

From the Editor's Chair . . .



Quotation for admonishing teenagers:

"Boys should abstain from all use of wine until their eighteenth year, for it is wrong to add fire to fire."—Plato, 360 B.C.

SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION

Congratulations to our winemaking friends in Scotland who have now taken a leaf out of our book and formed the "Association of Scottish Wine Circles." A meeting was called at Shawfield Works, Rutherglen, in February and was attended by representatives of eight Scottish Circles, Helensburgh, Greenock, Ayr, Kirkmichael, Mauchlin, North Ayrshire, Atholl and Shawfield. This came about largely from the initiative of Mr. Chas. Roberts (Helensburgh) and Capt. W. McMillan, of Shawfield club. Circles in Scotland have become very active in the last two or three years and, with the help of the Ayr and Helensburgh Circles, they began a round of visits to them which culminated in this meeting. The meeting chose the Association's title, decided on a £1-per-club levy for immediate expenses, and elected Capt. McMillan (Shawfield) as chairman, Mr. Charles Roberts (Helensburgh) as secretary, and Mrs. Meikleham (Helensburgh) as treasurer. Committeemen are: Mr. Clark (Ayr), Mr. Phillips (Greenock), Mr. Young (Helensburgh), Mr. McGawn (Kirkmichael), Mr. Hunter (Law), Mr. Burr (Mauchline), Mr. Rose (North Ayrshire) and Mr. Brown (Shawfield). The association is to prepare suggestions for lectures and a judges' list, to try to train its own judges to contact horticultural shows to arrange wine classes, to arrange an annual conference each year at a different venue, and to have an association newsletter. This businesslike first meeting augurs well for the success of the movement in Scotland.

MOST POPULAR SPIRIT

Ken Shales' article this month, and a telephone query from an enthusiast who was seeking a (legal) way of making gin—we evolved a method but only time will tell whether it works!—set us thinking about this popular drink. Gin, it is not generally known, got its name from the juniper berry, from which it largely derives its flavour. It was almost certainly originally made in Holland, and was once so cheap in England (during the reign of William III, when the duty on French wines was increased and Dutch gin supplanted them) that the population consumed it in vast quantities and many abuses, exposed by Hogarth, flourished. Today, however, it is "respectable," and the most popular of all the spirits. The name comes from the French *genièvre*, or the Dutch *jenever*, both

meaning juniper, and naturally the English, who can shorten Cholmondeley into Chumley, wasted no time in shortening these into "gin." At one time gin was also commonly called Geneva, but there was no connection with Switzerland, and this was fairly obviously likely an 18th century corruption or mispronunciation of *jenever*. Incidentally, since we are bound to be asked, the legal process we suggested to our telephone inquirer was to make a maize or rye wine of only one-third the usual flavour, to concentrate its alcohol by freezing in a deep-freeze, and then to flavour with juniper berries or the flavourings now obtainable from various firms. Gin distillers use a whole range of flavourings in addition to juniper, among them lemon, ginger, coriander, angelica, orange peel, cassia, liquorice, cinnamon, cardamon and caraway—take your choice! A note in my reference book says, I note with interest: "It is possible to make acceptable but not fine gin by the essence or compound process, consisting of merely adding flavouring to alcohol." So our suggested method may not be far wrong!

THEORY AND PRACTICE!

In his book "Making Mead," Bryan Acton has an amusing chapter on "Mead, Maids and Marriage," in which he and his fellow-author, Peter Duncan, discuss the persistence of the belief that mead is a source of fertility, and a sexual stimulant. They detail how this belief is to be found in the literature of many ancient civilisations—Nordic, Hindu, Greek, Roman, Moorish, and our own, and quote Professor Jung as remarking that if one finds a belief in several unconnected cultures at different times in history one should be wary of dismissing it out of hand. Bryan, who did all the research for this chapter at the British Museum, obviously did not appreciate this truth until too late, for his fourth son has now been born; he and his wife, both in their forties and with three grown-up sons, now find themselves parents again. As his ribald friends have been quick to point out, it was perfectly in order to delve into the ancient lore of mead making and to make gallons and gallons of mead for experimental purposes, but there was no real need to proffer such drastic proof of one's theories. Bryan, however, stoutly maintains that nothing could be more convincing of the hoosting effect that mead has on fertility! The new addition to the family, named David, is hiccupping consistently, and there is little doubt that the future of wine and meadmaking is assured in at least one household in this country.

CONFERENCE TIME

By the time this issue appears the Harrogate Conference will be only a fortnight away and preparations in exhibitors' homes all over the country will be reaching a crescendo as the bottles upon which so many hopes are pinned are filled, polished, labelled and packed into their cartons ready for the great day. Have you sorted out your entries yet? Entry forms had to be in 10 days or so ago, of course, but there is still just time to put the finishing touches to any exhibit; wine "polished" by filtering now has just time to recover before the show. Many winemakers make the mistake of leaving their preparations — and particularly filtering — too late. Personally I

dislike filtering if I can possibly avoid it but there is no doubt that asbestos filtration as practised commercially does impart a brilliance to a wine which is otherwise difficult to achieve. Unfortunately there is also no doubt that such filtration does "stretch" a wine, and a wine which has been so treated will need to be rested for at least a fortnight afterwards before it regains its full character. This is a point which is often overlooked, I feel.

LIFT TO HARROGATE?

There will be a vacant seat in a car leaving Essex for Harrogate on Friday 15th, early! Contact Mr. E. V. Plant, 60 Lenmore Avenue, Grays.

GLASSES

"Why do wine glasses have stems? And what size should the glasses be?" asks a reader.

On the first question, two main reasons: (1) the stem keeps your hand from warming the wine; (2) stemmed glasses are beautiful. If you need a third reason, there's always tradition. Wine tastes the same in any clean container. A water tumbler will do, or a coffee cup. But a glass with a stem is better, for it allows you to see the wine and savour its bouquet to the full. The best shape is the sherry "copita" or the Paris goblet. See that it is large enough. Your adequate drink should at most only half fill it. This leaves space at the top to breathe in the captured fragrance—what a wine taster calls "the nose," and that is why tapered or "tulip" glasses help. The stem allows you to twirl the wine and to watch all of it, unhidden by your hand.

Another thing: coloured glasses may be great for water. Not for wine. One of the big reasons for having wine is to admire its colour. So buy clear glass.

If you are a purist, you can buy different glasses for different wines. An all-purpose glass will do the job with less fuss and feathers. Get them hand-blown. The essentials are the narrow tops to catch the bouquet, and the graceful but utilitarian stems. Fill them half-full for table wines, a quarter-full for an aperitif or a dessert type.

COMMITTEE COMMENTARY

By the time these notes appear, over 2,000 schedules for the Harrogate Conference will have been sent out and even more members will have joined the current 100 individuals and 84 societies. Entries have got off to a slow start (why does everyone leave the posting of their entry form until the last possible moment?) Our entries secretary, Mrs. D. R. Martin, would have a much easier task if people got down to thinking about their entries sooner, after all, entries should be in their show bottles well before these words are read.

Ivor Morgan is still in need of prizes for the Conference draw. It is very noticeable that the list of donors include the same names year after year. What about it, some of you winemakers? Has your society given a prize?

We now have a most impressive collection of "pots," unfortunately, most of these lack proper storage and transit boxes and holders are not always as careful as they might be. Any offers for the production of trophy cases will be most gladly considered — send them to Mr. J. C. Laker.

A further examination for admission to the Guild of Judges is to be held at Harrogate and there will be many future candidates gaining experience as stewards to the judges. If you intend to take advantage of the facilities for watching the judging in progress, remember, no smoking and no noise.

One of these days, the question of payment of travelling expenses to judges invited to officiate at the National, will have to receive serious consideration. What sounds like a simple issue is, in fact, attended by many consequential considerations which must all receive attention. The ultimate criterion must be the effect of any payments of this kind on the finances of the Association.

If anyone can spare the time, Harrogate is a fine centre for coach excursions and arrangements will be made for a representative of a local operator to be present at or near the information desk. See you at Harrogate!

B.S.B.

ALEXANDRA PALACE WAS A LOSS

At the third annual general meeting of the Middlesex Festival it was agreed that the Alexandra Palace Festival had been a loss, financially and otherwise. This was due to fog, cold weather in the morning, to the issuing of buffet suppers by the caterers without collecting the cash.

The treasurer's report showed a brighter side to this gloomy state of affairs. Clubs were sending in the shilling per head per member loan with great alacrity. The request for monies to cover the cost of the the buffet were also being sent. A vote of thanks was recorded to Cyril Baxter, who sooner than cash our "Ernie" Bond, had used his own money to cover its value. It looked as though we had turned the corner and with the aid of the Derby Draw the finances would be consolidated.

The chairman then gave an account of the viewing of the new Greenford Hall with a Festival delegation. The Mayor of Ealing, Councillor D. J. Cousins, J.P., conducted the party round. It was agreed without reservation that this would be an ideal venue for the next Festival on 24 September, 1966.

The committee then resigned and Mr. Dennis Scott took the chair. The election that followed brought back all the retiring officers, and the committee is: chairman, Mr. W. G. Newsom; secretary, Mr. H. W. Beall; treasurer, Mr. C. Baxter; show secretary, Mr. B. Traynor; assistant show secretary, Mr. D. Scott; publicity, Dr. J. C. Harrison; competition secretary, Mr. D. Pickering. The positions of assistant treasurer and secretary were held over until the next meeting.

The next Delegate meeting was fixed for Thursday, 24 March, at the Southall Community Centre commencing 8 p.m.