

THINGS TO BE EXPECTED

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The role of a prophet is usually rather a risky one. If his predictions come wrong, he is accused of deceiving the people and if right, "Why it's nothing but guess work and anyone with common sense and equal experience could do as well," which is doubtless quite so.

It may be that I was given this subject (for I did not select it myself) because of a semi-prediction which I made some ten years or so ago at a farmers' institute held in Tustin. At that time very few knew or cared about ahucate, and those who did thought it unlikely that we could ever grow in California the fine fruit which we have since found adaptable to our climate. I then read what I think was my first paper making particular and enthusiastic mention of the alligator pear as probably a very-greatly-to-be-grown fruit of the future and I ended the article with the interrogatory prediction "Will the next (horticultural) craze be over the alligator pear?" using the word craze, of course, in the sense of greatly aroused interest, with a possible overdoing the matter on the part of some. That prediction, if it may be called one, has been fairly answered in the affirmative; though with possibly one or two exceptions, no one has become unduly excited and the great interest aroused is fully justified by present facts and future prospects. Much of what was then the future is now the past and we find many acres, aggregating thousands of trees planted to the ahucate, and that these trees will soon be bearing large quantities of marketable fruit is beyond controversy.

Will the market take all that we are likely to raise? I think it will and it is the purpose of this Association to see that the public has no excuse for pleading ignorance of the great privilege which we are placing before it. It has been my duty this season to supply for the Orange County Horticultural Contribution to the Panama-Pacific Industrial Exposition, along with other fruits, what was at this stage of the industry a very creditable display of ahucates. Every ten days from July 8th to September 30th I sent a dozen or so ahucates of the Taft variety, and of my other varieties so long as they lasted. The manager of the Orange County Exhibit states that they attracted more attention than anything in his collection; in fact, more than any display of fruits sent in. The people who have acquired a knowledge of the fruit in the tropics, and dealers, who are often also importers, had difficulty in believing that the fruit was really raised in this state, and when convinced were very enthusiastic in their favorable predictions. One San Francisco fruit broker is reported to have said that he could sell twenty dozen like the Taft daily at \$10.00 per dozen; a statement which I, of course, would very much like to believe true. Another, an importer of long and large experience and high standing, thought that he could handle a carload of such fruit weekly at from \$5.00 to \$6.00 per dozen, but that the consumers were not yet educated to distinguish among varieties and most any of those exhibited would sell equally well at first, size being the main requisite.

The steward of the Hotel Oakland who had a Taft presented to him pronounced it the best he had ever tasted and remarked that he would rather have an orchard of such fruit than a gold mine.

All of this is mentioned to help justify the prediction, that we will have a ready market for all thick-skinned fruit of good quality that we are likely to raise. I am not sure as to the thin-skinned kinds and do not grow them much myself, except incidentally for seed to raise stock for budding. Probably they will prove remunerative, but not to the same extent.

To obtain the best returns it is eminently necessary that the fruit should be smooth and not roughened. Visitors to my ranch have noticed, of course, that where the crop was large I have erected screens, not only to prevent the fruit from being twisted from the trees by the desert winds which occasionally blow with considerable violence during the winter months, but also to keep the fruit from being rubbed excessively on the limbs and twigs and against each other. Breezes, too gentle to blow off the fruit, may persist for several days. Continuously rubbing lightly on any woody surface produces abrasion and roughens the fruit so that while its contents may be unimpaired its looks prevent it from being marketable fruit of the first class. The difference in appearance, between protected and unprotected fruit is often great, particularly in the case of the thick-skinned kinds to which these observations principally apply. The thin-skinned varieties by maturing sooner are gone before the winter has hardly begun, and so are not exposed so much to the winds; on the other hand, the skins being thin, they roughen the more readily. It is obvious, as I have often remarked, that with fruit at \$5.00 or more per dozen, one does not have to save very many to pay for the protection. Once purchased, the material of which the screens are composed will last for years, to be used repeatedly. Another benefit to be derived from the use of screens is, that a tree so protected can endure several degrees more frost unharmed.

In the ahuate we have a fruit which justifies more expense in its cultivation than any other and the conclusion I have arrived at is that nothing we raise in California is destined to be the object of greater care and more intensive cultivation and as a result a source of greater profits, and we will do this not because it is essential in order to obtain fruit, we can get that without trouble, but because it pays and pays well to raise the best.