

Corn for Christmas

► VICTORY GARDENS grow today on fields where victories were won only yesterday, down in the far-flung tropical islands of the Pacific. Soldiers, sailors and marines are growing fresh vegetables to add variety to regulation GI chow. Corn-on-the-cob for Christmas dinner is one item that Sgt. George Doying, USMC, tells about in the U. S. Marines' magazine, *The Leatherneck*.

Many of our armed gardeners are having an experience Americans have not known since their great-grandsires worked their fields with a rifle laid across the plow-handles and a constant eye out for redskins on the edge of the clearing. A considerable number of these front-line Victory Gardens are within gunshot of the enemy, and more are within easy bomber range.

These tropical Victory Gardens are by no means city-lot affairs, according to Sgt. Doying's figures. A total of some 5,000 acres is under cultivation, on islands all the way from New Caledonia to Bougainville. Many of the plots are large enough to require the use of tractors. Total yield this year is expected to exceed 150,000 tons of fresh vegetables, with a value of more than \$11,000,000.

Not all the work is done by men of the armed services. A good many natives are hired to tend the strange crops they do not usually care to eat; as incentive for them, a taro patch in one corner is an almost invariable feature of the "farm." Soils in the Melanesian islands are fertile, being either deep black gumbo or fertile volcanic ash, and the perpetual summer climate permits planting at any time and makes growth very rapid. Some of the gardens are being cropped every three months.

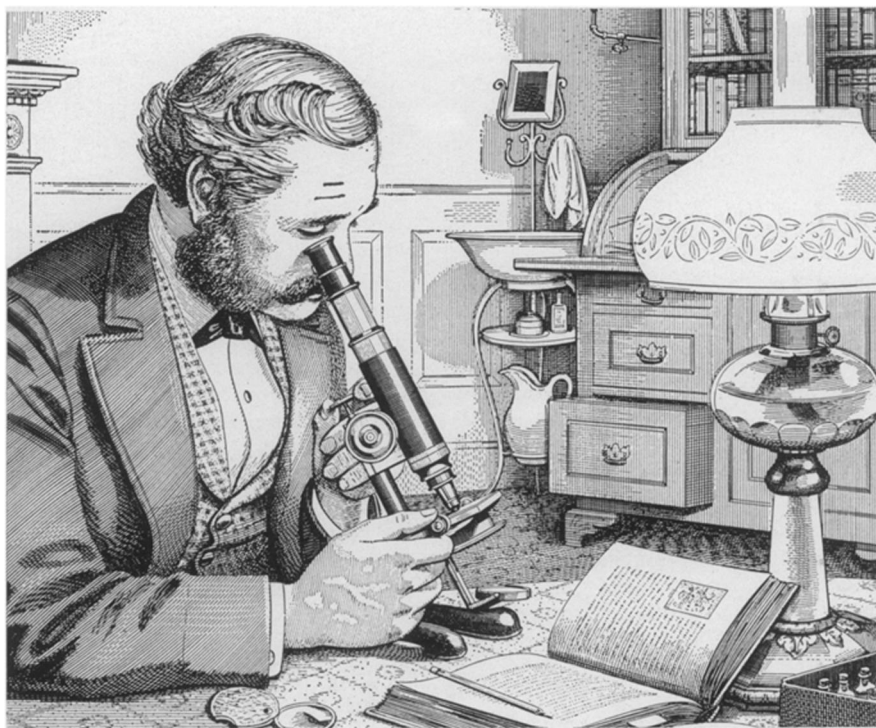
In getting gardens of "home" vege-

tables started in this far, alien region, naturally a number of odd incidents occurred. There is the story of the sergeant who swapped a watermelon (flown in from Hawaii) for a badly needed tractor. And the one about another sergeant in charge of a ton-and-a-half shipment of seeds and tools prioritized off a plane, who "bought" transportation to his destination with the promise of his first batch of cucumbers. And the one about the two crates of green peas that were flown a thousand miles to give a better relish to the Sun-

day dinner of a lonely island outpost—said crates being made of scraps of mahogany and rosewood lumber.

But perhaps the strangest story of all, and the grimmest, is about the garden that was plowed with bombs. This was at the former Jap base at Vila on Kolombangara, where the enemy's airstrip had been so thoroughly worked over with high explosive that plowing was superfluous. They just gave the ground a good harrowing and then put in the seed.

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