

ADOBE BRICKS YIELD CALIFORNIA HISTORY

Reading history from mud bricks is usually thought of only in connection with ancient Babylon, but Miss Margaret Kelly of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and Prof. G. W. Hendry of the College of Agriculture of the University of California have made the adobe bricks of the old Franciscan missions in California give up secrets of the past, relating to the introduction of agriculture into California.

The early Spanish missionaries introduced practically all of the major crop plants now cultivated south of San Francisco Bay, but since they were intensely busy men, with thousands of Indians to look after and too few of their own numbers for the work, they did not keep full written records of all their activities. Consequently the dates of introduction of most of the white man's crops have been lost.

But in the making of adobe bricks, barnyard and stable refuse is mixed with mud, and in this way the seeds and stubble of many kinds of plants were worked into the walls of the buildings and thus preserved. By dissolving the unbaked bricks in water Miss Kelly and Prof. Hendry were able to recover and identify such seeds. Since the dates of erection of the missions are well known, the dates of the introduction of the crops represented by the adobe-embedded seeds could be at least approximately determined.

While the data obtained from the California missions is valuable, it is believed that the older Jesuit and Franciscan establishments in Mexico will add to the total fund. There are thirty-three missions in Mexico, most of them abandoned. The oldest is the Jesuit mission at Loreto, established in 1690. Here Miss Kelly and Prof. Hendry hope to obtain information of the highest value.

AID TO BEAUTY HELPS SEED EXPERIMENTERS

Hydrogen peroxide, popular as a mouth wash and employed in the mysteries of the "beauty shoppes", has found a more prosaic but economically important use in agricultural science. R. H. Walker and L. W. Erdman, of Iowa State College, have found that solutions of 10 and 15 per cent. concentration will free seeds of clover, peas, soybean and other legumes of all bacterial and other microbic life at ordinary room temperatures in about thirty minutes. These concentrations are from three to five times the strength of the peroxide solutions ordinarily sold by drug stores, which average 3 or 4 per cent. Solutions as low as 5 percent., the experimenters found, were not effective in ridding the seeds of microscopic life, while 30 per cent. solutions injured the seeds.

The Italian Fascisti have declared war on birth control, which is regarded as a cause of low birth rates in some Italian provinces.
