

Historical Notes on the Cape

Wine Industry

By Dr. A. I. PEROLD,

In our last Annual, Dr. A. I. Perold, Chief Wine and Scientific Expert to the Co-operative Wine Growers' Association of South Africa Limited, and late Professor of Viticulture and Oenology at the University of Stellenbosch, reviewed the Cape wine industry during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The following article, which is a continuation of this very interesting essay, gives the reader an insight into the state of viticulture during the nineteenth century. Dr. Perold will conclude this history at a later opportunity.

DURING the early days of the second British occupation of the Cape, the paper money then circulating in the country was of no value overseas, and merchants, in an endeavour to pay for imports from England, exported wine rather indiscriminately to this country. The result was frequently a low-grade quality which gave Cape wine a very bad reputation in Great Britain. In "Het Zuid Afrikaansche Tydschrift" of June, 1878, Dixon, Collison, Ebden, Vos and Rossouw are mentioned as Cape wine-merchants who at that time were very careful about the quality of the wine they exported. On p. 352 it makes mention of the fact that a whole consignment of Cape wine from the firm of Ebden was seized by the Customs officials in the London Docks as they swore that it could be nothing else but genuine Madeira.

On the same page it tells us that Mr. John Collison gave a big dinner at Stellenbosch on the 7th February, 1824, to those farmers who sold their wines to him. On this occasion he said *inter alia*: "I am of opinion that it cannot be repeated too often, that the wine farmer has to pay more attention to the **quality** than to the quantity of his product. I know that the merchants in this matter are as much to blame as the farmers, as many amongst them have paid one and the same price for all kinds of wine, so that the farmer had no encouragement to take trouble. This, however, is not my custom. I pay according to quality"

A great deal of your wine has latterly been put much too young on the British market, and consequently has such a bad reputation over there, that many people do not wish to touch it; but I hope the time is coming when this will be a thing of the past. When such good wines are sent from the Cape they will fetch prices in England which will satisfy both the merchant and the farmer. As far as it concerns myself this has already happened. It affords me great pleasure to be able to declare that the wines which I exported have been declared **excellent**; and I trust that the prices I paid have satisfied the farmers. The Colonial wines which thus far most closely approached perfection were Madeira and Hock. I have exported both and have received very favourable letters about them. To Mr. C. J. Briers I offer this cup for his improvement of Cape Madeira and to Mr. J. M. van Helsdingen I give this cup for his improved Cape Hock."

In order to improve the quality of the Cape wines and to promote their export to the British markets, Lord Charles Somerset, then Governor at the Cape, called a meeting of all those interested by issuing the following notice (quoted from "Records of the Cape Colony," by Dr. McCall Theal, Vol. xxv, p. 318):

GOVERNMENT NOTICE.

His Excellency the Governor being anxious to encourage Improvement in the Manufacture of Wines in this Colony by every available means: and the aid and assistance of Government having, from various quarters, been solicited in promoting this very important object, He considers it expedient to recommend, as a preparatory measure, that a Public Meeting should be called, of all persons interested in the Wine Trade of the Colony, with a view of forming a Committee, to superintend the Interests of all Parties concerned, and to propose such Measures as shall be considered most conducive to the attainment of the object in view:—The Committee to be formed of competent Individuals (who may be entitled to the confidence of the Public,) selected from each of the classes of Grower, Manufacturer and Merchant.

Notice is therefore hereby given, that a Public Meeting will be held, for this special purpose, on Thursday, the 26th instant, at which His Excellency proposes to be present; and His Excellency trusts that all Persons directly interested in the Wine Trade will attend.

The Gentlemen of the Committee of the Commercial Room having been so obliging as to give up the Commercial Hall on this occasion, the Meeting will be held in that Room, at 10 o'clock A.M.

Cape of Good Hope, 17th January, 1826.

By Command of His Excellency the Governor
(Signed) R. PLASKET,
Secretary to the Government.

Apart from the wine merchants and wine farmers who turned up in large numbers, the meeting was attended by the Governor, the Colonial Secretary (Sir Richard Plasket), the Imperial Commissioners who had recently arrived from England to enquire into the colonial administration, the Landdrosts of the Cape and Stellenbosch districts, the Agent of the Hon. East India Company in the Colony, and many other persons of rank. Lord Charles Somerset himself took the

chair and addressed the meeting. He considered it his duty to make a few remarks about the object of the meeting. He thought it would be a waste of time to show why every possible effort should be made to improve the quality and flavour of our wines, and suggested that a competent committee be appointed by the meeting to go fully into the matter. With this object in view he moved the following resolution:

"That a Committee be appointed, consisting of Gentlemen from all classes interested in the Wine Trade of the Colony, who shall be requested to inquire into every circumstance relative to the culture of the Vine—the manufacture of the Wine, together with its treatment up to the moment of exportation, and the age at which it is exported; with the view of ascertaining the cause of its not being of a better quality and flavour; and that the Select Committee be further requested to invite information from all Persons competent to afford it, to add to its numbers, and to appoint Sub-Committees (if considered expedient), and to suggest such measures to be adopted as may conduce to a general improvement in the wines of the Colony." (From the Records, Vol. xxv, p. 371.)

This was unanimously adopted. His Lordship then proposed Mr. Wm. Hawkins, Agent to the Hon. East India Company in the Colony, as Chairman of the Committee, especially as this gentleman had taken great trouble to procure a market for our wines in India. This being adopted, His Excellency proposed Mr. Polemann as honorary member of the Select Committee. He furthermore promised the Committee all possible support and undertook to make such representations to the Imperial Government as the Committee may deem necessary. He also mentioned that, having communicated with certain wine-farmers in the division of Stellenbosch, he had received reports from them which did infinite credit to themselves. As these documents might be of use to the Committee he would submit copies of them to it.

His Excellency then left the meeting, and Mr. Hawkins took the chair. The following resolutions were then adopted in order to give effect to His Excellency's resolution:

"Moved by the Hon. J. W. Stoll, and seconded by D. Dixon, Esq.:—That the following Gentlemen be nominated as Members of the Committee for the Cape District: Thomas Dreyer, Seb. van Reenen, P. M. Eksteen, M. van Helsdingen, Lieut. Mulder, Jacob Cloete, Wm. Duckitt, Frans Becker and Frederik Liesching.

Moved by D. J. van Ryneveld, Esq., and seconded by D. Dixon, Esq.: That the following Gentlemen be nominated as Members of the Committee for the Stellenbosch District: F. Roos J. son, J. P. Roux J. son, Dirk Cloete, J. A. Myburgh, Sr., J. R. Louw, C. J. Briers, Hendrik Vos, Andries Beyers W. D. Hoffman, P. Marais, F. Rossouw, B. son, P. van der Byl, Paul de Villiers, W. Louw, Abr. de Villiers (Klapmuts), P. H. de Villiers D. son, D. Hugo P. son, P. H. Morkel and C. P. Theron.

Moved by S. Twycross, Esq., and seconded by the Chairman,—That the following Gentlemen be nominated as Members of the Committee for Cape Town: D. Dixon, J. B. Ebden, F. Collison, G. Vos, J. Beck, P. Woutersen, Dr. Atherstone and S. Twycross."

It was further resolved,—"That a General Meeting of the Committee be held to-morrow, (this day), at 10 O'clock, at the Commercial Hall." Moved by D. Dixon, Esq., and seconded by J. Ingram, Esq.—"That Subscriptions be entered into to defray the expenses of such steps as the Committee may from time to time think necessary to adopt, and that they shall have power to elect their own Treasurer and Secretary."

Moved by D. Dixon, Esq., and seconded by J. Ingram, Esq.—"That the General Committee hold their sittings in Cape Town, but that they shall have power to form Sub-Committees in the different Wine Districts, in order the better to promulgate the best systems of Winemaking; and that the Sub-Committees shall communicate from time to time all such improvements or alterations as have been found to be advantageous." After several votes of thanks had been passed, the meeting dissolved. The above information about the meeting was obtained from Theal's "Records of the Cape Colony," Vol. xxv, pp 370-375.

Meetings of this Cape Wine Trade Committee were held every week in an office in the Commercial Exchange; a subscription list was opened to defray the Committee's expenses and within a couple of weeks 1,000 rixdollars had been subscribed; models of screw presses were made, of which one was approved of by the Stellenbosch sub-committee; copies of half-a-dozen works on wine-making in French and English were ordered; a large number of samples of wine and brandy was received and tasted in the Committee's office in Cape Town; it had wine made according to different methods by competent members of the Committee; it issued about 300 copies of a questionnaire with 60 questions bearing on the work that had been undertaken to the most prominent wine-growers of the neighbouring districts for reply.

In fact the Wine Committee of 1826 set about its task most seriously and thoroughly. Never before had wine merchants, wine-growers, officials and experts worked together in such harmony. Unfortunately the Committee never published any comprehensive report of its labours and the results obtained, and almost exactly a year after its appointment the Committee died a natural death.

In reply to the questionnaire sent out by the Wine Committee a number of replies were received, some of which I shall quote later in this article. Before doing this, however, I wish to refer to some other matters of great interest in connection with the export of Cape wine. In order to have a check on the quality of the wine exported, a Government Wine Taster was appointed. To-day the Government Viti-culturist acts in the same capacity. Amongst other things this Wine Taster had first to pass the casks used for the export of wine. As condemned casks were sometimes again offered for export, the then Governor, Sir John Cradock, issued a Proclamation on the 24th September, 1813, which directed that casks once disapproved of by the Wine Taster for export shall be marked "condemned," and any one effacing such mark shall be fined 100 Rx. per cask, also any one using a cask for export which has already been disapproved of by the Wine Taster shall be fined

500 Rx. per cask, or six months' imprisonment, casks also to be confiscated.

Prior to this, on the 10th January, 1812, instructions were issued for the Wine Taster together with Regulations about the obligation not to export wine from the Colony without having been examined and approved by the Wine Taster.

PROCLAMATION BY LORD CHARLES SOMERSET ON 20TH MARCH, 1818.

"Whereas from the liberal and beneficent encouragement which has been given to the importation of Cape Wines into Great Britain, the greatest advantage has already been derived to this rising Settlement, and a prospect has been opened (depending solely on the industry and integrity of the Wine Growers and Exporters for realization) of rendering the Wine Trade the Staple of this Colony, and the certain means of

its future wealth and prosperity . . . "This brings out the great importance attached to the wine industry in the economic life of the Cape Colony. The proclamation continues to point out that it had become "a prevalent practice to vend Wine in Casks, supposed to be Leaguer Casks, but which, upon measurement, do not contain the legal quantity of 152 Gallons, British Measure . . .," therefore the proclamation directs,

1. That henceforward every Cask of Wine, Brandy, or Vinegar, brought into Cape Town, shall be gauged on its passing the Market by a sworn and skilful Gauger, to be hereunto appointed by me, and that its contents shall be forthwith marked on the Cask, for the information of the Receiver or Purchaser;

2. In order to prevent misunderstanding among Purchasers and Sellers of Wine, etc., it is hereby made known, that the following quantities, British measure, are those, which shall henceforward be deemed to regulate all transactions in the Staple Trade, viz.

A Leaguer,	152 Gallons.
A Half Leaguer,	76 Gallons.
A Pipe,	110 "
A Half-Pipe,	55 "
An Aum,	38 "
A Half-Aum,	19 "

. . . . that a charge of One Rixdollar shall be made for the Gauge and Certificate of measurement of each Cask, of whatever denomination, passed through the Market;" ("Records of the Cape Colony," Vol. xxv, pp. 34-36.)

Whereas the old British Gallon referred to above, which to-day is still the American (U.S.A.) Gallon, was equal to 3.7853 litres, the present British Gallon which was introduced in 1826, is equal to 4.5436 litres, which means that 6 of the above gallons are equal to 5 of our present gallons. Consequently a leaguer now contains 127 gallons and a half-aum 16 gallons, being the nearest whole numbers to 126.2-3 and 15.5-6 respectively.

In a letter dated 25th July, 1825, Lord Charles Somerset informed Earl Bathurst that during the previous year 7,948½ leaguers of wine had been exported from the Cape, which means well over a million gallons. This was a much bigger proportion of the crop then produced than what we now export of our present crop. The bulk of the wine then exported was either of the Sherry or Madeira type. It would seem that the wine-farmers at that time did not get very much for their wine, for a Memorial from Winegrowers of Paarl and Drakenstein to the Council meeting held on 28th November, 1825, stated that the price of wine had fallen to 50 Rixdollars per leaguer (then £3 15s. 0d.) and in some cases even to 40 Rxd., and prayed for relief from the duty of 3 Rxd. payable for every cask of wine brought to Market and that of 1 Rxd. charged for gauging same.

In "Het Zuid-Afrikaansche Tijdschrift" of November, 1878, pp. 287-294, we find some of the answers sent to the questionnaire sent out by the Wine Committee of 1826. As they give us a good insight into

GOUVERNEMENTS ADVERTENTIE.

ZYNE Excellentie de Gouverneur begeerig zynde om alle verbeteringen in de behandeling van **WYNEN** in deze Kolonie, door alle mogelyke middelen aan te moedigen: en de hulp en bystand des Gouvernements, om dit belangryk doel te bevorderen, van verschillende kanten verzocht zynde, oordeelt Hy het noodzakelyk als een voorbereidenden maatregel, dat eene **PUBLIEKE VERGADERING** worde byeen geroepen van alle Personen die belang hebben in den **WYNHANDEL** der Kolonie, ten einde een Committee te formeren om te waken voor de belangen van alle daarin betrokkene partyen, en zulke maatregelen voor te slaan als verwacht worden de beste te zyn tot bereiking van het bedoelde oogmerk.—Het Committee moet gevormd worden uit daartoe geschikte Personen, (die het vertrouwen van het Publiek verdienen), gekozen uit elke der klassen van Wynboer, Bewerker en Koopman.

Er wordt daarom by deze kennis gegeven, dat eene **PUBLIEKE VERGADERING** tot dit byzonder einde zal worden gehouden op Donderdag den 26 dezer, welke Zyne Excellentie voornemens is by te wonen; en Zyne Excellentie vertrouwt dat alle die direct belang hebben in den Wynhandel, tegenwoordig zullen zyn. De Heeren van het Committee der Beurs zoo verplichtend geweest zynne hune Zaal voor deze gelegenheid aftestaan, zal de Vergadering worden gehouden in die Zaal, 's morgens ten 10 uren.

Kaap de Goede Hoop, 17 January 1826.

Ter Ordonnantie van Zyne Excellentie den Gouverneur;

(Get.)

R. PLASKET,
Gouvernements-Secretaris.

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the systems of wine-farming that existed at the Cape more than a century ago, I propose translating some portions of these replies out of the original Dutch.

From J. R. Louw, Paarl.

He stated that his vines grow partly on cool, yellowish soil mixed with sand and requiring a manuring every second year, that they can partly be irrigated, but that this is not done. The remainder is a black, level clay soil near the Berg River that can be irrigated, but that this has not yet been done. "The grapes ripen so evenly that they have to be harvested quickly before they dry up into raisins." His farm lies between the southern end of Paarl Mountain and the Berg River and faces east. Most of his vines consist of red and white Greengrape which are interplanted. He also has some vines of the Pontac, Stein, Hanepoot, White French and Muscadel varieties which are planted separately. In all he has 100,000 vines of which about 30,000 are fully 90 years old, the balance being from 20 years to 8 months old. "The old vines are planted 3 ft. x 3 ft. square, others 4 ft. x 4 ft. square, and those planted by myself are in rows 5 ft. apart east to west and 3 ft. apart north to south. I have not tried out seedlings. Planting the vines a good distance apart seems to improve the quality of the wine, but in the early years it is at the expense of the quantity when taking the area under vines into consideration. I dig my vineyards in August, if the manure can be brought into the soil earlier, say in May, it is a good thing (This is still a splendid thing on most soils to-day.—A.I.P.)—

that means every 3 to 5 or 8 years, according as one can gather little or much manure. On hot soil (i.e. where the grapes may easily get sun-burnt.—A.I.P.) sheep manure is harmful (A very true remark.—A.I.P.). The manure increases the quantity and has only a slight effect on the quality so long as the grapes only ripen well.

In moist soil I plant my vine-cuttings one foot deep in the soil and in dry soil two feet deep, and always leave two buds (eyes) above the ground. The best time for pruning is from the 15th June till the 31st of July. I keep five bearers each with two eyes (buds) and top until the canes are strong enough to resist the force of the wind—usually three times. I do not support the bunches, but prune the vines so that the bunches do not touch the ground. I do not pick any leaves, but remove the worthless shoots after the 15th of December, since the sap which after this date does not rise so freely, is otherwise received by these shoots to the detriment of the grapes. Removing these shoots therefore allows the grapes to ripen better and improves the wine.

My grapes ripen so evenly that a selection is rarely necessary. Where the vines get too much moisture, I pick those bunches last that hang near the ground, as the upper bunches ripen first. Here the removal of shoots is most necessary. Early in the morning I do my cellar work and allow grapes to be picked only after eight o'clock. I did not notice whether the quality of the wine is better the later in the day the grapes are picked, or whether the waxing or waning of the moon has any influence on it. My wine never turns sour and is always in great demand. The degree of ripeness of the grapes before being picked has never been sufficiently taken into account. My indications of ripeness are: white grapes fully yellow, red grapes properly sweet and some raisins. These are the best for ordinary dry wine. For sweet wine fully half the berries must have been dried to raisins; then the raisins must be crushed and fermented without the stalks until the fleshy parts have been dissolved. I do not allow the sour and rotten berries to be crushed (by foot.—A.I.P.) with the grapes. For ordinary wine I allow the stalks to ferment with the skins in open tubs. I fill the tub in one day. When the must has risen to the highest point and has again fallen, I draw it off into a sulphured vat (one sulphur tag of 6 in. long and 2 in. wide per leaguer). This tempers and cools the must. Then after three times 24 hours I again have the must racked into another sulphured vat (one sulphur tag of 20 in. for a 6-leaguer vat). Should one find that the fermentation is thereby too much subdued, fermenting must should be added and the whole stirred with a clean stick. The fermentation in the tub is left to nature and in the vat it is regulated by the use of more or less sulphur. I aim more or less at blood heat. I make wine separately from each variety of grape. This year I separated the stalks from the fermenting mass and covered the fermenting tubs. About this I shall report more fully when submitting the samples. I did not notice whether mixing the grapes from different vineyards improves the wine. For ordinary wine I, however, crush the red and white Greengrape together in order to equalize the colour and taste. The other grapes

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I crush separately and treat as above, excepting Pontac which is left fermenting on the husks until the fleshy parts have been dissolved and the colour has been extracted from the husks. When the ordinary must has been racked off the thick lees, I add to every leaguer one gallon of redistilled pure brandy and one gallon of grape syrup which has been concentrated to barely half its original volume. Exceptionally I have this year not used any grape syrup as it is said to give the wine a cloudiness. I should add to this that the second racking takes place 10-12 days after the first, when my must is freed from the coarse lees. I find that the sulphur gets lost in the fermentation and does not harm the wine. One takes care that the fermentation continues until the wine is perfectly dry, and then again racks it carefully into another vat and adds one gallon of brandy to every leaguer of wine. Then, before the wine is delivered, rack once more, but now reduce the amount of sulphur as it is now merely needed to keep the vat sound. At this racking every leaguer of wine is fined with the white of a dozen fresh eggs. My wines were formerly known to and gladly bought by all wine merchants. I sold to A. Brink, Sr., Dirk Hertzog, and McDonald. Since 1818 many inhabitants have become acquainted with the wine out of my wine store in the town. Although my young vineyard does not yet bear, I have already made up to 98 leaguers of wine, but, owing to adversity, less during the last two years. I distil brandy from husks, stalks and wine lees, take care that the stills do not burn, and redistil the brandy. This year I distilled according to Mr. Polemann's instructions. The by-products from 50 leaguers of wine yield fully one leaguer of brandy (evidently redistilled.—A.I.P.) or spirits. The gentlemen should bear in mind that, in this report, I have limited myself to my ordinary method of winemaking. I hope to report further on the last vintage, when the wines will be fit to be shown."

From Charles G. Marais, Jonkershoek.

"The soil of my vineyard is fairly fertile and dry and can be irrigated, but this is only partly done. It is not brack, sour or subject to drought. It consists partly of heavy pot-clay and the rest is mountain soil mixed with small pieces of sandstone. My vineyard is situated at the foot and partly along the slope of a mountain on the western side and faces east. It is exposed to south-east and north winds. A river flows at the foot of the mountain. I do not know from where our vines came. I have ordinary and white Greengrape (Hence the red Greengrape evidently predominated over the white variety at that time.—A.I.P.) all of the same age, about 12 years. The vines under 7 years give a less alcoholic wine, but above this age no difference is noticeable. My vines are all planted at a distance of 3 ft. apart, so that I have no experience as to whether the distance the vines are planted apart makes any difference to the wine. I have not yet planted seedlings. I dig my

vines once every year. Once every 7 years, and that in July or August, I manure my vineyard. If this is not done at shorter intervals, one obtains a well-grown and pleasant grape.

I plant my vines 18-20 inches deep, keep two eyes above the ground, prune in June and keep four bearers, top four to five times per annum. If necessary the bunches are lifted one foot above the ground. I have never yet removed any of the bunches, but leaves I did remove in order to let the grapes ripen better.

I make good Cape Madeira. During the vintage I have my vineyard picked over three times, leaving the worst grapes for the last picking. I find that the grapes hanging high ripen first. I never pick any grapes as long as there is dew on them. To the moon I did not pay any attention. My test for the maturity of the grapes is this: The berries on being pulled off the bunches should leave white brushes (bundles of fibres) on the stalks. If one allows the grapes to ripen too much, they contain too much sugar, which makes the fermentation more difficult. I have my grapes sorted and then trodden by foot. I have tried all methods but found that an open fermentation in a tub on the husks and stalks is the best: not that it gives a pleasant flavour, but it furthers the fermentation and makes it more regular. In order to bring about the fermentation one should keep the cellar as warm as possible, and in order to check it one should rack over the must. I cannot state the temperature as I do not possess a thermometer. I do not use a cover on my fermenting tub.

I draw off the must when the whole mass in the tub has fermented right through and the fermentation gets weaker. I did not notice whether the wine is improved by mixing the grapes from different vineyards. I do not use brandy or boiled must, but when the fermentation of the must is completed, I add a cellar jar of rectified spirits to every leaguer of wine. I rack the must three times in order to clarify it as much as possible and to free it from the lees. Sulphuring is necessary to check the too stormy fermentation: the quantity depends upon the nature and the quality of the wine. I make from 80 to 120 leaguers of wine, i.e., from one to one and a half leaguers of wine per 1,000 vines (He thus had 80,000 vines.—A.I.P.). Brandy I distil from wine lees, husks and stalks, and I get one leaguer to every 15 leaguers of wine. One might make different experiments in the distillation of brandy, but the extra trouble and expense are just as little rewarded as in the case of wine-making."

TRADE PAPERS FOR SAFETY.

"A trader who fails to read his trade journal is guilty of gross negligence."

A German judge made this comment recently in an action for infringement of a patent. The trader pleaded that he had not seen an infringement warning published in the trade papers by the plaintiffs, because he did not read trade papers. The judge ruled that this rendered the defendant liable for damages.

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