

MAIZE SELECTION AT THE IMPERIAL
COLLEGE.

1928 - 1929

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INTRODUCTION

Maize is a crop the merits of which, as a food for man and beast, have been extolled so often that it would be superfluous to recapitulate them here. It played a very important part in the old Maya civilisation, its use being closely bound up with both their religious rites and their social customs. The original home of this plant and its parent forms are obscure but probably Central America was the seat of its first cultivation; though at least one writer suggests that it was being grown in Asia before Columbus had discovered the New World. (21) From Central America maize was gradually carried to the northern continent where its cultivation, chiefly by the women, provided a welcome reserve to supplement game or to make up for its scarcity.

Whatever the date of its introduction into these islands, it is certain that the Spanish discoverers of America found maize extensively used as food by the Caribs, and other inhabitants of the West Indies. (1)