

Riverside

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by Susie Champney Clark,
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RIVERSIDE

PASADENA has a twin, and her name is Riverside. They are both "in verdure clad" right royally, and possess many attributes in common, resembling each other more closely perhaps in age, in rapid growth, and many minor characteristics than any other two cities of California. Pasadena is much the larger place; and while conceding to it a superior situation, a beauty of adornment, and a home-like charm found nowhere else, we must grant to Riverside the palm of fruit-culture. The acme of orange-fruitage is certainly attained here, both in extent and in quality. The orchards are indeed "groves," the trees being so large and full as to completely overshadow and hide the residences, which we know exist somewhere in their green depths.

Riverside is situated in San Bernardino County, seven miles from Colton. This county, by the way, is the largest in the United States. Within its borders fifteen States the size of "little Rhody" could be placed without crowding. The Santa [p.49] Ana river runs through the neighborhood, hence the name--Riverside--chosen for the settlement in 1871, when the gigantic scheme for irrigation was begun. The soil of Riverside is a red clay mixed with sand--washed probably from the mountain, --a most unpromising, sterile-looking soil, but needing evidently only a little scratching and a plentiful supply of water to prove itself especially adapted to fruits of all kinds. Energetic labor was not lacking in the early settlers of this happily chosen locality, and their canal system of irrigation challenges the admiration of every visitor. The river above the town was tapped, and two cemented canals constructed, twelve and fourteen miles long, ten to twenty feet wide, from which sub-canals (100 miles of them) surround every block, with gateways through which the water can be admitted to the grounds from the main artery, at pleasure.

Water is never allowed at the immediate base of an orange tree. Furrows are ploughed five or six feet from the trunk of each tree, and two or three feet apart, making perhaps three furrows between each row of trees, these furrows all connecting with each other throughout the grove, for miles in length, so that when the water is admitted from the outer surrounding channel, as it is once in thirty days during the summer, it flows gently round in little rills, where it can be [p.50] best appropriated by the young rootlets. The system is perfect, and the results correspondingly rich. Over 900 car-loads of golden fruit were shipped from Riverside last year, and it is expected the crop will reach 1,200 car-loads this season.

Lemons, olives, apricots, and pomegranates are also extensively grown, and raisin culture is an important feature of Riverside industry, a quarter of a million dollars accruing last year from this product alone, which is of a quality to compete most favorably with foreign importations. The White Muscat grape is cultivated for this purpose, and if the printer renders the word Mascot, the mistake would not be a bad one, for such it has proved to many a lucky owner. The vines are planted about three feet apart, giving 660 vines to the acre, they are trimmed back to the dry stump each fall, and require comparatively little care. After the grapes are picked they are spread, while still in the field, in so-called sweat-boxes, though they do not really sweat. The moisture of the grape permeates the mass, softening the stems, and after two or three days they are sorted into three different grades of excellence, dried, winnowed, and packed; and most interesting is it to watch one or two hundred girls, with deft

fingers arranging the layers in boxes ready for shipment.

Riverside is some seven miles long and two or [p.51] three miles wide. It abounds in enticing walks and shady drives, the perennially green pepper trees drooping in graceful arches everywhere. Each block contains two and a half acres, near the centre of which the resident rears his home, and sitting there on his pleasant veranda allows the sun to do his work for him, or waits for its golden beams to be absorbed by the numberless trees around him, until they hang with golden balls and his good fortune is assured. Less attention is given here to floral embellishment than at Pasadena, although pretty gardens are very numerous, and masses of verbenas often border the curbstones. We notice another peculiarity of this California atmosphere. It not only fails to retain the briny odor of the sea, but does not readily transmit the fragrance of flowers. A certain gauge of humidity, or density of the air seems necessary to encourage this subtle floral charm. How intoxicating in our New England gardens is the sweet breath of even one heliotrope, or one stalk of tuberose! Here one has to approach the lusty growth and mammoth petals closely to invite their familiar fragrance. Tuberoses grow on and on, at their own sweet will; as soon as the flowers of one bulb have passed, another stalk springs up to take its place.

The show-card of Riverside is of course Magnolia Avenue, the finest drive it is claimed in the [p.52] world. To reach it, however, a drive of three miles from our pleasant quarters at the Glenwood is necessary. Back of Riverside as at Pasadena is an arroyo, or valley, 40 feet deep and a quarter of a mile wide. Crossing this, we reach a portion of the town known as Brockton square, because its residents are all natives of that thriving city of Mass. Next comes a strip of Government land, a mile wide, and then the tract named by some New York investors, Arlington, through which the beautiful avenue runs. Its width of 132 feet is divided into a double drive by a magnificent continuous row of pepper-trees through its centre. On either side, and between the drives and the 20 feet wide promenades, is a varied growth of trees and palms, evergreens, the eucalyptus, which unless trimmed grows 8 to 15 feet in height every year, the beautiful gravilia, and at the four corners of each intersecting avenue, a magnolia tree. Extend this vista, flecked with its enchanting lights and shades, its sunbeams crossed by waving branches, for ten miles. Imagine on its outer borders a thick green hedge which encloses residences that here find frontage, or orange groves that are simply endless in every direction, their glossy green boughs weighed down with their wealth of ripened fruit, and one can readily believe it all seems too lovely to be true, like an illusion of some magician's wand.[p.53]

Yet a few miles away, overlooking this valley, rise the San Bernardino mountains which mark the boundary line between fertility and sterility. Janus-like they stand, looking down on one side upon all this verdure and wonderful productiveness, on the other side upon 23,000 square miles of desert waste stretching eastward and northward in alkaline plains, sulphur deposits, and arid barren sands.

"Lo, these are parts of His ways; but the thunder of His power, who can understand? He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection." [p.54]