



A Botanical Orphan

WHEN the first Spanish explorers made contact with the natives of the New World, they found them cultivating and using a very peculiar kind of grain, to which the white men gave the name "Indian corn." In one of the Indian languages it was known as "mahiz," and this name has survived as its proper title: maize.

To be sure, most of the farmers who grow it don't call it that, and would hardly know what you were talking about if you referred to their principal crop by its historically correct name. To them it is known simply as "corn." The grains called, collectively, "corn" in England, and by the equivalent "Korn" in German, are the "small grains" of American agricultural parlance.

But although it is of tremendous importance in both the Americas, and has spread afar into lands like South Africa and India and the Black Sea Basin, its origin is still a riddle. The American Indians had it all over the continent, wherever it could be grown, when the white men came. There seems to be some evidence that it originally came from the South American uplands, though that is not a certainty. But the wild ancestor-plant was never found.

The nearest thing to it that botanists have ever been able to discover is a tropical American grass, found both wild and in cultivation. The Aztecs grew it and called it "teosinte," which means "grain of the gods"; but it does not look much like maize.

A number of botanists and plant breeders have attempted to induce teosinte to evolve into maize. But none of them has ever been successful; so that America's chief grain remains a botanical orphan.

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ETHNOLOGY

Ultra-Modern Marriage Laws Governed Ancient Egyptians

THE MOST RADICAL ideas of marriage reform tried or proposed in the world today are "as old as the Egyptians," it appears from a study of Egyptian marriage law made by W. F. Edgerton and just published by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

Mr. Edgerton has examined closely references to marriage in Egyptian documents, especially those of the Ptolemaic period, during the centuries just preceding the Christian era.

An Egyptian marriage continued during mutual consent; either party could dissolve it at will, declares Mr. Edgerton. More remarkable than this was an arrangement whereby marriage could be limited in advance to a definite period.

Arranged by Private Contract

The egyptologist concludes that neither church nor state took a hand in marriages. Neither the bride nor the groom was required to put hand or seal to any written document. The affair was arranged by private contract. To make a legal marriage it was sufficient for the couple to regard themselves as man and wife or to allow it to be known publicly that they so regarded themselves.

"Sitting together at the wedding feast would naturally be an implicit pub-

lic acknowledgment of the fact," explains Mr. Edgerton. "We have no reason to suppose that any other ceremony whatever was required."

Mr. Edgerton adds, however, that possibly the consent of the couple's parents may have been required.

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ZOOLOGY

Turtle by the Ton Taken From Lake in Missouri

TURTLE by the ton is being handled by the Missouri Game and Fish Department in its project to eradicate undesirable fish and other aquatic animals from Lake Taneycomo.

In the short space of two months more than 4,000 turtles, aggregating nearly eight tons in weight, were removed with nets from the lake, and at the same time a few bass, bluegill, carp, and catfish were taken. All the game fish were returned to the lake, while some of the carp supplied fresh food for needy families in the community.

Turtles of the marketable variety were shipped to Philadelphia. The non-marketable bait-stealers were killed and buried.

The eradication work will continue through the fall months.

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