

irrigation? It's probably the same with whisky. There's a drought on at the present time, but once we can get the real Scotch again it'll be a different tale I'm thinking.

"Whisky distilling is one of Scotland's oldest industries," the old man went on. "As far back as 1494 whisky appears in the Scottish Exchequer Rolls, and by the seventeenth century commercial distilleries were in full swing in the Highlands. The duty on whisky started at 2/8 for a Scottish pint. That's about one-third of a gallon," he explained. "There have been more than fifty changes in duty since then. In 1920, it was L3/12/6 a gallon, and at present is L7/17/6 a proof gallon or 18/5 an ordinary bottle. So no wonder we pay a pretty penny for it when we can get it."

"How is it made?" asked the man from the town.

"I don't know the commercial process well," the old man replied. "There are pot-stills and patent-still distilleries, and in the busy years from 1922 to 1933 they produced as much as 210,000,000 gallons of whisky. There are two kinds—malt and grain—and in the blending a fair amount of variety is introduced.

"Do you know there are well over 2,000 registered brand names applied to proprietary Scotch whisky?" he asked. "And each brand has to be kept uniform year after year. Whisky blending is a specialised job just as exacting as tea-tasting. But," he added, with something akin to a sigh, "can you tell me a better one?"

The old man rose to his feet and the stranger slipped off the far from comfortable gate-rail.

"Let's go in," the old man said. "I might be able to find a drop of something. It's thirsty work talking and listening's as bad."

The room they entered was solidly furnished in old mahogany, and there

were high shelves of well-bound books on either side of the open, stone fireplace.

The man from the town watched his host open the door of the highly polished chiffonier and produce a bottle and two crystal glasses. He watched him draw the cork, but he could not see the label on the bottle.

"Say when," said the old man and stopped when there were three fingers of whisky in the glass. "I only have water. I don't believe in any of these new concoctions—soda and ginger ale—in whisky. It's sacrilege. Help yourself."

The stranger poured a tablespoonful of water into the light-coloured whisky.

"Good luck!" they said together and sipped appreciatively of their drinks.



"That's great whisky," said the stranger with obvious sincerity. "What's the brand?"

"You don't recognise it?" the old man asked, with mock incredulity. "Well, it's Hokonui."

"Hokonui?" exclaimed the visitor.

"Yes, Hokonui." The old man chuckled. "But the very best Hokonui. You see, it's my own brand—made just eight years ago. Drink up and have another . . ."