GRAPE CULTURE.

SOME ADVICE FROM A PRACTICAL VITICULTURIST.

Annual Address Delivered by Director L. J. Rose at the Pavilion, Sept. 16, 1884.

Ladies and Gentlemen: It is with pleasure that I attend the annual return of this fair, and year by year note the improvements of the beautiful productions of our State—the profusion and beauty of the flower garden, the orchard, the vineyard, and the field, as displayed here.

Well may visitors to our Coast look with wonder and admiration at our ever fresh display, running through every month in the year; at the varied hues and forms of our flora, the wondrous size, fairness, richness of coloring, and luscious flavor of the gifts of Pomona, or the abundance and quality of the gifts of Ceres. California seems to be the favored abode of these deities, and where they delight to pour out their choicest gifts; where they add a new perfume to the violet and the rose; a bright blush and softer down to the rounded cheek of the peach; more bloom and sunshine to the purple or the gold of the grape, and a lavish abundance which is at the same time the envy and admiration of the world.

Nor are we blessed with all these gifts in the vegetable kingdom only, for the animal kingdom fully keeps pace with all these in marvelous perfection.

Go to the fair grounds; look through the stock department; see the sheep, the pigs, the cattle of various breeds displayed there, and you will see a glow of health, and lines of beauty for each kind and breed, true to the standard, to delight the expert, the connoisseur and the artist. Take the horse department: look at the gloss and sheen of their satin coats; see the soft, undulating lines of their contour and muscle—denoting strength, speed and perfect health—and the world cannot excel the exhibition. Nor are we left in the realm of opinion or belief in this matter. Beliefs may be deceptive, for we all love our own the best; but we have proof. With not one-hundredth part of the number, yet we are competing successfully in both trotting and running against the combined stables of the East.

It is a reasonable belief that man, too, will attain a higher average organization; that time will produce individuals that will be the peers of other countries and lands; that individuals from time to time will crop out, as our country grows older, that will be renowned in poetry, in oratory, in art, and in science.

I look around me here and see young, fresh and beautiful forms and faces beaming with life and perfect health, reared or matured in this land, free from all enervating influences—a land, you may say, free from all malaria or sickness of any kind—where man can enjoy every day in the year in outdoor occupation—with almost perpetual sunshine, with cool and refreshing nights, and with nature's gifts of beauty on every hand; a country bounded by the Pacific ocean, with its cooling breeze by day, and on the other side a range of snow-capped mountains and their refreshing breeze by night—with pure air, pure mountain water and conditions of climate where to exercise is a pleasure. Is it strange, in view of all this perfection, that man, surrounded by these favored conditions, should be the superior in both physical and mental development to his less favored brother in other lands?

I envy the youth of California their future. They will enjoy and make the changes which I see will come, and come rapidly. This beautiful California, with its varied climate, like both the tropics and the temperate zone—its wide range of productions being of equal excellence—and the extremes are sometimes scarcely more than an hour's ride apart. Take this place—Sacramento—with its tropical atmosphere, with its tropical growth of flowers and trees, which always fill me with admiration—note that peculiar, still, warm twilight, where the sunshine after the sun has set still lingers in the air; what a contrast to San Francisco, or any of the coast counties, where an overcoat is a necessary adjunct to one's wardrobe at all seasons of the year, and instead of the lazy, quiet languor of your feeling, all is activity and rush, with nerves strung for action and work and the mind fired with energy and ambition. Yet each excels in some productions. The one is the home of the peach, the melon, the corn and such crops as require heat; the other excels in the production of cherries, currants, potatoes, cabbage and like products not requiring such an ardent sun.

Coming events, it is said, cast their shadows before. Already we can see here and there what almost every part of California will be. We have only to look at Riverside, Pasadena, Anaheim, San Gabriel, Alhambra, Fresno and other bright spots, teaching us the possibilities of our country. It is but a few years since these beautiful tracts were the grazing grounds of cattle, covered with cactus and chaparral, with nothing to point them out as being better than the surrounding country; now they are like oases in the landscape, veritable Edens, containing a happy population who produce beautiful fruits and make wines to gladden the hearts of less favored countries.

To sing pæans to our country, which we all love, is a very pleasant task. But I have been asked to address you for the reason that I may have some information on practical subjects, which may have some value to some of you.

For many years I have been engaged in the growing of the grape, and in the manufacture of wine. Some facts that I have learned and opinions I have formed out of this long experience, may be of value and benefit to beginners. The question of where to plant and what to plant will always be of great importance; and each man's experience becomes important, for experience is the only sure guide. There are now vineyards in every part of the State—enough at least to show that every portion can raise grapes fair to look upon and in abundance, and, to some extent their product can be seen and compared. We have vineyards on the mountain slopes and in the valleys, and each locality claims some superiority. There is a general belief, however, that hillsides are preferable. This, however, I think is only true as to some localities, not to all.

A hillside differs from a plane or level surface necessarily but in two ways—first, exposure when on the south and west side to the more direct rays of the sun; and, second, to a more rapid shedding of water that falls as rain and the greater evaporation, having more surface exposed. It is true that the grape has an abhorrence of excessive moisture, causing many diseases and decay, and abundant sunshine is a necessity for their full maturity and excellence. Yet there is a happy mean, too, in this, and we may have too little of the first and too much of the last.

In Germany and France, and in the coast counties of this State, we have, as a rule, an excessive rainfall and a lack of warmth; and in these localities a southern slope may be a necessity to produce a grape of such quality as to make a superior wine. In the interior of our State these conditions, however, are changed. We have an average rainfall of twelve inches or less (a scant sufficiency) and an ardent sun, at times scorching the foliage and burning the fruit. There, to go on a hillside would be only aggravating the trouble of a lack of moisture and an excess of heat, and a level surface would be a necessity, or if a hillside, then a northern exposure would be desirable.

Grapes will grow in California in all soils that will grow ordinary vegetation, and it is impossible to give exact information. What may be true in one locality or for one variety of grapes in that locality, may not hold true in another. Grapes will grow and produce large crops in adobe soils, and I am not prepared to say that such grapes are not good. Stiff clay will also grow grapes. The berries will be small and the crop light; yet such grapes are very rich in color, and may make good red wine. But I do not wish to plant grapes in either of these soils, if for no other reason than that it would require more than twice the labor to get them and keep them in order. The soil I prefer is sand and gravel, mixed with loam and clay, which easily pulverizes when plowed, for such soil will yield large crops of the best quality of grapes, and can be kept in good culture with a minimum of labor, and will retain moisture if properly cultivated. Of course, I would want this soil to be deep, with no underlying hard pan nor water near the surface, and I would always use that which contained the most clay for dark grapes; for, as a rule, the more clay (which means iron) there is, the more color will the grapes contain.

The crowbar is used by me because it is cheaper, and if care is exercised it is as good as the spade. The great secret of success lies in the act of filling the hole, especially from the bottom. If a space is left at the bottom, not filled with earth, then the cutting at that point will mildew. Dry rot will follow, and it is almost a certainty that all of it will die. Nor is it difficult to fill the hole with the crowbar. It only requires a little careful practice in a soil that easily pulverizes, so that the earth will clasp the cutting in every part underground. In adobe or stiff clay it becomes a very different process. I have, however, learned a way by which it may be done very easily and effectually. Make your hole as usual with the crowbar and insert the cutting. Then take sand dry enough to run easily and fill your hole with it. This can be done quickly and almost every cutting will grow.

When rooted vines are to be planted, trim the roots short enough so that the plant so trimmed will with ease go in the hole made by the crowbar. Long roots are no advantage, for where they have been once formed the callous and the short root surface will throw out new roots with the greatest ease.

Cultivating is one of the necessities for the growing of abundant crops, and if properly performed, all the moisture in a soil will be retained for the use of the crop to be grown. Cultivation acts, beneficially too, in other directions, for by loosening the soil it allows the air and warmth to penetrate more readily to the roots.

Rain as it falls is taken up by the soil and is gradually carried down by the power of gravitation. This continual movement of the water is more or less active, in proportion to the quantity held by the soil, for there is a saturating point, varying in different soils, when the water moves with reluctance.

There is, however, another power, the very opposite to gravitation, the tendency to go down, namely capillary attraction—the power for liquids to raise themselves in hair-like spaces or tubes. You can see this power by taking a cube of sugar and dipping the tip of it in your coffee, when the liquid will rise to every part of the sugar until filled to its saturating point, when there will be no further movement. Again, the same thing occurs when you take the wick of a lamp and as soon as one end touches the oil, the oil at once rises in the wick, filling all the tubes or spaces, and to that extent diminishes the oil in the lamp; but when saturated to the capacity of the wick, all movement ceases. Light, however, the end of the wick, when oil will be consumed to feed the flame and a movement of the oil in the wick will begin, which will continue as long as the light burns, until all the oil in the lamp is exhausted.

This is the way water is removed from the soil. The sun is the lamp; a hard surface soil with unbroken tubes or spaces, or growing plants are the wicks, and the soil to a number of feet in depth is the reservoir. As long as these wicks (the crust of the soil and plants) remain, evaporation will continue, until the soil is exhausted of its water to several feet in depth. Thus water being removed from the soil near the surface, the soil below yields up part of its moisture to make both equal.

This being a fact, it becomes a study how to stop this evaporation; and we find we can do very much in that direction, for there are certain conditions which almost cut off evaporation entirely, as you can easily test for yourself. We find that capillary attraction goes on very easily through hard but porous substances like brick, loaf sugar, hard or compact earth, etc., but with difficulty in loose substances where spaces are wide apart or broken up. For instance: Take a dry brick, place it on a wet sponge and it will draw the moisture out of the sponge; and if placed in the sun, the sponge will protect the water in the brick from being evaporated. Thus it is, that by plowing we break up the hard crust (a favorable condition for capillary attraction) with its tubes and small continuous spaces, changing it to a loose earth (without continuous spaces for the water to climb in) which acts like the sponge and forms a mulch to protect the moisture from the sun and stops evaporation, for there is no water to evaporate—the wick is cut off. That lands cultivated, but not planted to any crops, retain their moisture all summer, many of you have observed. The conditions, however, are quickly changed when such ground is growing weeds, or is planted in some crop. The reason for this is very simple—moisture and sunshine or warmth, are a necessity for the growth of all plants.

It would be an interesting study to look into the processes of plant life, observe how they grow, and the different roles that water plays in the growth of plants; but a paper of this kind will not permit of this, and for our purpose it is sufficient to state that water is taken from the soil by the roots of plants, and is carried to every part of the plant where it is exposed to the sun, and most actively evaporated by the leaves; and this movement continues as in the lamp until the soil is exhausted of its water, when growth ceases.

This teaches us that we should keep our grounds clean from weeds, for to allow them to grow robs the soil of the water necessary for their crop. As I said before, all growth is at the expense of water from the soil grown in, and the adage holds here as in everything else, "You can't eat your cake and still have it." It follows, therefore, that the larger the plants, trees or vines are the more leaves there will be, and consequently more evaporating surface for the sun to act on, and the more water will be required and evaporated. You will readily see that if you raise weeds you will only have additional wicks to draw water from your soil, and rob the crop which you wish to raise. Therefore, plowing and cultivating the soil accomplishes both purposes by keeping your soil loose and in a favorable condition to prevent capillary action on the surface where the sun can get at it, and by destroying the not wanted vegetation with their connecting wicks of stems and roots in the soil to pump it up.

Cultivation should be as often as a hard surface or crust forms. This may be sooner or later, for different kinds of soil differ in this respect. Rain and irrigation will form it as soon as the surface dries, and for this reason light cultivation should follow every rain or irrigation, when possible, as soon as the soil will work kindly; and it will be found that such rain or irrigation, when followed by stirring the top soil, will do twice the good, and the ground will remain moist as long as when it is neglected. Even when there has been no rain or irrigation, and the top soil is so dry that weeds do not sprout any more, yet if there is a crust on the ground, it should be broken up to form a thin coat of loose soil, and your vines or crops will show the benefit in no doubtful manner by renewed growth and vigor.

what to plant becomes a very serious question, and I regret that there is so little information [which is known to be facts. Most vineyardists and wine-makers are agreed about a few varieties not to plant—as the Mission, black Malvoisie and the Muscat of Alexandria—for wine. I would say that for the present we have enough Zinfandel. The reason for my saying so is because we are finding among the new varieties that are now being introduced grapes that make a much better red wine. And to find a grape that is uniformly productive, that will make a good red wine, of dark color and good keeping qualities—a wine which will be called good by the Englishman and Frenchman—will solve the viticultural problem in California; for then we can all raise grapes and be happy, for we will not be able to overdo the planting of vines. The Zinfandel of some of the best localities is fair, but the bulk of that wine made in this State has too much acidity. Much of it may be used with other wines for "blending;" but that word blending always has a suspicious sound to me, and nine times out of ten it means that the wine to be blended has a grave fault or defect—generally excessive acidity; and much good wine is spoiled by trying to make a poor wine passable. I do not wish to say that blending may not be done, to the benefit of two or more kinds, for one wine may have too little color, or not enough astringency; while another may have an excess of either, or both, unfitting it to be drank as it is, or one wine may be almost neutral in flavor and bouquet, while another may have too much. Such blends are of utility in the hands of a man who understands his calling. It is quite likely that one locality may not be able to produce a wine of such quality as will fill all the requirements of a good wine. The cold, wet, coast counties may make wine of too low spirit, lacking in color or body, while the interior counties, where there is a longer and hotter season, may be able to raise heavy-bodied wines, strong in spirit and dark in color. If these should be actual conditions, then both sections would be benefited by an interchange. This is a fact in France, and doubtless will be so here.

California has made great progress in experimenting with many varieties—especially French varieties—of grapes in the last three or four years. In fact, more has been done in that direction in that time than in all time before, and we have already results in this experimental stage to show that we shall succeed and find the grape that we need. It is not certain that the same grape will be the desired grape for all sections of California; in fact, it is almost certain that every marked difference in climate will have a different variety which may be especially suited to such climate; but there is a great variety of grapes coming from different countries with different climates, as different as the climate of our State and similar to ours. As yet experience is too limited to recommend with confidence any varieties for special localities. I wish I knew what to recommend to each locality, for I would like to be good even to myself. I can, however, tell you some general characteristics of some of the noted new kinds, as I have had probably better opportunities of seeing than many of you, and have heard the opinions of some of our most prominent growers and wine-makers. The variety which stands, perhaps, the highest of all the new ones, is the Mataro. It is claimed by those who have worked it up that it is a true claret grape, making a wine of dark color, somewhat rough to the taste when new, but improving with age—a wine that carries well and is almost impossible to spoil. I have seen it growing and bearing both in Los Angeles and Napa, and it is a good grower and heavy bearer.

Grosse Blaue is another of the grapes of very bright promise. It is very rich in tannin, making a dark, bright red wine of fine quality. The vine is healthy and a good bearer.

Carignan makes a smooth, pleasant red wine from the beginning, but it is claimed does not improve much by age. A heavy bearer, but is liable to mildew.

Trousseau makes a fair to dark-colored wine of the highest quality for flavor and bouquet, and makes in the southern counties the best port wine yet made. It makes, too, a superior red, dry wine, if the grapes are gathered when not overripe. It is free from mildew, a good grower, perhaps medium bearer. I consider it valuable, and have had some experience with it.

Cabanet, the Shirraz and Malbec are grapes which make in Europe the finest of all wines, but where I have seen them growing (Napa valley in 1883) they are very shy bearers, and for that reason of doubtful value, and would recommend them for experiment only.

Pied de Pedriex and Gammy Trincturier are two varieties of grapes whose juice even before fermentation is dark red, and when fermented makes a wine of intense color—so dark that mixing one gallon of this wine with two of white wine would make a dark red wine—and I have much faith that red wines could thus be made of superior quality. Both of these grapes are heavy bearers, and I am very sure that such dark wines will always be in demand for mixing with wines that are deficient in color, and I intend to plant largely of both.

Petit Penot or Black Burgundy is also a grape of much promise as a red wine grape, and a good bearer.

Ploussard has a good reputation about San Jose, the only place where it has yet been tried.

There are some varieties of American origin which I think may be very valuable for the warm localities in this State. I have no actual experience with them, and some of the wine men do not share in some of the beliefs I entertain. I speak of three varieties:

Lenoir, Cynthiana and Norton's Virginia—We all agree that they are phylloxera proof; that the Lenoir makes a wine of intense dark color and valuable for mixing purposes; but when I claim that the Cynthiana and the Norton makes a very superior wine, then we differ. I have drank the wine at different times, and I like it better than any other red wine. It is held, too, in high esteem East, selling for the highest price, $15 per case. This high price, no doubt, is partly owing to the limited supply. It is agreed that the wine has a most beautiful color, and that it might be valuable for blending with others, and it is said that all are good bearers. Another very valuable quality these grapes have for warm localities is that the vines retain their leaves under all trying and hot conditions of climate, and that no sunshine can scorch them, and that their large dark-green surface remains intact until winter, fully protecting the grapes. Their drawback is that all root from cuttings with difficulty, and have to be rooted in nursery before planting in vineyard. I feel very safe, however, in recommending their extensive planting, for should my belief in their good qualities for wine purposes be erroneous, then they could be used for grafting upon, and being phylloxera proof would be very valuable.

As regards grapes for the making of white wine I can speak with much more confidence, for our white wines, especially in the south, are much more satisfactory than our red wines, excepting our sweet wines, whether white or red, which are always satisfactory.

For warm localities I can with confidence recommend the Burger. I have had it now for over ten years. It is the heaviest of all bearers and makes a wine of good quality, which can be drank without tiring the palate day after day in generous quantity and with pleasant effect to mind and body. It is a wine which will always be popular on account of its neutral flavor and aroma and mild, pleasant acid. It also makes a superior brandy.

Blaue Elben makes a good white wine, is a good bearer, and usually healthy, but is not quite so desirable as Burger and some others.

Semillon and Sauvignon Vert are two very valuable grapes for making superior and excellent Sauterne, which will always bring the highest price in market. Both are very heavy bearers.

Sultana may be regarded as a grape which promises well, for it has as yet been used only for wine making to a limited extent. What I have seen was of a very good Sauterne type. It is perhaps the largest bearer of all the grapes.

There are, of course, many more varieties, some of which are known to be valuable and some are in a stage of experiment; but I have given enough varieties, and those which are likely to be of great value. To give more would be only confusing, and many of them had better be left for a time in the hands of those who follow experimenting, and thus be approved or condemned as time will teach.

There are many more points that suggest themselves which would be of interest for me to discuss. One thought suggests another, and it becomes difficult to stop. But I would tire you with these prosy details, and I will bring my remarks to a close. I cannot do so without a word of praise to the liberal people of Sacramento, in doing the lion's share in giving the people of this State this grand and beautiful Agricultural Hall. Our legislators are entitled also to the thanks of the agricultural community for the wisdom and liberality which they have ever shown in extending aid to our State Fair and the different District Fairs; for the appropriation to help build this building, and last, but not least, for the generous aid to the viticultural interests of this State, and for the maintenance of the Board of Viticulture. And this is as it should be. A land that is so favored by nature should also have sons to aid it in the rapid march of development. I may say with confidence that from every dollar so expended a hundredfold benefit has been derived.

The Board of Commissioners have all been educators, and also been educated, and viticultural people have learned more in the last three years about planting and caring for vines, about wine-making, fermentation, curing raisins, grafting, remedies for vine pests and other subjects pertaining to viticulture, than all their knowledge of previous years. I believe that Californians are the best-posted people, and are freer from prejudice on these subjects than any other people on the globe.

All the Commissioners have done something to the end, and they have done it because they wish to help on the good work of making California in fact, as well as by nature, the favored vine land of the world—not for price, but for love of country and mankind. Very much, however, has been due to its chief officer, Charles A. Wetmore, for he has devoted his entire time and mind to the study and teaching about every branch of this subject. It is a hobby with him, and, fortunately for us, his very nature impels him to be always busy in reading and observation. He seems to acquire knowledge intuitively and gather facts by much reading and study.

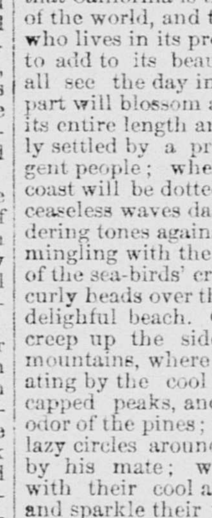
Arpad Haraszthy, the President, also has done much by his writing and speaking, and combines with his practical experience deep study and thinking. He is a hard worker and a good educator.

Matthew Cooke has helped very materially in pushing the good work along, with experiments and in devising remedies for the various diseases of plants and insect pests.

But I wish to call particular attention to the work done by Professor Hilgard and his assistants, Messrs. Rising and Morse. They are doing work of incalculable benefit to the wine interest of the State, in their analyses of soils, of wines from different parts of the State, and in experimental wine-making from grapes of the same varieties grown in various portions and climates of the State. This teaches how the same grape differs in different sections and under different climatic conditions, and how to obtain the best results in different localities. Such experiments make facts for the guidance of wine-makers and grape-growers throughout the land—saving incalculable sums to all, and aiding and benefiting the grape interest of the State to an extent that may be counted by millions.

I do not speak of this matter to eulogize these gentlemen, although they richly deserve it, but to draw attention to the work they are doing with limited means, and to urge that when the next Legislature convenes, larger appropriations should be made to enlarge these fields of useful information, which are of such great benefit to our State. It will be like bread cast upon the waters, returning to this State in a thousand fold.

I have no doubt that this is a matter which requires only to be brought to the notice of the next Legislature, for former bodies have shown an appreciation in aiding all industries which tend to the public good. They have ever shown by their acts that they recognize that the farming, the producing interest, underlies all other prosperity; that when this flourishes all trade and labor is happy. We all feel and know that California is the specially favored land of the world, and that every man or woman who lives in its productive soil is ambitious to add to its beauty and prosperity. We all see the day in the future when every part will blossom as the rose, when almost its entire length and breadth will be densely settled by a prosperous, refined, intelligent people; when our long line of seacoast will be dotted by cottages, where the ceaseless waves dash themselves in thundering tones against the cliff-bound coast, mingling with the weird and shrill sound of the sea-birds' cry; or again, lapping their curly heads over the golden sands of some delightful beach. Or these habitations will creep up the sides of our snow-capped mountains, where the air is made invigorating by the cool breeze from the snow-capped peaks, and made fragrant by the odor of the pines; where the eagle soars in lazy circles around some eyrie, occupied by his mate; where mountain streams, with their cool and dancing waters flash and sparkle their ripples and spray with ever-changing beauty in sunshine and shade. Such homes will be surrounded by vineyards, through whose dark foliage will peep purple clusters of the grape; or by trees, laden with fruit of various beautiful forms and shades of color, and there man, when his day's labor is o'er, will lingerly approach his home as he listens to the last song of birds to closing day, and be wooed by the fragrance of the rose and jasmine to his evening meal.



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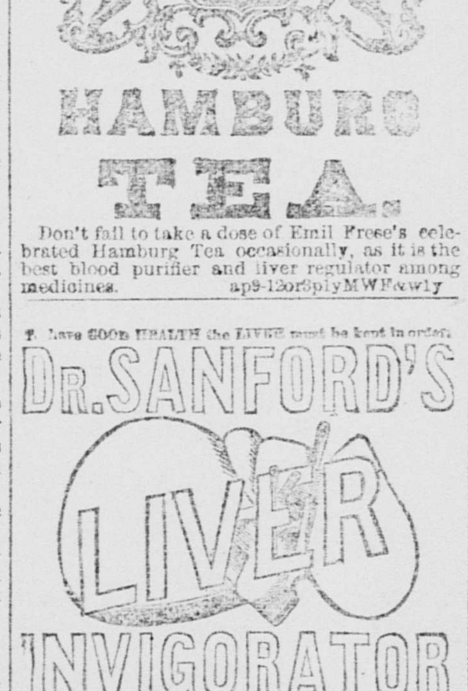

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