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Pamphlets on wine.

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DELIVERED BY M. M. ESTEE

BEFORE THE

CONVENTION

OF

Grape Growers and Wine Makers

HELD AT NAPA, ON THE 19TH DAY OF APRIL,

1883.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE COMMITTEE.



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ADDRESS.

FELLOW CITIZENS:—In the name of the Napa Vinticultural Association we welcome you among us. We have taken the liberty to call together many of the vine-growers and wine-makers of the State to consult upon questions of mutual interest. Grape-growing and wine-making is comparatively new to many of us; we admit we have much to learn in this business, but we are to be congratulated in this, that we have very little to forget, for we have no old prejudices to remove—nothing to unlearn. We are now trying to start right; with that view we want the best experience of the best and wisest men among us.

We want to know the best kind of grapes to plant, and in what localities we should plant them; for instance, what kinds of grapes will do the best in Napa, and what kind of wine will the soil and climate of Napa best produce, what kinds in Fresno, in Santa Clara, in the Foot Hills, in Sonoma, in Los Angeles. We already know we cannot produce as heavy wines in Napa as in some other localities, but we can make very fine light wines; nor can we successfully produce raisins here. We know that at Fresno and Riverside they make excellent raisins and can make heavy wines. We know the Zinfandel is a good wine grape

with us, but we don't think it is the best obtainable, and we cannot well afford, in the infancy of this great industry, to plant any grapes but the best, because we have to prove to the world that we can make not only good wine but the best wine, or we can never succeed. If our soil and climate is all right, then we alone will be at fault if we fail.

At the commencement of grape culture in California, we planted the vines we could most easily get, not knowing which were the best; now we look only for those vines that make the best wine; and among the best grapes for wine, within our practical knowledge, are the Grenache, the Matero, the Malbec, the Black Burgundy, the Pineaux, the Lenoir, the Charbeneaux, the Reisling, the Golden Chasseles, the Carbenet, the Verdot or Verdelot, and the Zinfandel. It is quality more than quantity that should be sought for. We must inspire a generous competition and an ambition to excel, and we cannot fail. We should be willing to learn from every source within our reach, or we will deserve to fail. For that reason meetings like this should be frequent.

In every department of France conventions are held frequently by the leading vine-growers and wine-makers. Journals are printed devoted entirely to these interests. The government gives these great industries its fostering care. The newspapers of the whole civilized

world note with marked particularity the prospect for a good or a short crop of grapes.

The questions of the quantity and quality of the vintage becomes a subject of news on change, and of great commercial interest in the public marts of London, Vienna, Berlin, St. Petersburg, New York and Paris, and this is so because there is only a small part of the earth's surface where grapes prosper; a little corner of Spain, about half of France, a nook only in Southern Germany, a single section of Italy and Switzerland, and our own California, comprises nearly all of the grape growing portions of the world; and in many of the very finest grape and wine producing sections of the world, like the champagne district of France, a real good crop only occurs about every third or fourth year.

In the champagne district referred to, the dangers which surround the grape are far greater than with us; the frost does damage in the spring, heavy showers in June, and hail in July and August, and during the vintage the frost again, and heavy rains also seriously damage the crop. I mention this in a very general way to show how delicate the grape is and what care and attention is required to successfully cultivate it. The grape has no home on all the broad earth where it will successfully grow without man's watchful attention.

WHAT ARE THE BEST VARIETIES OF GRAPES TO PLANT IN CALIFORNIA?

I have already mentioned some of the varieties which, according to our experience in this State, make most excellent wine. Much depends upon soil and climate and upon an experience of which we are yet very deficient, this will be one of the subjects open for discussion to-day. I may, however, be pardoned in saying that there are some varieties recognized everywhere as superior grapes, and he who plants them can make no mistake. Take the "Carbenet Sauvignon," from the "Haut Medoc," a French grape and a most splendid wine grape. Though not a large bearer, says August Dupré, "this grape makes fine wine in France, at Madera, in Spain, in Algeria, everywhere you obtain excellent wine from it." I do not know personally that there are any of this grape in this State, but it is claimed we have some of them. The "Franc Pineau," from the Bourgogne, in France, is also a very fine wine grape. It is said there are some of these in this State, but they have not been planted to any large extent. The Black Burgundy is another good grape, and it is being rapidly introduced here.

The Reisling is a good grape everywhere, and makes a distinctive wine everywhere, though in some localities it makes a much better wine than in others, depending very greatly upon the character of the soil.

Dupré claims that the best wines of the southwest districts of France, where the climate is very similar to ours, are made from the grape known as the "Carbenet" and the "Carbenet gris" before mentioned. Other varieties are named by him, but these stand first in the list.

The principal vine grown in the champagne district is the Black Burgundy or Pineaux. As the name indicates, it is a black grape, and some of which vines are grown in this valley. From this grape, chiefly, the champagne of the world is made. It is not a very large bearer, but it is a fine, delicate grape, and makes good wine everywhere, and is a fair grower in almost all situations.

In the eastern, the central and western districts of France, the grape known there as the Epinette, the Fromentis, and the Pineaux, are mentioned as the best varieties. There are many other kinds grown, but these are spoken of as among the choicest varieties, a very few of which are found in this State, and some of which might not prosper here, but so far as we have had experience any grape that thrives in France will do well here.

With us the Zinfandel is preëminent as a claret grape, but in a few years we may be planting other and better varieties. It is a grape quite unknown, at least by that name in other countries, unless it be the Black St. Peter, which many of our oldest grape growers seem to believe.

THE QUANTITY OF GRAPES RAISED TO THE ACRE IN FRANCE
 COMPARED WITH THE AMOUNT RAISED IN CALIFORNIA.

To show that California is a marvelous grape-producing country, we need but compare our grape crop with that of France.

In France they do not average to produce more than one and a half tons to the acre, notwithstanding the great care there bestowed upon the vine. Here three and one-half to four tons to the acre is not above the average, and eight or ten tons to the acre is not at all unusual. But in this connection it must be noted that the very best variety of French vines are not large bearers. But those leading French vines, some of which we have here, bear more than double the amount of grapes to what they do in France.

THE PRICE OF GRAPES IN FRANCE.

Good grapes in the principal vine districts of France sell, in our money, at from four cents to twelve cents a pound, and bearing vineyards sell for what would amount in our money to from \$800 to \$5,000 an acre; and each year the French vineyardist expends from \$15 to \$50 an acre in the cultivation and care of his vines, although labor is only worth from one to two francs a day. Indeed, as to cultivation, we in California are mere novices. In France every pound of manure that can be obtained is carried to the vineyard, and every bit

of earth that washes from the hills is carried back and placed around the vines. No one not acquainted with the manner of cultivation in France, can understand or appreciate the extent of the labor expended on their vineyards. Why, in some localities they actually make straw matting and cover their vines to protect them from frosts and cold north winds.

THE PRICE OF WINE IN FRANCE AND ITS ADULTERATION.

Raw wine at the close of the vintage sells from twelve cents a gallon to \$2.50 a gallon. This is pure wine. From thirty-five cents to \$1 a gallon is the usual price for good wines at the close of the vintage in the leading wine producing districts in France.

But it must be remembered that a large portion of the wines now made in France are not pure. Indeed the very largest portion of the wines manufactured there are made from a mixture of grapes with other substances.

One of the processes adopted by the French is to take the grapes and press them slightly before fermentation and make a white wine of this; then they add a necessary part of sugar-water with the remaining must and pulp and let it ferment, and in due time press again. This makes the French claret Americans drink. And then they add more sugar-water to the pulp and ferment again, and this makes the wine that the masses of the people of France drink. This is only one process; there are many others. But this is

an innocent fraud compared to the others. Why, so universal is this process now adopted in France that a very leading wine maker actually called together some of the best chemists of France to observe the experiment, and he worked over the pulp of his grapes by adding sugar-water five times, and in the language of a very distinguished writer, "thus obtained from a quantity of grapes—which according to the ordinary proceeding would have given him 500 'hectolitres' of wine—2,000 'hectolitres,' the quality of which gave general satisfaction." By general satisfaction I must presume that the author meant general satisfaction to the American snobs who prefer French fermented sweetened-water, with poisonous substances put in to add color and taste, than the pure juice of the grape if from California.

So universal are the many methods of adulteration of wines in France now pursued, that we read of lectures delivered in the very center of the great wine-producing districts of France, "on the French art of "making from a quantity of grapes four times the "quantity of wine which their grapes would yield by "the ordinary method." I do not argue by this that no pure wine is now made in France, for there are many of the leading wine-growers who make nothing but pure wine, and who denounce everywhere the almost universal system now adopted there in the manufacture of impure wine. But there is not power enough in the French government to stop this; how

then can the competing wine-makers do so. I am prepared to say that the French claret of commerce is largely manufactured from substances other than grapes; indeed, this is admitted everywhere but in America. No man who buys a 60 gallon cask of French wine for \$60, after shipment here and payment of 40 cents a gallon duty, can expect to get a pure article. In a few years French claret wines, if sold at all in America, must be sold under California labels to give them character; that is, if the time ever comes when it is fashionable to drink pure—American wine.

REMEDY AGAINST THE ADULTERATION OF WINES.

The most stringent laws should be passed on the subject, and these laws should be enforced. But the surest remedy is that suggested by Guyot, Dupré and others, namely: make wines distinctive by giving them the name of the grape from which they are made. From the Reisling grape make a Reisling wine, and call it by that name. The Pineaux or Black Burgundy makes a fine wine—name the wine after the grape. The Carbenet grape is known among the best vinticulturists of the world—call it Carbenet wine. So with the Zinfandel, we have already commenced right. We would say Zinfandel wine from Napa or Sonoma, or from Santa Clara, and then if these localities produce a better Zinfandel wine than some other parts of the State, they will have the benefit of it.

THE SOILS FOR GRAPES.

There are no soils so poor and none so rich in the grape zone of the world where the grape vine will not grow, and there are comparatively few places even in the grape zone where the grape grows successfully.

The question of soil then becomes an important factor, and in a new country like ours, we cannot be too careful in the selection of the proper situations.

In the famous "Haut Medoc" District, department of the Gironde, France, the soil is generally gravel, covering a subsoil which is sometimes clay and sometimes a sandy rock-like material, all of which is impervious to water.

In the Languedoc District, which consists of over 600,000 acres, and where vinticulture flourished at the time of the Romans, the soil is chalky on the slopes, chalky and clayey in the plains, and mixed with more or less gravel, especially on the high plateaux.

The soil of the Burgundy District is loose chalk mixed with clay. The soil of the famous champagne district is chalk, silica and clay, with more or less pebbles.

In France for vineyards they generally seek a southern aspect. Yet in the champagne district many of the best vineyards face to the north, and everywhere in France the very best vineyards are found on rolling lands, and of course face in every direction.

In this State, where the climate is dry and warm for

much of the year, I cannot think the situation makes any material difference; the character of the soil, however, is all important.

A deep gravelly soil, more or less volcanic in its character, is the best soil we have thus far found for grapes. This soil will not produce as many grapes as alluvial lands, but the grapes are very much better for wine.

PROTECTION OF THE GRAPE AGAINST FROST.

All European writers on the subject show that the only protection from frost is secured by shutting out the sky over head and preventing radiation towards it. The frost will not seriously affect the young shoots if you can keep drops of water radiating from the earth from being deposited on them. If you can stop the vines and the surface of the ground from losing heat by reason of the cold air above, you are all right. A fog will do this, smoke will do it, but you must commence smoking before the vines freeze; you then stop the rapid radiation of moisture and heat from the ground—the surface of the ground—and the vines retain all the heat they possess, which is almost always sufficient to repel a frost, and your vines are uninjured. There is no doubt but smoking is a successful remedy against frost if thoroughly carried out. The best vineyards of the world, except possibly the Johnesburgh vineyard, are more or less subject to frosts.

THE QUESTION OF TRANSPORTATION.

We cannot hope to succeed as wine producers unless we have the world for a market. To do this we must have equal and just freights. There should be no discrimination either in favor of or against any single individual or any number of individuals; because, if the powerful corporations of the country, engaged as common carriers, can select a favored few from among our people, and either in consideration for past political services or for any other reason, give them better terms than are accorded to other shippers, then the transportation companies alone have the power to cripple and finally destroy this great but struggling industry.

The Pacific Mail Steamship Company at present transports the most of the California wines shipped to New York.

For some years a few wine merchants of San Francisco have been given special rates for the shipment of wine, so that they could ship their wine to New York for from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 cents a gallon cheaper than any other merchants or producers. Feeling that this was a most harsh, cruel, unjust and illegal discrimination, many of the leading wine merchants and wine makers of the State sent to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company the following communication:

“ Jan. 25th, 1883.

“ *To the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, San Francisco,*
“ *Cal.:*

“ GENTLEMEN—The undersigned, wine makers of Cal-
“ ifornia, respectfully remonstrate against the renewal
“ by you of the contract now existing between your
“ company and certain seven wine merchants of San
“ Francisco, for the following reasons:

“ The above named parties, under the existing con-
“ tract with your company, are allowed to ship their
“ wines by your steamers to New York for $3\frac{1}{2}$ cents
“ per gallon less than you charge all the other wine
“ producers and wine merchants of this State for
“ transporting the same kind of wine in similar pack-
“ ages from the same port to the same destination.

“ This, we are informed and believe, is contrary to
“ law. We know it is unfair and grossly unjust, for,
“ if permitted to continue, all wine producers here
“ must either sell their wines to the favored people above
“ named, or go into the Eastern market and compete
“ with those who can deliver their wines there at $3\frac{1}{2}$
“ cents a gallon less. We do not ask to be favored
“ above any other of our fellow citizens. What we
“ do request is, that you treat us all equally and carry
“ every man's freight of the same kind, the same dis-
“ tance for the same money.

“ In conclusion, we most respectfully, but earnestly,
“ ask you to give every producer and every dealer an

“ even chance, by favoring no one, but by being just
“ to all.”

That company wholly disregarded this remonstrance and renewed the contract previously existing between the parties. Unless this discrimination can be stopped, then the grape-growers and wine-makers and wine-merchants of California will be completely under the control of the transportation companies, and whatever profit there will be in the business the transportation companies will make, and whatever loss will be suffered the producers will suffer. The law is with us, our own statute forbids discrimination by common carriers, our constitution prohibits it, the decisions of the supreme courts of the various States are against it, and the Supreme Court of the United States has decided in our favor.

On the one side then we have right and justice, the majesty of the law to whose mandates all must bow, the combined strength of the producers of the country. On the other side the powerful corporations who, heedless of every lesson of the past and regardless of very right which the people possess, have made a law unto themselves which they enforce at their will, and though they are creatures of the law, they trample upon the very power that gave them being, and disregard principles of justice as old as written laws and as universal as civilization.

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