

Reflections of a Fruit Grower

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Sometimes I think of the trees and the forest when I consider the American Pomological Society.

Were I an artist, I might try to depict a forest scene remembered from my childhood, a scene that greeted my eyes every morning when I awoke to look out of my upstairs bedroom window across the top of the orchard to the woods beyond, where amidst a thrifty, well-spaced grove, one old patriarch oak reared its head to the sky; its massive trunk topped in Summer by a widespread crown of leafy branches upon whose pinnacle an eagle sometimes perched, his white head glistening in the morning sun. Or, in Winter twilight, its bare framework silhouetted above the surrounding tree tops. To its side stood a more youthful companion; tall, straight, slender, a handsome offspring.

Often as a boy I would go to visit those oak trees. As I walked through the orchard, I could catch an occasional glimpse of their lofty tops. But once in the woods, I had to hunt to find them, for there only the straight boles were visible, and they disappeared among the leafy bower overhead.

In more recent years, I have come to liken that old oak tree to the American Pomological Society; its offspring, to the American Society for Horticultural Science, and the lesser trees to the state and district horticultural societies.

We, as growers and members, have our meeting in this grove, to partake of the fruits thereof and to enjoy and benefit from the companionship its sheltering branches afford.

Like the squirrels in the forest of my childhood, we are of two kinds; the ground squirrels and the red squirrels. The former scurry about picking the berries, and the fruits and the nuts they find on the ground. And even though they are probably just as righteous and happy as the latter, it is doubtful whether they know where much of their repast comes from. The red squirrels, on the other hand, have climbed those tall trunks and clipped the acorns from their topmost branches. They know from whence their blessings flow.

We need not concern ourselves about Mother Nature's ground squirrels and their earth-bound existence but we, as members of the American Pomological Society, owe it to ourselves and to our fellow horticulturists to teach them where these acorns come from; for they, unlike the ground squirrels, can learn to climb, and climbing, they will find that not only are there acorns for all, but the more that climb, the more acorns there will be for the picking.

Many years ago, I first joined the American Pomological Society because an old fruit-growing friend recommended it to me as "a good thing". I was only mildly impressed at first, and for a good many years my membership was a sort of "off again, on again" proposition.

Finally there came a time when I started to analyze what I was getting for my money, and when I got around to the American Pomological Society and dug out the facts, I just settled for a life membership.