For Home Garden and Farm

How Al Nevraumont, a San Francisco Boy, Built Up the California Seed Company by Capitalizing Energy and Experience

Not so many years ago a scientific explorer rummaging among the ancient tombs of Egypt unearthed a collection of wheat seeds. These little grains had lain in their resting place beside the body of one of the great Pharaohs in a sarcophagus for some thirty-six hundred years.

Yet they appeared well preserved and not so different from wheat seeds today. One of the archaeologists suggested that they be planted, to see whether they would grow or not after such an enormous lapse of time.

This was done, and, marvelous to behold, the tiny wheat seeds, that were probably waving in the breeze as some green plant when the giant redwoods of Mariposa were saplings, germinated and sprang to life as if they had just been gathered as the last harvest. The little grains that were picked before Moses came down from Mt. Sinai, that had already been buried for centuries when Cleopatra threw away an empire for love of Antony, were now growing as if millenniums had been nothing to them.

"Mankind, lauding their own works, speak of the wonders of the world, and instance the Pyramids as an example of marvelous achievement. But place a little grain of wheat beside the majestic monument of Cheops, and the little seed is a greater wonder than the studeadous stone structure towering to the clouds.

"For the little seed carries within its infinitesimal circumference generations upon generations of its own kind. It is imprisoned sunlight, it is stored energy, it is the miracle of life! It represents not only a plant, it embodies wheat, it symbolizes the food of millions. Upon it has depended the fate of empires. Wipe out all the little grains of wheat from the world and famine would stalk abroad, decimating the ranks of humanity. Our whole civilization would crash about our ears like a house of cards, while cultured man, famished by hunger, would return to the jungle age of tooth and claw.

"This is why the tiny grain of wheat is a greater marvel than the Pyramids; why the sublimest works of man shrink into insignificance before a simple little seed, holding within itself the mystery of life. Science can explain the Pyramids from base to summit, but the grain of wheat is beyond it, a masterpiece whose mechanism is forever unknown.

IMPORTANCE OF SEEDS IN PLAN OF CREATION

The importance of seeds in the plan of creation was well illustrated during the war, when Al J. Nevraumont, president of the California Seed Company, appeared before the draft board and asked that one of his men be exempted on the ground that he was engaged in an essential industry. The man's services were invaluable, and were required in a very critical time, as never had there been such a demand for seeds.

The chairman of the draft board objected strenuously to the exemption, fearing that the seed business was an essential industry, and saying very testily: "Why, what are seeds? Anybody can tend to them. The public doesn't need them as bad as that. Seeds are not as important just now as men for the Army."

"You think so? You are wrong!" warmly replied Al Nevraumont. "Let me tell you that the winning of the war largely depends upon seeds. If we don't have the proper seeds we are not going to have the proper harvests, and without harvests the armies cannot be supplied with food."

"Not only that," continued the president of the California Seed Company, "the very coat you have on your back, the hat you are wearing, the shoes on your feet, the dinner you ate last night, and on which your life and work depend; the tea and coffee you drink, the house you live in—all come from seeds. Getting the proper seeds is of the first importance in this war. It requires skill and expert knowledge, which take years to learn. Europe depends upon America to feed starving millions, and if we are to have crops you must have seedmen. I am not merely a seedman—I am a dealer in unborn life and must have my man."

It is needless to say the draft board gave Nevraumont his man.

BUILDING BUSINESS OUT OF NOTHING

The California Seed Company, which is now doing one of the most extensive seed and plant businesses in the West, is entirely the creation of Al Nevraumont, a San Francisco boy, since the fire of 1906. It was built up out of nothing but the energy, skill and expert agricultural knowledge of Al Nevraumont. Before the great disaster Nevraumont had been

From the very start he began to make money, as he had retained a large clientele who knew his reliability and knowledge before the fire. As his trade extended he organized the California Seed Company, located at 151 Market street, of which he is the president. A large part of his business has been built up from the fact that besides being a seller of seeds, he is also an expert adviser on farms, orchards, and agricultural development. He has specialized on fruit trees, and knows the best methods of planting, grafting and caring for young trees before reaching the bearing stage.

A large part of the business of the California Seed company therefore is to advise farmers as to what kind of crops to raise on particular soils, especially beginners who are unfamiliar with their land and the accompanying climatic conditions. Any farmer who desires to know just what to plant in certain localities may consult the California Seed Company, and expert advice will be freely given as to the best crops to raise.

CALIFORNIA HAS THE WORLD BEATEN

In the opinion of Al Nevraumont, California has the world beaten on seed production. The Golden State has not only the best soil, climate and water conditions for growing seeds, but it has the best scientific methods of selection, so that the results attained are attracting the attention of the whole agricultural world. Already California is the greatest producer in many lines of flowers and vegetable seeds.

The constant aim of California growers is not quantity but quality production, is to select and grow from the choicest varieties, and this method long pursued has given California a front rank in the excellence of its seeds the world over. Orders are now pouring into California from the remotest parts of the globe for California seeds on account of their reputation for superiority.

The California Seed Company does a large part of the export business of California seeds, a trade based alone upon high quality of product. Only the other day Al Nevraumont received an extensive order from India for a shipment of plants and seeds. The California Seed Company ships seeds and plants to South America, to Mexico, Guatemala and as far south as Chile. About seven years ago Nevraumont sold some apple trees to a Chinese in Chefoo, and only recently was surprised to receive a package of rosy Gravensteins from China, showing how well his plants have done. Nevraumont also has a contract to supply seed to the Chinese Agricultural Experimental Station at Peking, China. Only a week ago Nevraumont received a letter from the King of Siam, saying his seeds give better satisfaction and results than from any purchased elsewhere.

SUPPLYING SEED TO PACKING COMPANY

What shows Nevraumont's success in buisness more than anything else, and what constitutes the greatest feather in the cap of the California Seed Company, is the contract which it holds to grow seed for the California Packing Company, one of the largest consumers in the country. The California Packing Corporation has the largest output of canned vegetables and fruits of any similar organization in the West.

The policy of the California Packing Company is to obtain the best vegetables and fruits for their products, and for this reason it contracts with the farmers direct, supplying the seed to insure quality. For instance, if the company wants to put up a thousand barrels of small pickled cucumbers it will calculate the production per acre and enter into a contract with different farmers to produce just the requisite sizes and quality, furnishing the seed for the purpose. The California Seed Company handles this business for the Packing Company, whether it be tomatoes, string beans, cucumbers or peas.

The California Seed Company specialises in high-grade fertilizers, of which it has a number of varieties, each having some peculiar advantage, according to the requirements of the various plants.

Some plants require an abundance of certain kinds of elements like nitrogen and others demand only a mild stimulation in the way of food. Grasses, for instance, require a very heavy fertilizer, rich in nitrogenous elements, and the California Seed Company in the Gold Bear Fertilizer has a food that makes grasses grow like magic.

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