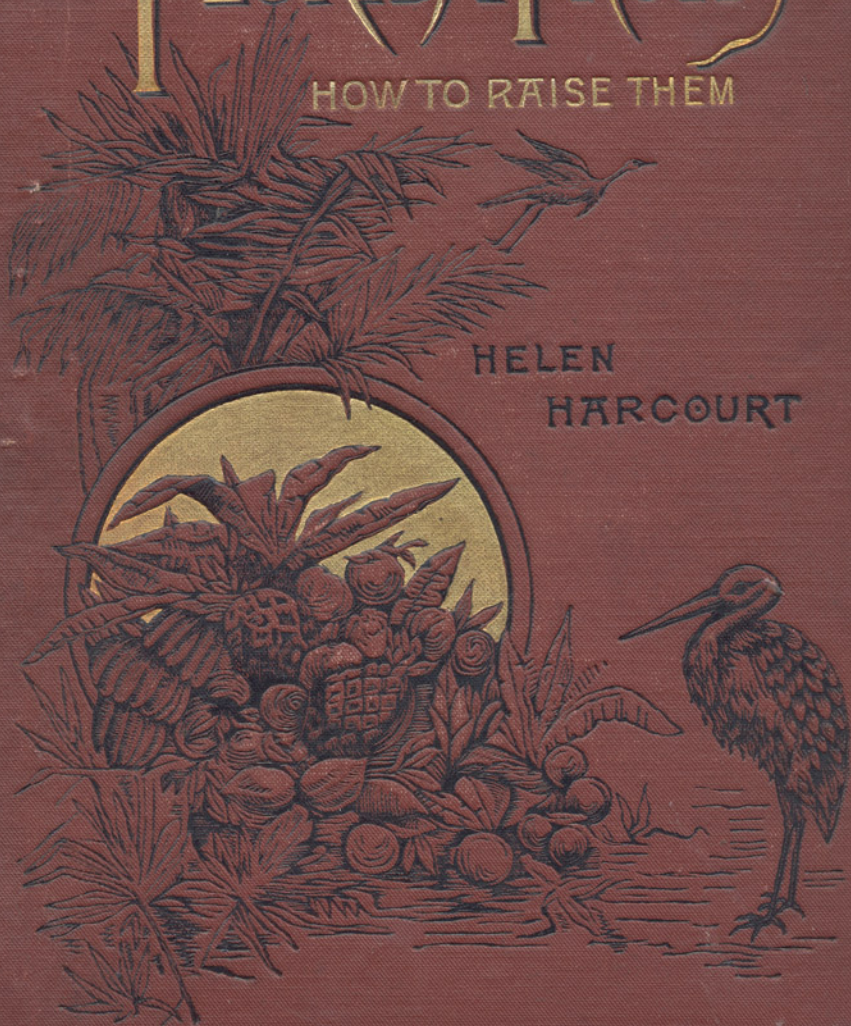


FLORIDA FRUITS

HOW TO RAISE THEM

HELEN
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PREFACE.

In laying the present revised and enlarged edition of "Florida Fruits and How to Raise Them" before the public, the writer gives tangible expression to the growing belief that not in the citrus fruits alone will Florida find the Alpha and Omega of her horticultural wealth.

While oranges are now, and will probably continue to be, the chief staple in such sections of our great State as are best suited to their culture, there are numerous other fruits making, year by year, rapid strides to the front.

A few years ago the question was, "What can be grown in Florida?"

To-day the question is, "What can not be grown in Florida?"

For instance, it was said that strawberries could not be raised in quantity; already, in the last three years, they have won recognition as one of the most profitable "quick crops" that can be raised any where.

"Peaches could not be grown in Florida" was the assertion only four or five years ago, and now it has been proven that peaches can not only be grown over nearly the whole State, but grown in abundance and in perfection. The peach crop is already a very important item in the western and central sections, and yearly becoming more extended both in quantity and area.

And so we might go over a long list of fruits already proven to be adapted to Florida's soil and climate, but these examples will suffice to show that in the horticultural possibilities of our beautiful sunny State we stand yet upon the threshold.

And as it is with the list of fruits, so it is, in a great degree, with the manner of their culture; to a certain extent we yet grope in the twilight, and must be content to observe, to inquire, to compare, to study, to experiment, seeking to avoid the errors of some and to imitate the successes of others.

To place at the service of the Florida fruit grower the result of years of patient observation and experience, both personal and collected from trustworthy sources, in a plain, concise, and practical form, so that the veriest novice may make a success of his new pursuit in his Florida home, has been the earnest purpose of the author. How far and in what degree this purpose may have been attained, it is left to the reader to decide.

FLORIDA FRUITS.

CHAPTER I.

RISE AND PROGRESS OF ORANGE CULTURE.

Throughout the length and breadth of the horticultural world there is at this moment, and will be for years to come, no one tree or fruit possessing so all-absorbing an interest as the far-famed, luscious orange. And good reason there is for this pre-eminence of the "golden apple," as we shall presently see—its fame is not built upon a sandy foundation, but upon a gold-bearing rock, and as such it shall stand forevermore.

An orange grove is at all times intrinsically beautiful, whether laden down with its yellow fruit glistening amid the dark green foliage, or standing clothed in the glossy glory of the latter alone, or dotted all over with its starry white blossoms, and filling the balmy air with their sweet breath.

Most truly "a thing of beauty and a joy forever" is an orange grove to its happy possessor, and in using the word "forever," we do so advisably, for no one who owns a grove at the present day will live to see its decay, or the failure of one jot or tittle of its usefulness, rather the contrary.

We remember reading a rather sarcastic story of some young girls, who, to settle a disputed point, applied to a maiden lady of eighty years with the question:

"How old must a woman be before she gives up all hope of getting married?"

The old lady (so the story runs) shook her head, and made reply:

"Girls, you must ask some one older than I am." So with the orange tree.

At Cordova, that far-famed seat of ancient Moorish splendor and luxury, there are still remaining a number of monster orange trees, known to be seven hundred years old; their trunks are partly hollow, their bark cracked and rugged, and yet each year these doughty old giants yield up their seven and ten thousands of large, luscious golden balls, as though yet in the hey-day of their youth; and who knows? perhaps they are! Certainly, as yet, they show no intention of dying of old age, nor of retiring on half pay, nor of shirking the active business of their lives, and doubtless if one versed in their native tongue were to say to them:

"How old must an orange tree be before it ceases to bear?" they would shake their great, bushy heads and reply:

"You must ask older trees than we are."

Even in England, at Hampton Court, where the tree is raised only as a curiosity, and is carefully sheltered under glass, there are several, the register of whose birth bears date of over three hundred years ago.

So you see it is no rash assertion, this of ours, that no orange grove owner will live to see his trees cease to yield him an income, and a good one too, if he but treats them with moderate kindness, unless, indeed, some extraordinary extraneous cause supervenes to destroy them, such as fire or flood, which may be reckoned as among the impossibilities.

Before referring in detail to the mode of culture pur-

sued in Florida, in raising this justly celebrated fruit, a brief glance at its origin may not be amiss.

An earnest naturalist, Galessio, was the first to trace its history with any degree of authenticity, and the result of his careful researches he published to the world in his "*Traité du Citrus*," issued in Paris in the year 1811.

According to this author the Arabs, penetrating further into the interior of India than any foreign nation had done before, discovered the orange family flourishing there, and held in high esteem by the natives.

From this point the Arabs conveyed the sweet, now called China oranges, into Persia and Syria; and the bitter orange, now called the Seville, found its way into Arabia, Egypt, the North of Africa, and Spain. From these points the orange traveled into other countries, notably China, and in this latter empire it so flourished and spread far and wide, that by and by it came to be a fiction believed in by Europeans that the orange was indigenous to China.

Galessio shows, however, that the so-called "China orange" is by no means a spontaneous production of that country, and his statement is further corroborated by the absence of all mention of this fruit in the exceedingly minute and circumstantial account given by the father of modern travelers, Marco Polo, of the productions of China.

The orange was not known to the ancients, either in Europe or Syria, and the palm of its introduction to the world must be accorded to the Arabians, whose anxiety for the extension of medical and agricultural knowledge was almost equal to their zeal for the propagation of the Koran.

The sweet orange which they carried to Spain spread thence into Portugal, Sicily, St. Michael, and the Mediterranean islands, and the West Indies.

In each and all of these various places has the difference

in climate and soil produced varieties and changes in the characteristics of the original common stock, so that in these days the Sicily, St. Michael, Maltese, Havana, and a great number of others are well-known and established varieties of this noble fruit. To suppose, as many do, that the orange is a spontaneous production of the soil of the New World is to make a great mistake; only where the early Spanish or Portuguese landed and penetrated into the country is the wild orange of America to be found.

On the banks of the Rio Cedeno, in the midst of a great forest, Humboldt, to his amazement, came upon a broad belt of wild orange trees, laden with large, sweet, and most delicious fruit. "Surely these must then be indigenous to the soil," he thought; but subsequent inquiry led to the discovery that those grand old trees had once formed a portion of extensive groves planted by the Indians from seeds obtained from their early Spanish visitors and conquerors. And to this same source does Florida owe her beautiful wild groves; only here, whether by the accident of soil or seed, the wild fruit is sour not sweet.

Ponce de Leon and his successors, but most of all the unfortunate French colony, barbarously massacred by cruel Menendez, "not as Frenchmen but as Lutherans," were directly instrumental in introducing into the "Land of Flowers" the noble fruit that is rapidly becoming the chief source of wealth and happiness to its adopted home. Briefly, the orange is not a native but a naturalized citizen of the United States.

Looking back only a few years from our present point of enlightenment as to the inestimable value of this once neglected tree, it is very hard to understand how it is that the native Floridian did not long ago wake up to the realization of the wealth within his grasp, of the golden apple lying neglected at his feet. And yet there were, it is true,

several causes conducing to perpetuate this strange blindness. For one thing, Florida, though it contains within its borders the oldest city by forty years in the United States, has ever been, owing to a conjunction of circumstances, one of the least known and most sparsely settled of them all; owned first by one European power, then by another, before finally passing into the Federal States; torn and distracted by Indian wars and raids, and lying in a remote corner of the Union, completely out of the general line of travel, it is not to be wondered at that Florida was, except to a very few, a sealed book. It is true that there were a few intelligent, wide-awake Southerners who held the orange at an approximate to its true value, but these men were content to set out and cultivate their trees on a comparatively small scale, and they never penetrated further into the country than the St. John's River and St. Augustine, where, too often, a severe frost would injure the tender trees and discourage their owners.

Beyond the points just mentioned few settlers were to be found, and those few were, almost to a man, of a low and ignorant class; men who were satisfied to saunter lazily through their days, existing on "pork and hominy," or whatever else was "easy to grow, and could take care of itself," in which category were included vast herds of cattle, which ever and anon they drove to the nearest sea-port for shipment to the West Indies. To such as these the luscious sweet orange of Europe, so well known in the Northern States, was a boon unknown and undreamed of; they knew, it is true, that, scattered over the central and southern portions of Florida, were wild groves of beautiful trees, bearing a large, yellow fruit, but that fruit was exceedingly bitter and sour, and held by them in no esteem.

It was not until our unhappy civil war had come to a

close, and the *ancien regime* was broken up, that a new people began to press beyond the borders of Florida, bringing in their midst the commencement of a new era in its hitherto stagnant civilization.

Even then it was some time before the attention of these new-comers was drawn to the capabilities of the wild sour orange groves scattered all around them in the rich hammock lands, and the first bold pioneer who ventured to experiment upon their true value, met, as is usual in such cases, with no encouragement from his neighbors, but rather determined opposition and ridicule.

A case, in illustration, was related to the writer recently by a neighbor, a lady who is now the proud owner of several fine bearing groves: Fourteen years ago she removed with her family from the northern part of the State down into the "Great Lake Region," and "Orange Center," building a home in the piny woods for the sake of health. The want of shade was at once apparent; to supply this *desideratum* several large sour orange trees were transplanted from a wild grove near by. They flourished exceedingly well, but their fruit was allowed to rot upon the ground uncared for. One day there came a stranger, who argued so eloquently upon the great gain to be obtained by cutting their tops off, and inserting buds from a sweet orange in their trunks, that, sorely against the will of our informant, her husband proceeded to follow the stranger's advice. "I scolded and cried, and cried and scolded," she said, "but it was of no use; the tops of those splendid trees were sawed off, and the little green sticks the stranger gave us were put into the bark of the poor bare trunk. In a few months, seeing how fast the buds were growing, I began to think perhaps there was some truth in the stranger's words, and in three years, when I saw a fine crop of splendid oranges, the sweetest I had ever tasted, I

blessed the stranger, and thanked my husband for cutting off the tops. We succeeded, some time after, in getting a few sweet oranges from New Orleans, and planted the seed, and some of our neighbors did the same; we also budded a few more sour stumps. But even then none of us ever dreamed of making a business of raising oranges to sell. We knew so little of the North, and were so shut out from the busy world, that it has only been within the last eight or ten years that our people have really waked up and begun to plant out groves in earnest."

Having thus endeavored to show why this great industry of the future has lain so long in abeyance in a land where all the essentials of its pursuit, even to the wild fruit itself, have existed ever since its earliest settlement, we will pass at once to the practical details of orange culture.

At the very outset the Florida orange grower labors under a disadvantage; his business is a new one, and consequently he is, to a considerable extent, dependent on a series of experiments. The new-comer finds but a limited store-house from which to draw his practical information; his neighbors have bought and are still buying their own experience, and he must do the same in a great measure, for the points in orange culture on which all growers agree are very few. How can it be otherwise with an industry which is only in its infancy?

The oldest orange trees in Florida are but babies, as it were, and comparatively few, out of the thousands of groves set out, have even as yet reached the age of maturity; it will be many years still before orange culture will have reached the perfection of a science, as has the culture of the older orchard fruits of the North.

We are apt, at a distance, to associate poetry and romance with the very name of an orange grove, but when one sets to work in earnest to "make" one for himself, the

cold, stern facts that ever beset the business life of man come to the surface, and he learns that some money, more time and labor, muscle, patience, and perseverance are necessary before his embryo grove becomes self-sustaining.

It is not play to plant and conduct an orange grove from infancy to bearing and paying maturity, and it is because the idea that it is all play, all "fun," to "make a grove" has been so prevalent, that there have been so many disappointments, so many discontents returning to the North with the report that "orange groves are humbugs."

The more thoroughly the incoming settler realizes that orange and other fruit growing is a regular business, requiring, like other business pursuits, the investment of more or less capital, and a good deal of care, time, judgment, and perseverance—the more thoroughly he realizes this, we say, the better prepared he will be to meet and conquer the various vicissitudes and drawbacks that are sure to occur during the long years of work and waiting that must be encountered before he can sit down at last for the rest of his life in the enjoyment of a good and steadily increasing income.

Far be it from our wish to discourage the would-be orange grower, rather would we urge him who seeks health and competence, aye, more, wealth, to come to Florida and make unto himself a "Fortunatus' purse" of the golden orange, but we would have him come realizing that here, as elsewhere, the great law of nature, which decrees that nothing that is worth the having can be obtained without toil and patience, is in full operation.

So many have come to Florida full of enthusiasm, full of the idea that it was only necessary to stick the trees in the ground, any where and anyhow, and then sit with their hands in their pockets, as it were, for a year or two, in order to reap a full grown fortune, that we feel it our

bounden duty to give full warning that though an orange grove is a glorious thing to own, and will give its possessor competence and wealth, it is not to be obtained without time, labor, and patience, or their equivalent in money. The latter, when the settler is fortunate enough to be able to purchase a grove ready made.

And right here is another point to which we would call attention:

We often hear complaints of the "high prices" asked for bearing groves; now, these so-called high prices are, as a rule, very low prices in reality, when one stops to consider the years of toil and care and perseverance that have gone to "make" each grove, through all the time of their slow growth; not only so, but what of the actual money value of said grove?

Why does the would-be purchaser want to buy?

Because he expects a good income from his grove? Exactly so. And now we will ask one more question:

If he went to an office where annuities were sold, would he expect to purchase an annuity, annually increasing in amount, for a mere nothing? Scarcely!

Yet that is just what these men who are not willing to pay a fair price for an orange grove are seeking to do.