent why the Province of Yunnan, which borders Tibet on China's western boundary, is a particularly likely place to search for plants for introduction into America.

Mr. Rock, our agricultural explorer, who has been collecting in this region now for nearly three years, shows by his notes and specimens in what way Yunnan plants are likely to be valuable to American horticulture.

The vast mountain area, in which he has been exploring, where snow-clad peaks 12,000 to 20,000 feet high rise from almost sub-tropical valleys and gorges thousands of feet deep have been channeled by the largest and longest rivers in Asia (the Mekong and the Yangtze) in their break through the mountains which bound the Tibetan table-land, furnishes a home for thousands of interesting plants which some day will enrich our horticulture.

It is true that other exploring botanists, like Forrest and Kingdon Ward, have visited it, but this is the first time that an American explorer, with the needs of our farms and gardens in mind, has hunted for plants which can be grown in American dooryards and has entered western China by its back door, so to speak, which is Bhamo, on the border of Burma.

Mr. Rock's itinerary, like that of Frank Meyer, will be given in detail in a later number of this series. It suffices for him to locate the region where he collected the plants in this inventory. This centers chiefly around Likiang and the Likiang Snow Range. Many of the plants were found in localities where the thermometer goes below 32° F. and heavy snowfalls occur. High tropical altitudes and temperate-region latitudes correspond, but only roughly so, for it has come to be well recognized that high alpine plants are accommodated to conditions which do not prevail at many places at sea level in the Temperate Zone. The heavy and continuous blanket of snow which characterizes many mountain regions makes it possible for many rather tender plants, such as the potato, for example, to live in the ground over winter. To illustrate, in the higher altitudes of the Rockies on its western slopes and also as far north as Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, potato tubers often remain unfrozen in the soil because the soil is blanketed with snow before freezing weather occurs, whereas otherwise they would be frozen in