

From the Editor's Chair . . .



*"The honey-bee that wanders all day long . . .
Seeks not alone the rose's glowing breast,
The lily's dainty cup, the violet's lips,
But from all rank and noxious weeds he sips
The single drop of sweetness closely pressed
Within the poison chalice."*

Lesson of the Bee: Ann Botta

POISONOUS PLANTS

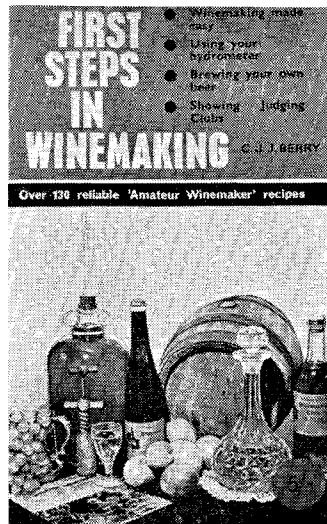
In the summer we usually receive from readers many queries as to whether it is safe to make wines from certain flowers which are not commonly used in winemaking: this year, for instance, we were asked at different times whether it is safe to make wine from buttercups, from peonies, and from lilac. It is quite clear from reference books that all these plants do contain poison in varying degrees, and it is for this reason, presumably, that recipes for wine made from them are not commonly encountered. Generally speaking one finds that for centuries country folk have made wine from almost every non-toxic fruit and plant; anything which was even slightly poisonous, however, was avoided. In these days of greatly increased winemaking, however, it seems that winemakers are more venturesome, and we regularly receive letters from readers who say they have made buttercup and lilac wine and drunk it with (apparent) impunity. This makes us wonder whether in winemaking the degree of dilution, or the effect of fermentation, is such that the resultant wine is non-poisonous.

WHAT COMES OVER ?

For example, Traveller's Joy (Clematis), Pheasant's Eye (Adonis), Buttercup (Ranunculus), Marsh Marigolds (Caltha), the Hellebores, Columbine (Aquilegia), Monkshood, or Aconite, Baneberry (Actea) and Peony (Paeonia) are all known to have caused severe illness and deaths amongst animals, but it is difficult to say how much of the poison, if any, would come over in a much diluted infusion which had been fermented. Other plants, such as Broom are only mildly poisonous, and one would have to imbibe enormous quantities to be affected. We wonder, since this is an important subject on which winemakers should be well informed, whether there is amongst our readership anyone who can write for us an authoritative article on the possible toxicity of country wines—as distinct from that of the original plants ?

NEW EDITION OF "FIRST STEPS"

For some months now we have been working on a new edition of "First Steps," publication of which we are happy to be able to announce this month. The old edition had had so many copies printed—about 150,000—that the type was badly worn, and the book had to be re-set, so we have



taken the opportunity of presenting it in modern paperback format. The cover design by George Hodgson retains the basic ingredients of the old cover, but is more attractive typographically, and the same is true of the book as a whole. The text has been thoroughly revised, brought up to date (it was first written in 1960) and considerably expanded, and yet more recipes have been added. More and better illustrations have been included, too, so that "First Steps" can proudly retain its claim still to be the handiest and most concise guide to the newcomer to our craft. Despite all these improvements in this new edition of "First Steps" (Mr. Callaghan will be glad to note!) the price remains the same—5/- (post 8d.), with a 1/- a copy discount to clubs ordering six or more.

CHANGE OF VENUE

Just before its last committee meeting on 17 July, the committee of the National Conference heard that Butlin's Camp at Minehead, which they had booked some months ago for the 1967 Conference, would not after all be available, since it is being largely reconstructed during the coming winter and may not be finished by then. Butlins offered their Bognor camp as an alternative and, since time for organisation is now rather short, this the committee accepted. So the National Conference and Show, 1967, will now be held at BOGNOR, on the same dates (7th, 8th and 9th April).

IN THE WEST

The Wales and West of England Festival, which is being held in the Union Building of the University of Bristol on Saturday, the 24th of this month, once again has an attractive programme, we notice, and 11 classes for wine or beer, and one for a display stand by a Circle. Entry forms have to be in by the 17th, so there is still time to "have a go": write for details to Mr. S. Scantlebury, 518 Path Road, Bristol 4, or Mrs. J. Nicholls, 6 Woodland Terrace, Redland, Bristol.

—THE EDITOR.