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Purity and Adulteration

IN

Native Wines

Address

BY

PERCY T. MORGAN

PRESIDENT OF THE CALIFORNIA WINE ASSOCIATION

AT THE

International Pure Food Congress

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Purity and Adulteration in Native Wines.

*Address by PERCY T. MORGAN,
President of the California Wine Association,
at the International Pure Food Congress,
St. Louis, September, 1904.*

In speaking to the subject assigned to me by the Committee it may not be amiss to give a short historical sketch of Grape Culture and Wine Making in the United States, in order to demonstrate the importance of the Native Wine Industry and the necessity for its protection from spurious or adulterated products.

Almost five centuries before the discovery by Columbus of the American continent early Scandinavian navigators visited the eastern shores of what are now the United States, and finding grapes growing in great abundance named the country "Vinland."

Wines were produced in considerable quantities from native grapes in Florida as far back as 1564, according to the testimony of Sir John Hawkins. Amadas and Barlowe, who visited North Carolina in 1584, were so impressed with the luxuriance of the growth of vines that one of them wrote that he found the land "so full of grapes" that "I think in all the world the like abundance is not to be found."



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During the French occupation of Louisiana, history records that the wine production reached such proportions that the government becoming alarmed for its domestic trade forbade its manufacture in the colony.

About 1630 the "London Company" sent French vignerons to Virginia to cultivate imported vines, Lord Delaware having enthusiastically recommended the experiment.

Almost all the early attempts at viticulture were directed to the introduction of vines from Europe, until Nicholas Longworth, who might be called the "father of the Native Wine Industry," in 1850, after experimenting with foreign varieties along the Ohio River for thirty years, gave up the attempt to grow them, and remarked:

"If we intend cultivating the grape for wine we must rely only on our native grapes and new varieties arising from their seed."

Mr. Downey in 1851 also stated in the *Horticulturist* that,

"The introduction of European vines into America for cultivation on a large scale is impossible. There is first a season or two of promise and then a complete failure."

When the above testimony was given, the Pacific Slope was practically an unknown country, having only recently become part of the United States. The gentlemen above quoted were, therefore, unaware

that vines from Spain were successfully introduced into Mexico in the sixteenth century, and that when Franciscan monks, under Father Junipero Serra, established in 1769 the first California mission at San Diego, they brought with them cuttings of the *Vitis Vinifera* from which they propagated the Mission Grape, pioneer of the California Wine Industry.

It was not until the early '40's that the Wine Industry in the Eastern and Southern States commenced to assume commercial proportions, though Volney testifies to having tasted, in 1796, wine made at Gallipolis, Ohio, and there are records to show that grape growing was carried on about this time in Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland, Illinois, North and South Carolina, and a little later in New York and the District of Columbia.

The early efforts having resulted in comparative failure, through the attempt to propagate imported vines, earnest attention was turned to the improvement of the native varieties. When Major Adlum first brought the Catawba grape prominently to notice in 1824 he sounded the tocsin of the Native American Wine Industry.

The transactions of the "Cincinnati Horticultural Society" show that great interest was taken in viniculture even in the '30's, when annual wine exhibitions were held and premiums awarded, and so much

was thought of the region as a wine growing section that the Ohio River was designated the "Rhine of America."

From the Fox, the Cape, the Catawba, Ives Seedling and Norton Seedling have sprung nearly all the Eastern wine bearing varieties, of which more than fifty are now in general use.

In the South, among many other varieties, the Scuppernong grape is largely cultivated, and a "Mother Vine" still exists which was planted on Roanoke Island, North Carolina, in the days of Sir Walter Raleigh.

Around the Scuppernong vine is entwined a romance of early times in America, which has been immortalized by Sallie Southall Cotten in the "Legend of the White Doe," which purports to relate the fate of Virginia Dare, the first white child born of English parents on the soil of North America, whose disappearance, together with that of an entire party of colonists, is a mystery which history has not solved. The legend runs that this beautiful young girl was turned by Indian sorcery into a white doe, which, being shot by a silver arrow, returned to human form, and dying, her heart's blood fertilized a seedling vine, the fruit from which yielded a deep red wine instead of the white juice usual to this grape.

"And the tiny shoot with leaflets, by the sunlight warmed to life,

"Was the Vine of Civilization in the wilderness of strife."

The production of still wines of distinctive types has reached very considerable proportions in the Eastern and Southern States. A trade of many million gallons per annum has been created in wines, principally under individual labels, named after the grapes from which they are derived. Many of these wines are of excellent quality and have received substantial recognition at domestic and foreign Expositions, including Paris, 1900.

Few realize the enormous growth of the American Sparkling Wine Industry. Since Nicholas Longworth in 1842 announced that he had "by chance" produced a wine naturally fermented in the bottle, the output has increased from year to year, but more rapidly in the last decade, until at the present day the consumption of wine made after the champagne process from native American grapes equals approximately one-half of the quantity imported from abroad; in other words, almost one-third of all the Sparkling Wine drunk in the United States to-day is produced from American grapes, and this ratio is constantly increasing. How much enterprise and energy, coupled with extensive advertising, has brought about this splendid result, only those can tell who have fought the battle against the natural predilection in favor of imported champagnes.

The American product has a characteristic flavor extremely pleasant to those who are accustomed to drinking it. In point of

sparkle, finish, bouquet and general excellence the native wine can to-day bear very favorable comparison with the imported article, as an evidence of which may be cited that American Sparkling Wines were awarded both gold and silver medals at the Paris Exposition of 1900.

In California the *Vitis Vinifera* immediately found congenial surroundings, and for the last fifty years viniculture has been a leading industry of the State. Numerous varieties of foreign grapes are cultivated. In one vineyard cuttings from the celebrated Lafite Vineyard are growing, the grapes from which produce a very high class wine. Wild grape vines are also found indigenous to the soil of California, and grow luxuriantly along the streams of almost every county, but so far native stocks have not been employed for wine grape culture.

Upwards of two hundred and fifty thousand acres are devoted to grape culture for wine and raisins, and the investment in these industries in California aggregates over eighty million dollars.

The vintage of 1902 yielded about forty-five million gallons of wine, and the average annual production is not far short of thirty-five million gallons, of which about two-thirds are dry white and red wines, and one-third sweet wines.

The climate of California permits of the production of wines, bearing a close resemblance to European types, which are largely consumed

with ever increasing favor all over the United States, in Mexico, Central and South America, the Hawaiian Islands, China, Japan and other Oriental countries, as well as Great Britain and even on the continent of Europe.

California Wines have taken gold medals at many International Expositions, the most recent foreign recognition being that accorded in Paris in 1900, when four gold, nine silver, and nine bronze medals were awarded by the jury.

Grape culture is carried on to a greater or less extent in more than two-thirds of all the States and Territories of the Union. Measures which tend to the uplifting of the Wine Industry should, therefore, in the interest of their constituents, be a subject for the solicitude of a great majority of the members of both Houses of Congress.

It is in domestic consumption that an industry must find its great prosperity. France, typical as a wine producing country, despite her great home production, imports on the average almost four times as much wine as is exported.

Americans are not wine drinkers in the same sense as the French, the Italians and the Spanish, who consume annually almost fifty times as much wine per capita as the people of the United States. While it is gratifying to note that over ninety per cent of the wine consumed in

lishment of happy and prosperous homes thereon; and also to the greater prosperity of transportation companies in freight on many *carloads* of wine, where they now carry only *pounds* of tea and coffee.

A dissertation on the Native Wine Industry, detailing conditions of production in the various localities and the variety of wines in each district, would consume many hours. Realizing, therefore, that the time allowed to each speaker at this Convention must necessarily be short in order to give opportunity for discussion of the many important topics before it, I will turn to subject matter which is perhaps of most interest to those here assembled.

Taken as a general proposition, the wines of native production offered to the consumer in the United States compare very favorably in purity with those of any country in the world, and the great percentage are absolutely pure.

Grapes in the wine producing sections can, as a rule, be grown in sufficient quantities and at a cost which offers little inducement for the use of adulterants to increase the volume. In fact, in the largest native wine producing center it is frequently a question of how profitably to distribute the generous yield of certain seasons. This, it is true, would be easily solved if laws could be passed limiting or prohibiting the marketing of wine until it has reached a certain period of maturity. It is the competition of immature wines of a succeeding generous crop that

the United States is domestically produced, the fact is rather discouraging that only about one-half gallon of wine per annum is drunk per capita as against one and one-half gallons of distilled liquors.

That the habitual drinking of pure wine, as practiced in European countries, is conducive to temperance, and not, therefore, to be classed with intoxicating liquors in general, is a generally acknowledged fact, which, in early days, was testified to by no less a personage than a President of the United States, the great Thomas Jefferson, who remarked:

“I rejoice, as a moralist, at a prospect of a reduction of the duties on wine by our National Legislature. It is an error to view a tax on that liquor as merely a tax on the rich. It is prohibition of its use to the middling classes of our citizens, and a condemnation of them to the poisons of spirits, which is desolating their homes. NO NATION IS DRUNKEN WHERE WINE IS CHEAP; AND NONE SOBER WHERE THE DEARNESS OF WINE SUBSTITUTES ARDENT SPIRITS AS ITS COMMON BEVERAGE.”

The evils following an unstinted and excessive use of coffee and tea are little realized, and if this could be partly or largely replaced by a consumption of pure, light native wines it would redound to the benefit not only of the people at large in healthfulness, but to the increased profitable occupation of large acreage of land, and the estab-

often destroys or injures the value of previous maturing vintages. Holders become nervous for their market, and a panicky feeling sometimes ensues, which impels them to attempt to force their product on the market at a greater rate than consumption will warrant.

The Native Wine Industry will never attain its proper prominence until the public has the opportunity of judging the true merits of the best wines through selected vintages carefully matured and bottled at originating cellars, whether these be cellars of individual vintners or of large central handlers, like those of Bordeaux, having the opportunity of picking out suitable wines throughout a region for properly aging, and able, like the great French houses, to guarantee under standard labels the quality and maturity of the wine and to stand or fall by the public approbation or disapproval of any deviation from a given standard.

Such wines, of course, will have to command an adequate price to compensate for all the care and attention necessary, and will not, therefore, in any way come in competition with the cheaper wines.

The use of sugar to strengthen musts, which from climatic or weather conditions have not attained the necessary degree of sweetness to produce by fermentation an adequate alcoholic strength for the proper preservation of the wine, is practiced pretty generally all over

the world. In some countries it is, under proper restrictions, permitted by legislative enactment. It would perhaps, therefore, be unjust for one section, blessed by Nature with a benign climate which seldom fails to properly mature its crops, to endeavor to force upon another less favored section any unfair legislation; but great care must be exercised that privilege shall not degenerate into license, and while restrictive measures should not be carried to the extent of preventing the artificial strengthening of grapes which are too low in natural sweetness to admit of their being made into wine, it is nevertheless not only necessary that the law should designate what kind of sugar shall be used, and to what extent, but that wines which are wholly or in part derived from glucose and contain antiseptics and artificial coloring should be plainly so designated upon the casks and bottles.

It is not claimed that glucose is unhealthful, for being a vegetable product, carefully extracted by the most modern and approved methods, it will probably bear favorable comparison with sugar produced from any other source; but its use under the general designation of WINE —of which the meaning, according to Webster, is

“The fermented juice of the grape,”

would soon render unprofitable the great vineyard investments of this country, from the fact that alcohol can be produced from the fer-

mentation of glucose at probably one-fifth of its cost when produced from grapes.

Let each stand on its own merits. Let grape wine be marked and sold as WINE, and glucose be marked and sold as a corn product; or, if mixed, let this fact be plainly apparent to the consumer, and then if he prefer the corn or the mixed product to the pure wine the law will have done all that can reasonably be asked by the producer of grapes.

It is possible, as has been suggested by the eminent advocate of pure food legislation, who is now Chief of the Bureau of Chemistry of the United States Department of Agriculture, that deficiencies in Grape Must in one section of the country might be supplemented by the use of concentrated sugar produced from the grapes of a more favored section, so that the use of either cane or glucose sugars in pure wine in this country might be entirely dispensed with, and that pure wines so designated shall cover only the pure product of grapes, unadulterated by any foreign substance.

This would place our Native Wines on a high plane, and we could challenge comparison with all the world, for if wines contained no added substance, nothing but the naturally matured article could be marketed as pure; and immature, adulterated or sophisticated wines could no longer sail under false colors.

The greatest sufferer from spurious or adulterated wines must

necessarily be the wine producing center the most remote from the great consuming markets, for freight on the wine and the extra cost of coo- perage may almost equal the cost of growing the grapes. When stretching or adulteration is practiced near the centers of consumption such so-called wines can be, and often are, offered at prices which make it im- possible for the distant grower to profitably compete.

The curse of the wine business to-day, in common perhaps with other industries, is the cry for cheapness. The trade seldom asks, How *good* is your article, but How *cheap* is it? The cheapest wine cannot be really good, for the costs of properly maturing and handling are great and inexorable. Immature wines, and so-called wines which have only a sort of relationship to the grape product, make fierce competition for the honestly matured and wholesome article.

Handlers who wish nothing but the best—and to their credit be it said there are many such—get disheartened when they see their neigh- bors taking advantage of an indiscriminating and trusting public, and waxing rich selling wines at prices which spell penury for the more con- scientious dealers.

The question which now confronts us, therefore, is, shall QUAL- ITY prevail or shall cheapness rule? It is you, Gentlemen of the National Association of State Dairy and Food Departments, who can influence the answer to this question.

Shall the enactment of such National Legislation be encouraged, as will supplement the existing very generally excellent State laws, to enforce the labeling of an article, whether it be in barrels or in bottles, for what it actually is, and not for what the distributor chooses to say it is? Shall the public be entitled to truthful representation, or shall the edict of Barnum that "The public loves to be humbugged," be the watchword?

In this connection it is well to mention that in order that laws be respected the responsibility of analysts must be unquestioned. Instances have occurred where an absolutely pure article has been branded as impure and dealers put to humiliation and expense through inexperience in wine composition and analysis on the part of chemists to whom samples have been submitted. Such occurrences tend to bring upon Pure Food Laws opposition and antagonistic comment. No article should be publicly condemned without previous right of appeal to a disinterested tribunal, preferably the Bureau of Chemistry of the United States Department of Agriculture, which should be made the Supreme Court for Pure Food Decisions.

It is frequent gatherings, such as this distinguished company here assembled, which are needed to arouse the public sentiment of customers to demand what they pay for, namely, THE BEST, under labels guaranteeing purity and maturity. If the consumer really desires the

cheapest, without regard to quality, the fact should stare him in the face daily in the label on his bottle, but the masquerading of immature or fake wines under the guise of a good, honest article should be stopped by the strong arm of law, judiciously and equitably executed.

When this is accomplished a discriminating taste will be rapidly awakened among consumers, which will increase ten-fold the present consumption of honest, pure, healthful wines.

The security of investments in vineyard property will then be assured, and fluctuation in prices which now cloud the enterprise be avoided; and, relieved of the incubus of cheap goods masquerading under standard quality labels, the Native Wine Industry will go forward by leaps and bounds.

I wish, in conclusion, to acknowledge the courtesy and kindness of Mr. Paul Garrett, of Norfolk, Virginia, in furnishing statistics and valuable old records for my use; and also of many other Eastern Wine Makers who have courteously answered inquiries on matters relating to their districts; my thanks are also due to Mr. E. R. Emerson, who, sometime ago, kindly sent for my perusal his work, "The Story of the Vine," all of which have been of material assistance to me in preparing this paper.

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