

## UTILITY AND SENTIMENT APPLIED TO AVOCADO

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It would be quite a natural question to ask a man who had been confined by business to a desk for more than fifty years, why he had selected the growing of avocado trees as something to occupy his time and mind: Granted that I am asked that question. I say first that it is really a recognition on my part of what I owe to this section, for having given me health and an opportunity to work, when I was sadly in need of both.

Forty-seven years ago the largest orange orchard in Southern California occupied the ground on which the Southern Pacific depot, in Los Angeles, now stands. The question at that time was how to market the product of these several hundred trees. They were seedlings, with long thorns, and the fruit had a rough skin and were full of seeds, but they were sweet as to pulp. We have found out both how and where to market these and now we ship 40,000 carloads of citrus fruit each year.

Remembering this remarkable development, it seemed to me that I should join gentlemen like yourselves who have devoted time and care to the development of the avocado, and do my bit toward testing the tree as a business proposition. My experiment is on a hillside, part of which is very steep, and if it proves a success in every way it will demonstrate the increased value of a large acreage of somewhat similar ground. If for any reason, it should prove a failure, it would be a warning to some prospective growers to try other means.

It has been stated that the banana will produce more food per acre than any other vegetable grown. My opinion is that the avocado, on account of the richness of its pulp, will prove better than the banana in this respect. When, in about four or five years, we have a production sufficiently large to need care and attention in marketing, one more man to assist in this might be of value to you. My hopes lie in this direction.

So much from a utilitarian standpoint. Now allow me a little in the way of sentiment. The avocado exceeds in the beauty of its growth almost all trees. To have your Mexican varieties budded by an expert and to watch the development, and care for the tree during the change that it makes to one of the better varieties, is a joy to any lover of nature.

Also, if I may be allowed further, what I may call personal mention, I am under obligation to my nephew, the late Mr. Habersham, of Hollywood, for introducing me first to this beautiful tree. He planted a number of seeds, given to him by Mr. John Murrieta, and from these seeds he brought almost to maturity a number of trees, two of which have proved famous, but neither of which bears his name. I would be glad if I could do something to repay his memory for the pleasure that I have derived from my acquaintance with the tree.

Having worked more than fifty years in the city of "Day by Day," in the land of "All the Time," I hope you gentlemen who have waited years and years for the fruition of your hopes in your avocados planted from seed, will not grudge me a trip in my mind to the "City of Sometime," in the "Land of Yet to Come," and following Mr. Wright's allegory, let me go there and meet the King of that country, "Looking Ahead," and his Queen "Anticipation," and seek an introduction to their two most beautiful daughters, "Fancy" and "Imagination," who will take me into the temple, whose dome blazes with a ruby flame and which is sacred to the God "It Might Be." I will make an offering on his altar, and he will give me an avocado seed, which I will plant close to its shadow, and I will watch the growth and expansion of its leaves, beautiful lustrous green when grown, but catching the glint of the rosy dome above and coming out of the bud like burnished bronze. I will watch its blossoms burst into stars and the fruit glow as great green globes turning to maroon as they ripen.

It should be perfect in its transmission, in its resistance, in its production, in its flavor. It should be an ideal tree, and I would name it with the name of my nephew, and send it down to posterity as a blessing to the human race.