

THIS ASSOCIATION

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The subject assigned to me sounds like a prospectively dry historical sketch coming. But, cheer up; it is not so; for, while rapidly making history, the years of the California Avocado Association are, as yet, too few to inspire the pen of the historian. A great life is only, just now, unfolding before our wondering eyes. Its precious babyhood has been nurtured by devoted hearts and hands that have lovingly lifted it out of its swaddling clothes; soothingly led it through its wheezy times of colic, measles, mumps, whooping-cough and kindred concomitant troubles of tender years,—which experts teach us is the only safe time to have 'em,—and now, upon this 1918 anniversary, presents it as a little three-year-old beauty, which, for accomplishments, will take the blue ribbon at any horticultural baby show in California.

'Way back in the spring of 1915, we were given a pen portrait of it, by its honorable, and handsome father, Edwin G. Hart. Oft times, you know, fond parents will, for comparison, secure a picture of the developing child, each birthday, until the twenty-first. In like spirit, I presume, another picture has been ordered upon this, its third birthday. These infantile remembrances will be of interest to glance at, occasionally, as the years roll on towards its majestic stature of maturity.

The avowed purpose of "This Association," as stated in its fellowship agreement, is: "The improvement of the culture, production, and marketing of the Avocado."

Have members, all, discerned the keystone of this arch which rises over the portals of the beautiful structure we are entering in California?

Not long since, while conversing with several representative members, upon the scope of the Association's work, I asked if they could repeat exactly its object, as officially declared in the by-laws. They, each one, said it was: "The culture, production and marketing of the avocado."

They seemed satisfied with it; and truly that would be a splendid occupation for any California man or woman, and yet, it requires not a philologist to point out that they entirely ignored the major word of this neatly framed manifesto, viz: "Improvement of the culture, etc," and quoted only the minor words. Two of the gentlemen frankly admitted they had never observed the prominence of the word improvement; the other one said he had forgotten it.

Therefore, for a good purpose, may I here ask all the orthodox members of the audience to slowly repeat, with me, our declared creed: "The purpose of this Association is, the improvement of the culture, production and marketing of the avocado." Thank you. The active word is, improvement; the others are passive.

Let me then, good friends, encircle this fundamental word improvement, with a little wreath of forget-me-nots. I will, as the publicity man would say, "feature it"; as the publisher would order, "box it."

The adopting of this watchword, "Improvement," has laid out for us a lifetime of searching and striving for the best; during which, the findings and provings of science will often seem coldly unsympathetic. Fidelity to our purpose will make all initiative acts and final judgments of "This Association" entirely impersonal. Truth is always so. We must, in the words of another, "Hew to the line, let the chips fall where they may."

In the continual climbing upward, under this banner of Excelsior, let not our eyes be dimmed by the near vision of dollars, and prejudice, or we may not reach the summit.

There will come times when individual members will have to sacrifice personal feelings. The seed of many an enjoyed fruit of years ago, planted, grown and fondly named as one of the family, and many a cherished avocado idea, theory and practice, will prove but footholds and stepping-stones to something higher in the Association's collective climbing, before it "goes over the top." It is already being done; whole jungles of family favorites and entire free lectures on methods have been permanently "camouflaged," by knowledge gained. Weep not then, tender hearted brother, sister, nor show ruffled feelings when the judges pin not the blue rosette upon that dear domesticated avocado orphan in your home garden. Rather take your part and pleasure in knowing that what you have done is a conscientious workmen's contribution to the building of the grandly looming avocado industry,—a stone in its foundations, a brick in its walls. Rejoice, even though you be not the chosen Steeple-Jack to climb and plant the flag upon its lofty pinnacle.

My disappointed friend, if you still exist, I speak somewhat in sympathy; for if you will come with me to the foothills of Monrovia, I will show you a four-year-old avocado orchard, wherein, among fifty-seven varieties, the planter thereof had fondly hoped to find the "dark horse," but which, during the past year, has been largely mowed down to stumps, for the sole purpose of building thereon, something far better, we hope.

This arch word, improvement, gives "This Association" the "right of eminent domain" upon the avocado industry and its reputation. To emphasize this thought, I beg to quote, and commend to you, a passage from a special report prepared by Mr. Barber, on behalf of the board of directors, in presenting its formal findings in regard to the eight varieties of avocados recommended, which says: "As an association we are morally responsible to the many investors joining the industry, year by year. By our mere existence we invite the investment of their funds in the production of avocados, and they rightly expect our assistance. It becomes our duty to protect them from irresponsible people selling varieties which we know to be unworthy of commercial planting."

Adherence to our principles was what evolved the list of eight varieties, the selection of which has, as far as we are now able, made the present, easy, and the future, free from regrets. It has been as a life line thrown to the buyer who has been sinking, almost out of sight, in a whirlpool of despair. It is a towline to the harassed nurseryman who has been rowing, upstream, on the River of Doubt.

Fellow workers, practically speaking, our present concern has to do with the culture; (be

careful not to spell it with a "K"); that of the production and marketing is safely a matter of the future,—and we're not there yet. Let us first take good care of the culture, and the product and selling, and perhaps profits, will be taken care of by,—the middleman.

Loyalty to our principles has, also, gained for us powerful allies: the University of California, and the United States Department of Agriculture. We have now many "friends at court." Both of these great institutions of science have treated the California Avocado Association as a co-ordinate interest, in matters pertaining to the avocado. Signal examples of their favor have been shown us. Recently, and most notably, on the part of the Department at Washington, this Association has been permitted to publish in its year book, just off the press, a condensation of Explorer Wilson Popenoe's report to the government on his sixteen months successful study of the avocado in Guatemala. We are deeply appreciative of Mr. Fair-child's fine feelings of generosity in thus trusting us with this intensely interesting document, so much earlier than his own chosen time for its promulgation. Its presence in the book will justify any avocado man or woman in California, or Florida, to buy, beg, borrow, or pilfer from Dr. Webber, any copy of it he may have left.

The department has, also, recently shown its further favor and confidence by entrusting some of its members with the propagation of sets of the varieties of avocados secured by Mr. Wilson Popenoe in Guatemala.

All of which confidence in our Association springs from that fidelity to its sacred purpose of *improvement*.

In the lovely land of California, where celestial and terrestrial joys and creature comforts crowd our lives, and overflow to other climes, our gladdened eyes see rapidly rising this sunlit Temple of the Avocado. Let the offerings we bring there be ever of the purest and best, for the health and happiness of our fellow beings, and for the good name of the California avocado, to which, in old time language, "We pledge our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."