OLD WORLD WEED INTRODUCTIONS

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The ways and means by which noxious weeds become introduced are of much interest, especially to the agronomist and seed analyst, the former because he is generally placed with the task of eradicating them and the latter because he is expected to identify all impurities in imported seeds. The seeds which warrant the writing of this paper are impurities found in the seed of a leguminous plant, fenugreek, Trigonella foenumgraecum. It is an annual plant indigenous to and cultivated over a wide area in the Mediterranean region. It is also frequently mentioned in the agricultural literature of India where the crop is associated with the growing of cotton and the fodder used to feed work bullocks.

Fenugreek seeds are used for a number of purposes and, like the plants, have a strong and characteristic odor. Among the uses may be mentioned a yellow dye, medicine, perfumery, and, when ground up, as an ingredient of condition powders and poultry and stock foods. It is for the two last-mentioned purposes mainly that the seed is imported into the United States as an agricultural product. However, C. H. McCharles of the California State Food and Drug Laboratory states that fenugreek is used to a considerable extent in confectionery and particularly as an artificial maple flavoring.

Seed of fenugreek may be purchased from seedsmen in Europe and occasionally is offered for sale by seedsmen in both the eastern and western parts of the United States. Sometimes seed imported for stock food purposes gets into the trade for use as a crop to plant and herein lies the danger of introducing noxious weeds.

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