

California Avocado Association Annual Report 1918 and 1919 4:24-26

OPENING ADDRESS

PRESIDENT SHEDDEN

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let us put ourselves into a good frame of mind by all singing one verse of "My Country 'Tis of Thee." It is with gladness I greet you upon this third anniversary of the California Avocado Association. I speak sincerely when I express these feelings, for, at each of our six semi-annual meetings, I have experienced an increasing pleasure, both in anticipation and realization. This is because of our better acquaintance not only with each other, but with that hub and pivot of interest, the avocado,—that tree of knowledge, whose students are becoming, each year, more serious and discerning, in the study of it. More practical understanding of it has been *burned* into us, this year, than ever before.

The unsuspecting avocado grower surely was handed the "hot end of the poker," but he bravely held on, and thereby found out just how much he could stand. It has been twelve months of courageous struggling, and all that we have done, in the year gone, has been deeply tinged with the red hue of our first year in the world wide conflict. Savage war has loosed hell on earth, and we live in an atmosphere of horror created by the combined barbarity and perverted science of one perfidious nation that has been convicted of trying to steal the world,—while it wasn't looking. How hard it is to talk without touching the war!

Within our own avocado sphere, certain untoward happenings of the year have had a depressing effect upon some whose avocado hearts seem not to grow upon "resistant stock," and, in consequence, these down cast ones are found sitting under the "Juniper tree of sorrow," and weeping because they have no avocados to eat, nor the luxurious price of corn and beans, as a substitute. While the year did seem to hang heavy with disappointments, yet, progress did not stop. It was, and is, going on. They who do not see it may be looking for it in the wrong direction,—in the wake of the flitting dollar. One day, a lady asked me to look at an avocado seed she had planted in a flower pot, none too large, and which had shown no signs of life. A little examination below the surface indicated a mass of root growth, and in a few days the seed began to make rapid progress above ground. Just so is it, at present, with the avocado. We are not standing up on a ladder, in full view, picking fruit this year, but the far better, and more lasting process of evolution and selection and substitution has been going on, with scarcely an interruption.

Be patient, and soon there will be harvested in California, avocados whose quality and quantity will reward us with keen satisfaction. Reports from all sections give promise that the avocado orchards will not be slackers this year.

Tell it to our dear Uncle Sam who is crying for food to feed the millions who are fighting

and dying for humanity's sake. Just here, let me present a hope heartily expressed in a recent letter from the Association's good Washington friend, L. B. Scott, that this Association urge a campaign to have one, or more avocado trees planted in every home garden, where they will grow, in California.

From my heart, I commend to the Association this humanitarian act, and hope the board of directors will take up the matter, and evolve a plan for its accomplishment, and in a way that the Association will be seen as backing it, so as to eliminate any seeming personal interest.

I can see in it a grand move towards popularizing the avocado. Avocado purchasing clubs might be organized in communities, and by buying in quantities, could secure prices vastly lower than those quoted to the purchaser of a single tree. The small avocado owner, multiplied by thousands, would be an important factor in winning esteem for the fruit in the land where it is produced.

Doubtless it would cost the Association and the nurserymen something to do this, but we must, sooner or later, get into training for the inevitable campaign of education, publicity and popularity, to which we are drawing nearer each year. This afternoon session will be devoted to business. The finances of the Association are in good condition, as will be seen by report of the treasurer.

The present membership is 193. A goodly company of pioneers in the industry, but far from being all who are interested in growing the avocado. Conditions during the past year have not inspired recruiting work; war bonds and stamps have been more attractive than membership certificates, but I believe that, later in the season, when the avocado begins to blush in profusion upon the trees, we will be encouraged to begin a drive for new members.

Among important business matters to be transacted will be: Report of secretary-treasurer; new by-laws presented by the board of directors, for adoption; election of certain honorary members recommended by the directors; election of three directors, for a term of three years, and as we, as an association, will soon take our place in the business world, it will be wise to give this matter careful consideration. Also we should be observant to return thanks to any one who has lent us a helping hand, and shown us favor, especially, at this time, to the United States Department of Agriculture, through Mr. Fairchild and Mr. Wilson Popenoe, and to others whose friendly hand is shown.

I call attention to the Question Box, put in a conspicuous place for the reception of questions pertinent to the avocado culture. As far as possible, all questions put in the box, up until close of this session, will be answered at last of tomorrow afternoon session. In the interim, persons will be selected to reply, concisely and quickly, so that time will not be lost.

With a prayer for the diffusion of clear thought upon this assemblage, I now declare the third annual meeting of the California Avocado Association open and ready for the transaction of business.

May 17, 1918.