



THE VITICULTURE

OF THE

CAPE COLONY.

LONDON: PRINTED BY EDWARD STANFORD,

26 & 27 COCKSPUR STREET, CHARING CROSS, S.W.

1893.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from

This project is made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services as administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education through the Office of Commonwealth Libraries

THE
VITICULTURE

OF THE

CAPE COLONY.

LONDON: PRINTED BY EDWARD STANFORD

26 & 27 COCKSPUR STREET, CHARING CROSS, S.W.

1893.

THE VITICULTURE

OF THE

CAPE COLONY.

THE vine was introduced into the Cape Colony as *Viticulture.* early as 1653, and, being found to flourish in a remarkable manner, large numbers of stocks were imported from the Rhenish Provinces, and extensive tracts of country in the Western Province laid out in vineyards. In 1685 numbers of the Huguenot refugees, expelled from France into Holland by the terms of the Edict of Nantes, were drafted thence into the Colony, and allotted farms in the Western Province. Many of them being skilled viticulturists, the industry from this date made rapid progress, so that in 1710 it was estimated that there were 2,729,300 vine-stocks in the Colony, producing 151,150 gallons of wine, a large proportion of which was shipped by the East Indian Company to its Indian settlements, and even to Europe.

The policy of encouraging the industry was continued by the English Government after the

Viticulture. cession of the Colony; and the low scale of duty imposed in England upon the import of Colonial wines placing the Cape at a great advantage as compared with the Continent, Cape wine was eagerly bought up at high prices for export to England, there to be used for the adulteration of the still more expensive Continental wines; and the inferior quality of the raw wines exported at this period is to a great extent to blame for the low estimate in which Cape wines are now generally but most unfairly held in the European markets.

The protection was, however, removed in 1860 by the terms of the Commercial Treaty with France, when Cape wine was actually placed on a disadvantageous footing as compared with the wine of that country in England. For Colonial wine made under the old system to arrive in England in sound condition required to be fortified to above the standard of 26 degrees, the limit of the 1s. per gallon duty, and falling under the 2s. 6d. duty of the higher tariff it was unable to compete in the market with the lighter Continental wines. Although frequent representations on the subject were made to the Home Government, it was deemed inadvisable to alter the scale, and hence we find that the export of Colonial wine fell from 1,000,000 gallons in 1859 to 50,000 in 1881. With the improvement of the process for making wine, this difficulty has now been removed, it

being found possible to ship light wines to England capable of competing with Continental wine, and the export has again risen to 91,000 gallons in 1891. *Viticulture.*

The Cape, owing to its favourable climate and fertile soil, is eminently the land of the vine, far excelling all other parts of the world in productive power and the quality of the juice of the grape; and this statement will be readily accepted when it is noted that the average yield is 190 gallons per 1000 vines, or in other words about 86 hectolitres per hectare, and in parts the yield per 1000 vines is as high as 835 gallons, making the astonishing return of 173 hectolitres per hectare.

The vineyards of the Colony, occupying an area of 26,800 acres, and producing 6,012,522 gallons of wine and 1,423,043 gallons of brandy, are chiefly situated in the south-western portion, but the area under cultivation is only a small part of that suitable for viticulture. The accompanying map shows the localities devoted to and available for viticulture.

Unfortunately, until very recently the methods adopted for making wine have been most primitive, and in very few cases have the wines so made been allowed to come to proper maturity.

To remedy this state of affairs, the Colonial Government in 1884 obtained the services of an expert viticulturist, and purchased the celebrated estate of Groot Constantia. There, under his

Viticulture. superintendence, the best method of growing and making wine upon improved European systems has since been carried out, and young wine farmers afforded opportunities to receive instruction, with the furtherance of which object Schools of Agriculture have also been established at several centres.

Annual wine shows are moreover held, at which special prizes are offered by the Government for wines made under the new systems; and the healthy stimulus thus given, and the keen competition created among the principal wine farmers is causing year by year a marked improvement in the quality of the exhibits.

Wines. The principal varieties of wines produced from grapes grown in the Colony are :—

I. LIGHT WHITE WINES.

(*a*) Green Grape.—A very fair light Hock is produced in the largest quantity, this species being the most hardy and generally grown of Colonial grapes.

(*b*) Steen Wine.—A very delicate wine, which might readily be utilised for making Champagne.

(*c*) White Hermitage.—An excellent light Hock.

(*d*) Sauvignon Blanc.—A light wine produced from the grape of that name, and from which Sauterne is made in France.

II. LIGHT RED WINE.

(a) Hermitage.—A light Claret of excellent *Wines*, quality.

(b) Cabernet du Sauvignon.—Also a fair Claret.

III. SWEET OR DESSERT WINES.

(1) *White*.

(a) Haanepoot.—A delicate sweet wine with strong bouquet.

(b) White Muscadel.—A heavy sweet wine.

(2) *Red*.

(a) Pontac.—A fine dark wine, with rich colouring and strong astringent, used principally for blending with other wine. Blended with Muscadel wine it ages into a very good Port wine.

(b) Red Muscadel.—Heavy sweet wine, such as the well-known Sweet Constantia.

(c) Frontignac.—A very superior sweet wine.

The bulk of the brandy at the present time distilled in the Cape Colony being prepared for native consumption, is of the inferior quality which is most in demand, and the high price hitherto obtained for the raw article removes all incentive to the farmer to attempt to any extent the production of a superior quality suitable for export. The Legislature of the Colony, recognising the *Brandy*.

Brandy. great evil resulting from the abnormal consumption of spirits by the coloured population, has endeavoured to frame laws to check the sale, and in time no doubt the demand from this source will be very much lessened, and the producer be compelled to prepare a superior article in order to command a market elsewhere. That a superior quality of brandy can be produced has conclusively been proved. Trials which have been made with French stills have met with great success, the brandy obtained being quite equal to superior French Cognac.

Prizes are now offered at the agricultural shows, and it is confidently hoped that at no very distant date the quality of brandy generally produced will have attained the high excellence and purity which would naturally be expected owing to the superiority and abundance of the Colonial grape.

Raisins. Large quantities of grapes are converted into raisins, 2,599,147 lb. weight having been produced during the year 1891, principally in the divisions of Worcester, Robertson, Ondtshoorn, Paarl, and Ladysmith. The grape chiefly used and most suitable for this purpose is the Muscat or Haanepoot, a luscious and fleshy grape of large size, with a very thick skin. This branch of the industry is also strongly encouraged by the Government, under whose auspices shows are held at which the very fine quality of the exhibits is a marked feature.

On account of its greater distance and the consequent heavy charges which have to be incurred for freight, this Colony is not able to compete with the Mediterranean raisins in the European markets. In former years large shipments were made to the Australian Colonies, but the prohibitive import duty now levied there has entirely closed that market to this Colony. The raisins now produced are accordingly entirely for home consumption, but the industry is capable of much further development.

RETURN SHOWING THE NUMBER OF VINE-STOCKS IN EACH OF THE PROVINCES OF THE CAPE COLONY.

Province.	Vine-stocks.				Total.
	Haanepoot (Muscat).	Red Wine.	All other.		
Western	5,323,147	5,326,660	31,849,752		42,499,599
North-Western	9,620,044	5,557,233	11,642,443		26,819,720
South-Western	2,276,272	1,035,413	5,055,323		8,367,008
Midland	233,799	183,787	178,067		595,653
South-Eastern	28,757	31,800	81,907		142,464
North-Eastern	24,087	10,800	64,898		99,785
Eastern	2,171	560	16,689		19,420
Grigqualand West	12,516	1,842	16,157		30,515
Total	17,520,793	12,148,095	48,905,236		78,574,124

TABLE SHOWING THE NUMBER OF GALLONS OF WINE PRODUCED
IN THE SEVERAL PROVINCES OF THE CAPE COLONY DURING
THE YEAR 1891.

Name of Province.	Red Wine.	White Wine.
	gallons.	gallons
Western	601,994	3,992,864
North-Western	373,521	849,567
South-Western	70,583	121,624
Midland	1,719	328
South-Eastern	83	191
North-Eastern	—	42
Total	1,047,900	4,964,616

TABLE SHOWING THE NUMBER OF GALLONS OF BRANDY PRO-
DUCED IN THE SEVERAL PROVINCES OF THE CAPE COLONY
DURING THE YEAR 1891.

Name of Province.	Gallons of Brandy.
Western	324,926
North-Western	793,650
South-Western	278,225
Midland	22,862
South-Eastern	2,629
North-Eastern	634
Eastern	107
Griqualand West	10
Total	<u>1,423,043</u>

QUANTITIES AND DECLARED VALUE OF BRANDY AND WINE EXPORTED FROM THE CAPE COLONY
DURING THE YEARS 1882 TO 1891 INCLUSIVE.

	1882	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891
Brandy ..	Galls. 449	Galls. 3657	Galls. 2953	Galls. 4517	Galls. 10,018	Galls. 10,373	Galls. 16,647	Galls. 17,280	Galls. 7231	Galls. 8910
	£ 159	£ 1123	£ 884	£ 1074	£ 2403	£ 2173	£ 2833	£ 4062	£ 2557	£ 2237
Wine ..	Galls. 46,724	Galls. 121,852	Galls. 95,514	Galls. 92,065	Galls. 131,056	Galls. 100,823	Galls. 106,980	Galls. 111,310	Galls. 85,044	Galls. 91,932
	£ 11,658	£ 23,845	£ 17,701	£ 17,245	£ 23,426	£ 18,928	£ 19,477	£ 23,120	£ 19,537	£ 20,183
Total value, brandy and wine ..	11,817	24,968	18,585	18,319	25,829	21,101	22,310	27,182	22,094	22,420

CULTURE OF THE VINE.

[From 'The Agricultural Journal.']

It is always interesting to see ourselves as others see us; their verdict upon what they see may not always serve to increase our self-importance, but at any rate it will add something to our self-knowledge. Mons. Mouillefert, the accomplished director of the arboricultural school at Grignon, who visited this colony in 1889 to report upon the measures taken for the destruction of the phylloxera, has contributed to the *Revue de Géographie* a sketch of things at the Cape as they appeared to him, and by an evidently careful collation of documents, he has produced a remarkably good article on the Cape, with special reference to its productions. Perhaps the most immediately interesting portion is that upon viticulture, especially as this is a subject on which the author can speak with authority. We have therefore selected this part of the article for translation.

The culture of the vine in Cape Colony is very ancient, and probably dates from the arrival of the first settlers from Europe, that is to say, about

1652 to 1660. By the end of the eighteenth century it had already attained considerable importance, and at the period of my tour in 1889, I was so fortunate as to be shown vineyards whose date could, upon authentic documentary evidence, be traced back to 1709 and 1713. These were those of Messrs. Bosman and Minnaar respectively, of the Paarl.

The first varieties that were imported came from France and from the banks of the Rhine. No climate can be more favourable for the culture of the vine than that of the south-west portion of the Cape. The rains are sufficient in amount and favourably adjusted. The temperature, although rather high, is not such as to scorch the plant and its fruit. The accidents and maladies to which it is subject are not numerous, and with the exception of the phylloxera, it has but few enemies. Nevertheless, in spite of these favourable conditions, and the antiquity of the culture of this valuable plant, the viticultural area is far from having the extension which it might possibly take. The official returns of 1887 enumerated only seventy million stocks on 12,500 morgen of land, and this was almost entirely situated in the western part of the Colony—that is, in the districts of the Cape, Stellenbosch, Paarl, Wellington, Montagu, and Malmesbury. With exception of the centres where the vineyards form tolerably compact masses, sometimes of as much as 1000

hectares, they are scattered up and down among the farms, and occupy spaces of greater or less extent, say, from ten to thirty hectares on farms whose total extent is from 200 to 600 hectares. But despite this insignificant spread, it is nevertheless the vineyard which is the main element in the value of landed property. It would seem as if the other portions of the estate are only accessories to this culture, and under such conditions it is not easy to indicate precisely the value of the vineyard. Yet quotations are given of sales of viticultural property at 15,000 or even 20,000 francs the hectare, prices which are easily explicable by considering the large profit which this industry is capable of returning.

The varieties of the vine to be found in Cape vineyards are tolerably numerous, and are almost all of French origin, having been introduced by the Huguenots towards the close of the seventeenth century. The principal ones are :—

GREEN GRAPE OR GROEN DRUIF, which must be a sort of Chasselas with a greenish berry. It is very productive, and gives light white wines.

RIESLING.—A vine of Rhenish origin, equally productive with the former, and also giving a light wine.

STEEN GRAPE OR STEEN DRUIF.—Another Rhine variety, even more productive than the last, but giving a less valuable wine.

FRENCH GRAPE.—This seems to me to be the

Clairette of South France, or a nearly allied variety. It gives a pretty good white wine, having both body and delicacy.

HAANEPOOT.—A vigorous kind, producing very large clusters of grapes with a thick skin and a musky flavour. There are two varieties, white and rose-red. This vine, which must be the *Muscat of Alexandria*, was probably introduced by the first Dutch settlers. It produces dry wines of the sherry type, and sweet wines which are not without delicacy. The *Haanepoot* grapes are also made into raisins, besides they are sold as table fruit in the neighbouring towns, and are sent to the Eastern Province, and particularly to Kimberley. The mail steamers of the service between Europe and the Cape consume a large quantity of these grapes, for they can be served at table during the greatest part of the voyage. More than this, some experiments which have had a tolerable success justify the hope that this variety will soon make its appearance on the European market at the season of the year when the native fruit is absent.

SPENGLER.—This is a sort with large round berries, white, greyish, or tawny, and with a thick skin. I should not be surprised to find that this variety has originated in the graperies of North Europe, and is, in effect, a sort of Chasselas with large berries. It is often cultivated on trellises, and runs to a great length.

MUSCAT FRONTIGNAC (MUSCADEL).—Of this

there are two varieties, white and red. It is not very productive, but it gives a very sweet must, and, after fermentation, a highly alcoholic wine with a peculiarly musky flavour, distinctly recalling that of the wine produced from it in the Hérault. This wine is generally known as *Constantia*, from the name of the chief farm where it is produced.

TEINTURIER.—This sort of wine is originally from Central France and the Bordelais. At the Cape it is known under the name of *Pontac*. It is one of those that were earliest introduced, and at the Paarl I have seen vineyards of it dating from 1707. The wine is not only very deep in colour, but remarkable for its astringent taste, which causes it to be but little in demand for ordinary use. Nevertheless it keeps well, and has a distinct value in compounding. Excellent sweet wines are also made with the *Pontac* grape.

HERMITAGE.—This wine is the *Grosse Syrah*, originally from the valley of the Rhône, and is of comparatively recent introduction at the Cape. It produces handsome bunches of large juicy berries, which furnish the best table wine of the Colony. It is, besides, very productive, and is capable of turning to account soils that are situated on the slope and somewhat dry. Hence is it that because of these qualities the *Hermitage* has risen to considerable importance in a comparatively short time. It forms the main content of recent vineyards, and its value is sure to increase.

VARIOUS KINDS.—Here and there other European varieties are to be met with, such as the *Pineau de Bourgogne*, several kinds of *Chasselas*, the *Folle Blanche* of the Charente, the *Blanc de Gaillac* or *Mauzac*, and the *Cabernet Sauvignon* of the Gironde. The grounds of the Viticultural School at Constantia are particularly rich in varieties of vines, but there is too small a quantity of each to enable one properly to appreciate the quality of the wine that could be made from them. Yet I had the opportunity of tasting wine from the *Cabernet Sauvignon*, which seemed to me a fair success.

IMPORTANCE OF THE VITICULTURAL OUTPUT.—According to the official report of 1887, the statistics of vine products are as follows :—

			Francs.
Wines	..	253,632 hectolitres,	value 3,298,800
Brandies	..	62,948 „	„ 4,104,375
Raisins	..	90,600 kilogrammes	„ 63,500
			<hr/>
			7,466,675
			<hr/>

Hence we have a mean general production of 26 hectolitres per hectare, after having allowed about 3200 hectolitres for that which might have been obtained from the grapes converted into raisins. But at Montagu, Messrs. Malherbe and Du Toit's, I have seen a return of nearly 150 hectolitres, and the same at Mr. De Wet's at Robertson. It is true that these vineyards were under irrigation. In these same districts there

have been returns of 287 hectolitres from 10,000 vines, say about 180 hectolitres per hectare. From the above figures there works out for the wine an average price of 13 francs per hectolitre, and 65 francs per hectolitre for the brandy. As for the raisins, they sell at the rate of 70 centimes the kilo. It were well to add to these data the amount and value of the large quantity of grapes sold in the fresh state, but of this the documents furnish no account.*

SOIL OF THE VINEYARDS. — The soil of the vineyards at the Cape presents little variation; it lies almost invariably on silicious, quartzose, granitic, or silico-argillaceous strata. Lime is generally wanting. According to the analyses of Dr. Fischer, Secretary for Agriculture, some soils contain no more than 1 per cent. of lime, but in certain districts, Robertson and Montagu for example, where the surrounding mountains contain beds of tertiary limestone, this element appears in sufficient abundance. Phosphates also seem scarce in the viticultural soils of the Cape. Thus it is that in the areas where these two principal elements are wanting, or are scantily furnished, the production falls to a very low figure.

ESTABLISHMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF VINEYARDS.—At the Cape the vine is almost always

* In the above text the kilo is $2\frac{1}{2}$ lb. avordupois; the hectolitre, a small fraction over 22 gallons; the metre $39\frac{2}{3}$ inches nearly; and the hectare $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres nearly.

reproduced by cuttings. These, planted in damp soil towards the end of the winter or commencement of spring, that is to say, from July to the end of August, strike with great ease—thanks to the genial temperature of the country. The best vineyards are started after trenching the land with a spade, or ploughing to a depth of 40 or 45 centimetres. Those set out after simple digging have, as in Europe, no future before them. The planting takes place in lines 1 metre 5 centimetres apart. The method of managing the stocks is very much like that pursued in South France, that is to say, the vine is kept low with three or four branches, and a larger or smaller number of bearers. The pruning is equally short, leaving about two or three eyes, and is generally done twice.

Landed property, as is well known, is exclusively in the hands of the white population, either English or Dutch. All manual labour is done by the blacks, or the more or less mixed race.

On most farms the vines are manured with the dung arising from the ordinary working of the land year by year, or with compost. But such manure, dried out, scorched by the sun, and badly handled, has no great fertilising power. With the exception of bat guano, collected in certain local caves, and bird guano brought from some small islands on the coast, natural and chemical manures are as yet little used in the Colony.

PRESSING AND MAKING OF WINE.—The pressing

at the Cape generally begins about the end of February, and continues during the whole of the month of March; the exact period varying with the kind of product which is desired. If light table wines are wanted, the gathering commences early; if, on the contrary, sweet wines, like Constantia, are desired, the bunches are left almost to dry up as they hang. Three leading sorts of wine are made in the Colony: (1) Sweet wines, under the general name of Constantia; (2) dry white wines (*vins d'entrée*); (3) table wines. The sweet wines are commonly made from the white and red Frontignac and the red Haanepoot. For this purpose the grapes are allowed to become very ripe, almost to desiccation. The material is then placed in the vat, and moistened with must from the same sort of grape already undergoing fermentation. The mass is then left for two days. It is then drawn off into vats, where the fermentation continues slowly. It is reckoned that to produce a leaguer of this wine the quantity of grapes corresponding to five leaguers of ordinary wine must be taken. The price accordingly is proportionate, and these wines ultimately become perfectly exquisite and inimitable. The best known *cru* is that of Constantia, a farm formed in 1699 by Governor Van der Stell, and situate at the foot of Table Mountain. This has, some years ago, been purchased by the Government to form a Model Farm and School of Viticulture. The property

contains about twenty heetares of vines, and the soil is a silicious gravel, with argillaceous gravel in the substratum.

The second sort includes white wines, belonging to the large category of Madeira and South Spanish wines, particularly of the sherries, Alieante, and white ports. The chief sorts of grapes used to produce them are the Haanepoot and Museadel. When the wines have been well made they are exeellent, and may certainly eompete with the best of their kind in Madeira and Spanish sorts. If they were only better known they would form dangerous rivals to the true sherries, Madeiras, and ports. Generally speaking, they are worth, first hand, from 100 to 125 francs the hectolitre.

The best red table wine at the Cape is decidedly that which is obtained from the *Grosse Syrah*, a vine known in the Colony under the name of *Hermitage*. This product might eome elose to our South French and Algerian wines, but its quality depends greatly on the farm on which it is produced, the skill of the eultivator, and the mode of fabriation. Most frequently the grapes are left to ripen too long, the fermentation is too long continued, and the must lies on the husks too long, even so much as fifteen to twenty days. In addition, the fermentation is made in open vats, covered with nothing but hides, and with too little attention to eleanliness. Consequently the wine often has a disagreeeably bitter taste, and is far too

strong and too heating for use in this country. Nevertheless, now and then one finds an excellent sample; and it is certainly true that its high alcoholic strength enables it to travel, and to withstand the heat of summer. It is capable of great improvement by keeping, at least, if one may judge by the samples which I brought away from the farm at Constantia in 1889. For some years back attempts have been made at the same place to make wines of the Bordeaux and Burgundy type with the *Cabernet* and *Pineau* grapes. These have a fine flavour, and even bouquet, and if their delicacy and lightness could be improved, they would become good table wines.

Then there is the Pontac, made from the grapes of that name. It is a wine of very deep colour, and heavily loaded with tannin, which gives it an astringent and peculiar flavour, and limits its use considerably. By keeping it becomes cloudy and considerably milder, but it always remains decidedly heating.

With Haanepoot and Red Frontignac (Muscadell) port wines of strong bouquet are made. Finally, white table wines of a comparatively light character are made with Riesling, Steen, Green Grape, and Spengler, and these appear in commerce as "Still Hock" or "White Hermitage." But despite the progress recently made in their manufacture, they are still far too alcoholic and too heating for the climate.

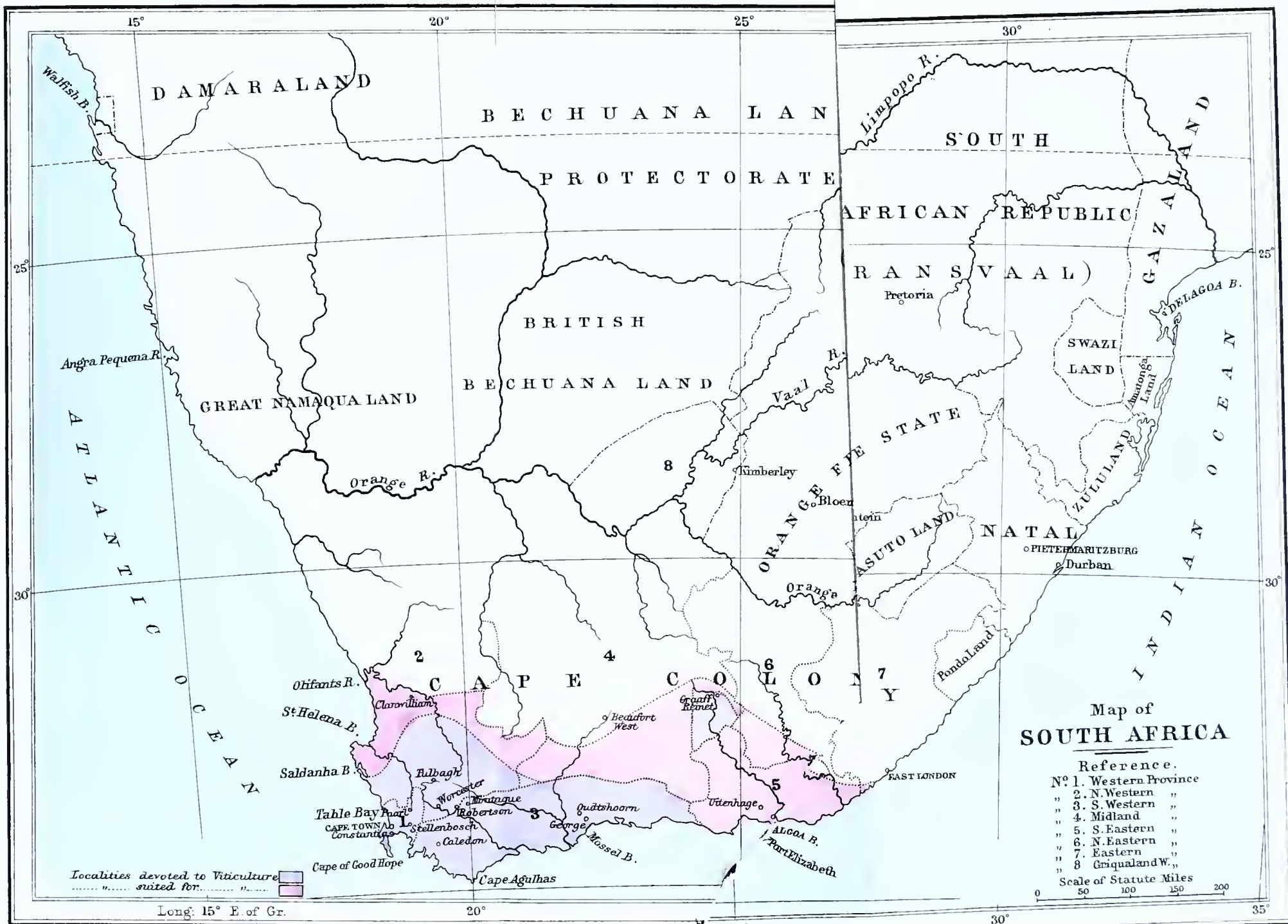
Two sorts of brandy are made at the Cape. First, a brandy from the husks, and of this the return is considerable. One leaguer of brandy at 65 degrees is expected from 10 of wine, and in some cases is obtained in the proportion of 1 to 5. Secondly, brandy obtained by distillation of spoiled or even of good wines in places with imperfect means of communication, with no market near, or where the transport would be too costly. The distillatory apparatus is of the rudest kind, and is reduced to the barest essential elements, every farm having its own. The brandy is of good quality when well made, and closely resembles our Armagnac.

Raisins are chiefly prepared in the districts that lie out of the way, and where means of communication are difficult. This is particularly the case in Robertson and Montagu. For this purpose the Haanepoot is chosen. The finest bunches are cut when quite ripe, then they are dipped in a hot ley of wood ashes, obtained by burning certain bushes. The immersion, which lasts only some minutes, is intended to harden the skin of the grape, to coagulate the albumen, and thereby to prevent alteration of the seed, and to facilitate desiccation. But the process sometimes leaves in the raisins a disagreeable alkaline flavour, and many farmers omit it altogether. The bunches, when withdrawn from the caldron, set up in the open air, are spread out on calico frames, or simply on straw.

Women are employed to turn them several times during the day, and to withdraw them as soon as they have become sufficiently dried. The hot, dry climate of the district is adapted to the industry.

To sum up: The viticulture of the Cape seems capable of a great future. To attain it, the viti- culturists have only to improve their modes of cultivation and of making their wines. Unfortunately the phylloxera made its appearance in 1886, and it is to be feared that, in spite of the energetic defensive measures employed against it, it will cause great destruction. Besides this, the oïdium and the anthracnose in some seasons do a considerable amount of harm, and require to be combated. The peronospora, fortunately, is as yet unknown in the Colony.

VITICULTURE



Map of SOUTH AFRICA

London: Edward S. Stanford

London: Stanford's Geogr. Estab.



