

clay, that would grow sixty bushels of wheat to the acre, and not soil suitable to grow good wine. I quite indorse Mr. Soler's remark, that a light pumice country would grow infinitely richer and better grapes for wine-making. A pumice country would grow more saccharine in the grape. A pumice-soil would produce excellent claret. There is one point I would like to impress upon the Committee, and it is this: It would be of great advantage to this country, if the wine-growing industry is to be established, to grow largely a light wine. There would be a hundred times as much of it drunk if once it were established. Where one bottle of a heavy strong wine like port or sherry, containing some 23 to 25 per cent. of alcohol, is drunk, twenty or a hundred bottles of claret would be drunk. Therefore it would in the end pay the wine-grower far better to grow a light table-wine that would be drunk by the gallon, instead of growing and making a wine that would be drunk by the glass. On my small vineyard I saw 1,700lb. weight of grapes—on the eighth of an acre. That is not the crop of grapes per acre that one would expect to grow by planting the vines on the soil they should be planted on. If a third of that quantity were grown it would be an excellent crop, and would pay remarkably well. I think it would be folly to plant vines on land that would grow sixty bushels of wheat to the acre. The value of the wine industry, if it is ever established in New Zealand, will be that it will add a value to land not adapted for grain-growing purposes or pasturage. It would add very much to the value of the poorer and secondary classes of land. The pumice country, which is in many instances very poor, would, I believe, grow an excellent wine. I believe that on a very large area at Napier, the limestone country, over which a mixture of pumice-sand is blown, would grow an excellent wine. Not only is the soil admirably adapted to the growth of the vine, but the climate of Napier is in nine seasons out of ten admirably adapted to the ripening of the grape. It is not only necessary to study the soil, but it is necessary to study the climate. The climate of New Zealand differs, as it does in all countries, but more especially, I may say, in an island like New Zealand, where one side may be cloudy and wet, and on the other coast dry and almost perpetual sunshine. Therefore it would be very necessary not only to choose the right soil, but the right climate. So convinced am I that the culture of the vine, and wine-making, may be made to pay, that I have distributed my cuttings, and given advice as to how to plant and how to attend to the cultivation of the vine, to many people. The process of wine-making is remarkably simple—to make simply a natural wine by fermenting the juice; but it is a process that I would not recommend any man with a few acres to go into. It requires care and attention.

226. And special knowledge?—I do not think there is much special knowledge required, but care and attention; and unless a man had a large area of not less than 50 acres he had better sell his wine into a central wine-making establishment.

227. You gave us to understand that from 8 to 14 per cent. is a good proportion of alcohol in New Zealand wines or continental wines?—Champagne is supposed to contain 12 per cent.; hock, 12 per cent.; Bordeaux up to 15 per cent.; and Burgundy about 14 per cent. I think there must be some mistake in introducing 40 per cent. in the proposed Bill, as it is rather misleading. I have seen the Bill now before the House.

228. Do you consider that a measure of this kind would be of advantage to the wine industry, enabling the wine producer to fortify his wine?—I think that there are many seasons in New Zealand—dull, cloudy summers as there are in France—when the natural juices of wine are very poor in sugar, and a pure wine which would not keep could be made from the juice—from the glucose which forms the alcohol. I think it would be advisable under these circumstances to enable the wine-grower to fortify his wine to the extent of several degrees—from 2° to 4°. If the natural juice would only indicate 6 per cent. he might elevate it to 9, if 8 per cent. by 2, if 10 per cent. by 1, by the addition of the alcohol distilled from the lees. But if an undue proportion of spirits is added to wine it makes a very unpleasant drink—unwholesome, intoxicating, and not a drink to be encouraged. The alcohol in wine should be present without being tasted, in the same manner as garlic should be in all soup, though no one should be able to suspect its presence.

229. Mr. Soler states that some of the wine for which he took prizes at different Exhibitions was as high as 18 per cent.; that would be a good result for naturally produced wine?—I think it is a wonderful result. Australian wines have so astonished the French wine merchants that a wine has been sent Home from Australia, I believe, up to 28 per cent. of alcohol—a natural wine. They simply would not believe it. They said it was a fraud; that it was impossible that natural wine, pressed from the grape and fermented, should produce that amount of alcohol. But it was proved to them to be the case—that the soil and climate were so good, and the grapes were so matured, that this was the actual product of the glucose in the grapes. Australian wines of that quality are never drunk as table-wine; they are too strong; but they are matured in France, and used to augment the strength of inferior wine—wine made from grapes that are very productive but very poor in saccharine. These wines are very valuable for the amount of colouring-matter and alcohol they contain.

230. Do you think it would be advisable for the Government to take this matter in hand and educate the people in the culture of the vine?—I think it is a very important industry, and would add value to a large area of land in New Zealand that is not of very great value at the present time. Anything that adds to the value of land, and to the prosperity of the country and the people, might well be taken in hand by the Government.

231. What variety of grape would you recommend should be cultivated?—I should say the Pineaux Noir or Black Burgundy.

232. Would you recommend any beginner making a vineyard to try a variety of vines, so that he could tell what quality would suit the soil best?—The white-wine and red-wine and champagne can all be made out of the same grape. The best brand of champagne is made from the Pineaux Noir. The difference between the white-wine and the red-wine is this: The red-wine is bruised and fermented in a large vat with the stalk and the skin, which contain the colouring-matter; the white-wine is made by pressing the juice from the grapes directly they are picked; the juice is fermented