

# Imperial Dress

AND FARMER.

"Water is King—Here is its Kingdom."

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## THE DATE PALM.

RELIABLE INFORMATION CONCERNING THE DATE, FURNISHED BY THE U. S. GOVERNMENT.

The Agricultural Department at Washington has recently published a pamphlet on "The Date Palm and Its Culture," by Walter T. Swingle, Agricultural Explorer, Section of Seed and Plant Introduction, from which we take extracts that will be of great interest to those who have interests in the Imperial Settlements, as this section of the United States is pointed out as being the great date country of the future so far as the United States is concerned.

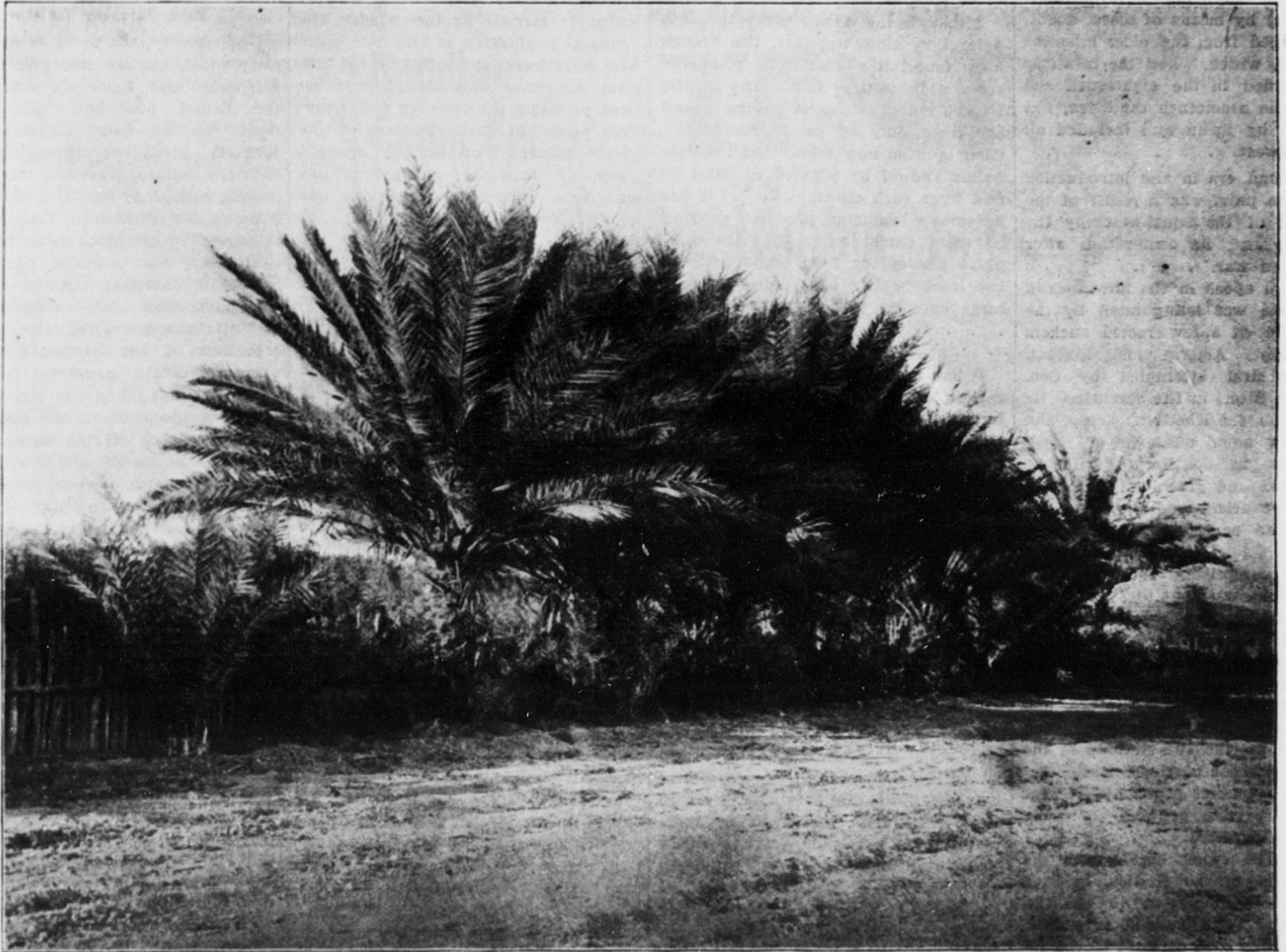
The date palm was one of the first plants to be cultivated, it having been grown for more than four thousand years along the Euphrates River. It has been for ages, and is

ed in the United States alone averaged for the ten years ending June 30, 1900, \$402,762 per annum, as appraised at the exporting points. The real value when received at the

erly. It would be, however, a very expensive method of culture to irrigate and cultivate such a large proportion of male trees. The Arabs—and before them the Assyrians—learned to pollinate the palm artificially, and from a small proportion of male trees to fertilize the flowers of a very great number of female trees. At the present time the proportion followed in planting is that of about one male tree to one hundred female trees.

The date palm flowers in the early spring, producing from six to twenty flower clusters, according to the age and vigor of the tree. Each flower cluster on the female tree produces a bunch of dates consisting of numerous fruits, borne on slender twigs, which branch from a main

her head in the burning sky." It is essential in order to avoid disappointment that these factors be kept in mind by all who attempt to cultivate date palms: First, the roots must have water; second, the leaves require a hot, dry atmosphere with abundant sunlight, if the plant is to mature dates of a good quality. Another essential requirement of the trees is that the winters be not too cold. The date palm is able to stand much more cold than an orange tree, for example, but not so much as a peach tree, and probably not even so much as a fig tree, which can sprout up from the roots if the twigs be killed by an unusually cold snap, whereas the date palm is usually killed if the terminal bud be frozen. . . .



DATE PALMS IN FULL BEARING AT HONLON HEADING ON THE LAND OWNED BY THE CALIFORNIA DEVELOPMENT COMPANY AS A HEADING FOR THE IMPERIAL CANAL SYSTEM ON THE COLORADO RIVER.

still, the most important food plant of the great deserts, and many regions in the Sahara and in Arabia would not be habitable were it not for this plant. . . . For centuries the transport of dates has been the chief motive for the formation of great caravan routes which run in every direction through the deserts of Asia and Africa. The exports of dates to Europe and to America has been and is still an important industry both in North Africa and in the countries belonging to the Persian Gulf. The value of the dates import-

American ports was doubtless 50 per cent. greater or \$600,000 a year, an amount now exceeded only by the imports of two other dried fruits—Zante currants and Smyrna figs. . . .

### Peculiarities of the Date.

Unlike most of the ordinary fruit trees, the date palm has the male and female flower on separate individuals. If grown from seed, about half of the resulting palms are male and about half female. If such trees be allowed to grow to maturity in this proportion enough pollen is blown by the wind to fertilize all the flowers prop-

stalk. Such a bunch may bear from 15 to 30 pounds of dates when ripe, and a vigorous tree is commonly allowed to produce from eight to twelve such bunches. . . .

### Needs Plenty of Water.

The date palm demands a fairly abundant and, above all, a constant supply of water at the roots; at the same time, it delights in a perfectly dry and very hot climate. A well-known Arabian proverb runs: "The date palm, the queen of trees, must have her feet in running water and

### Also No Rains.

In the Sahara no misfortune is more feared by the inhabitants than a heavy rain just as the fruit is ripening. Such a disaster may entail the loss of the entire crop if the rain is followed by a few days of cloudy and humid weather. . . .

### For Five Thousand Years.

It is probable that the date palm was first extensively grown in the valley of the Euphrates. It was apparently little known and but slightly esteemed in ancient Egypt before 3000 B. C., although as early as 2000 B. C.