

VITICULTURE.

Professor Blunno, viticultural expert of the New South Wales Agricultural Department, has just returned from a visit to Europe. During a seven months' absence, he travelled in some of the most important wine-producing districts in Italy and France, and was able to glean a large amount of valuable information respecting the improved methods of growing vines, as well as the manufacture of wine. Professor Blunno has now furnished the New South Wales Minister for Agriculture with a report bearing upon the various matters that came under his notice. In the course of the report, the viticultural expert remarks:—"At Palermo, Sicily, I visited the State viticultural station, also the vineyard of mother stocks and nursery for the propagation and graft of phylloxera-resistant stocks. At Milazzo, province of Messina, I visited similar institutions. A suitable vineyard of mother plants is attached to it for the production of cuttings. At the time of my visit the phylloxera (gallivole), leaf-gall insect, had made its appearance on the young shoots, and women were engaged in hand-picking the young leaves that showed the pest. In the same district private nurseries exist on an extensive scale, one containing 500,000 grafts of Cataratto bianco. At Palermo I saw splendid green grafts on rootlings (Conduro system), and was much impressed with the green grafts on resistant vines of all sizes and ages.

"At Riposto, on the coast half-way between Messina and Catania, is the Government Oenological Station, one of the many institutions scattered through the Italian Kingdom with the object of studying local conditions, and to resolve local technical questions in connection with the wine industry. I tasted the wines made with the addition of citric acid to the grape must, so as to correct the natural deficiency of acidity of the grape juice of that district, and also to ascertain whether a higher degree of acidity would have any effect in regulating the great fermentation which occurs in hot climates. I found the wines were better for the treatment they received.

"Here also I sampled twenty-five wines made from grapes produced by twenty-five Franco-American hybrids direct bearers, viz., wines which are alleged to be phylloxera resistant, and directly bearing grapes, without being grafted.

"At Conegliano there is a shooting station, as a protection against hailstorms. The practice of hail shooting in Italy is no longer followed with the same enthusiasm that was displayed during the last couple of years. The opinion of many scientists is that the whole ques-

tion has been treated too empirically, and as the theory of the formation of the hail is not known, nothing can be suggested for its prevention.

"At Epernay, in the Champagne district, the firm of Moet and Chandon has lately erected a special place for the bench-grafting of phylloxera-resistant vines, and has extensive nurseries. The method of callosing the bench-grafts in moss at a certain temperature gives a higher percentage of good grafts than the ordinary system of stratifying in ordinary temperature.

"I went to London for the purpose of inquiring into the condition of the Australian wine trade. Having inspected the South Australian Wine Depot, I called on Messrs Burgoyne, and on Messrs Pownall, the principal buyers of Australian wines. These firms are very sanguine about the future of these wines. They confirmed the opinion expressed by other merchants, that the taste in England for clarets is going out of fashion, and that rich full-bodied wines, well fermented, will always find a ready market. They were delighted to learn that in New South Wales an Act against wine adulteration is now in force.

"Being one day in the House of Commons," added Professor Blunno, "I had the opportunity of meeting Mr J. Chamberlain. Speaking of the common prejudice against Australian wines, he asked me what, I thought of it. I brought under his notice a statement made to me by M. Skawinski, manager of Chateau Pontet Canet. That gentleman, referring to the Australian wines—he had an opportunity of sampling at French Exhibitions—admitted their high quality, but expressed a doubt that they had been grown in Australia. I informed Mr Chamberlain that the exhibitors of Australian wines, which had won prizes at these exhibitions, were high-principled persons who would never even dream of exhibiting wine that was not grown in Australia. Mr Chamberlain was pleased to hear this, and remarked: 'I like the colonies, and I hope viticulture will become a really great Australian industry.'"

THE LICENSING BILL.

The following are some "chips" from the debate on the second reading:—

"The Premier seems quite happy because in his estimation the Bill pleases nobody."—Mr Aitken.

"If the Prohibitionists are consistent they will not rely on those who keep grog in their private houses."—Mr Hogg.

"In Westland the pubs. are open all day. If a man spoke about a licensing law there he would be a curiosity."—Mr Lewis.

"We are getting so much Governor-in-Council in our legislation," says Mr Aiken, "that the best thing this Parliament can do is to pass one short Act referring everything to the Governor-in-Council and go home."

"I have been in districts where there were no licenses," said Mr Hogg, "but there was unlimited drinking." "When were you there?" queried a member on the opposite side of the House.

"The whole of our licensing legislation is of a deceptive order."—Mr Duthie.

"The Reduction vote is coquetting with the question. Let us have Prohibition or no Prohibition."—Mr Wilford.

"It is when the police fail and the Government do not do their duty that the Moderate party step in and give their votes to the Prohibition party."—Mr Duthie.

According to Mr Wilford the difference between a traveller and a bona fide traveller is that the one travels to drink and the other drinks to travel.

"My opinion is that no man in this House would be more delighted to see this Bill lost on its second reading than the Premier."—Mr Lang.

Under the Food and Drugs Act, the county authorities in Glasgow have recently prosecuted a certain firm for selling spurious or adulterated brandy. The trial took place in the Hamilton Sheriff Court, and some rather singular evidence was given for the defence by commercial witnesses. They testified that no one can buy real brandy for 8s a bottle, because since the phylloxera destroyed the vines in 1876 it cannot be made for money; that liquor imported from France as brandy is now a mixture of grape spirit and other spirit, in what proportion and with what other spirit is not known except to the producers. They testified that they are satisfied if liquor looks, smells, and tastes like brandy. A Mr Gemmell said that brandy was spirit distilled from any fruit, grain, or root, as rye, potatoes, or maize. In other words, any spirit distilled and doctored so as to resemble brandy is brandy. It was also given in evidence that, besides grain, rotten figs and black ants were used to distil brandy from. The Sheriff, in giving judgment, said that the prosecution had proved that brandy is a spirit derived from grapes; that the liquor in question is not distilled from grapes, and therefore could not contain the medicinal qualities that brandy ought to possess; and that when the public asked and paid for brandy they ought not to be cheated by an imitation, however clever, made from potatoes, rotten figs and black ants. The above exposure, it is said, occasioned considerable excitement in Glasgow.

A short time ago a New York wine merchant paid £1000 for a single cask of wine. It is called "Napoleonic wine," because it was preserved especially for Napoleon I. It is of 1767 vintage, and none has been sold before except a small quantity to the King of Spain. Napoleon was so busy making war that he had little leisure to drink it, and thus it has remained to become the oldest sherry in the world. This sale has drawn attention to other old wines and their present market value. The same dealer possesses some wine which once belonged to Admiral Nelson. It is worth £800 a cask, and was vintaged by a gentleman of the name of De Castro de Palermo, of Herax. The other day a Spaniard presented him with one bottle of Marsala, made in 1801 for the Duke of Brente, who was then acting for Napoleon in the Tuileries. He has also another wine in his collection which once belonged to the Duke of Wellington, and is now worth £500 a cask. He considered these speculations in such liquid curios profitable, inasmuch as, properly preserved, they increase in value yearly.

Dr. Julius Stoklasa, an eminent chemist of Berlin, Germany, is attracting wide attention by his lectures on alcohol as a source of life and energy. He contends that alcohol and carbonic acid are products of the breath of animal and vegetable bodies; that fermentation is going on in all the organs of the human body, especially the liver, muscles, lungs and pancreas, producing alcohol, which is the breath of plants and the source of life and energy in the human body. Stoklasa is not prepared to say to what extent the use of alcohol aids life and energy or retards it, but he is making experiments, the result of which are to be reported to the next international conference of applied chemistry.

A short measure relating to the punishment of habitual drunkards has been introduced into the Legislative Council of Victoria by Mr Balfour. The bill proposes to amend the Police Offences Act by making the following clause portion of Part III. of that Statute:—"Any person who is an habitual drunkard, and who within the preceding twelve months has been twice already convicted of an offence, either under section 25 of the Police Offences Act 1890, or under section 153 of the Licensing Act 1890, shall on a third conviction under either of said sections be deemed an idle and disorderly person within the meaning of Part III. of the Police Offences Act, 1890, and shall be liable to imprisonment in any gaol for any time not exceeding twelve months, with or without hard labour."


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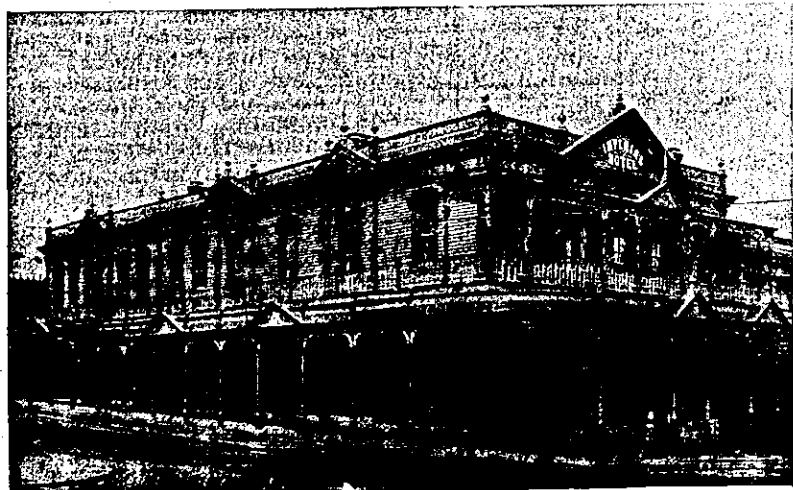
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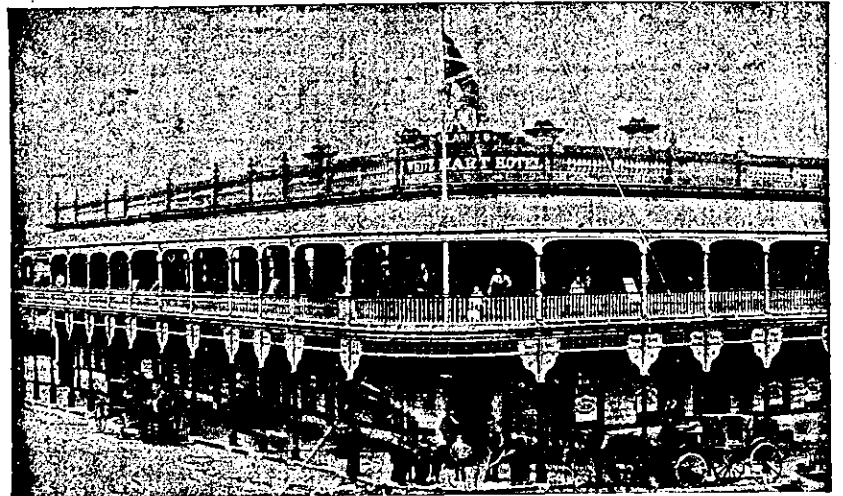


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