

HIS MAGIC BOTTLES.

Tricks of London's Professional Wine Doctor.

HE IS AN EXPERT JUGGLER.

This Master Mixer, With His Chemicals, Spirits and Water, Will Turn Out Cheaply and With Ease Any Desired Brand, New or Old.

Some people call him a wine forger and treat him accordingly. But I prefer to regard him as an entertaining juggler who does surprising feats with a magic bottle.

His apparatus, arranged on a narrow shelf, consists of a dozen or so of small glass stoppered bottles of various colored liquids, a big jar of caramel and another of silent spirit. There are other things, such as an aerated water plant, but it is openly displayed downstairs. For the aerated water plant is the wine doctor's ostensible calling.

"Fact is there's too much wine made already," he says—"real wine, I mean. It's not wanted. It keeps down the price. Besides, it's wasting good land to plant it with grapes just to keep up the old myth that they're necessary for wine making."

He draws my attention to his row of bottles with a comprehensive wave of the hand.

"See those? Wine in embryo, tons of it! Give me good water"—he indicates an innocent looking tap in the corner—"and I'll turn you out a bottle of anything you like to name—while you wait!"

That is what I have come for. I ought perhaps to explain that I originally met the doctor in a distant colony, where men talk more openly than they do here, and—well, he knows that what I may set down in print about him will convey no clew to his identity.

"Mind you," he goes on, "I don't object to real wine in moderation. My own best qualities have a base of sound sherry or burgundy. Take claret, for instance. Why send to Bordeaux when with a gill of Australian burgundy or Spanish rioja, water—watch while I do it—a few drops of French vinegar and 25 per cent of potato spirit that's colorless and odorless and only costs a few pence per gallon I can give you chemically the same thing with more alcoholic strength?"

Presto! It is done. He pours some of the result into a wineglass and hands it to me. It has the look, smell and taste of the wine for which I pay, and is, of a bottle.

"Total cost a fraction over three-pence, bottle and label included," he exults; "hock and sauternes the same. A little real sherry for the base, sufficient acidity—say citric—an astringent like tannic acid to dry them, spirit and water in proportion to dry them, and there you are! Leave out the tannic and use white sugar sirup instead and you have chablis."

A dispensing druggist in a hurry could not make up a prescription more quickly than he manufactures wine before my eyes. I taste a "niersteiner."

"Light elegant dinner wine with good body, from the Hogen-Hochheimer district," he remarks in the tone of one quoting from a wine circular. "Now try the graves. Dry and savory, eh? The chablis soft and round, isn't it? You quite recognize the vintages you've had to pay respectable prices for?"

Is it so, or has he the power of suggestion, like a prestidigitator, who can make you believe that you hear your eighteen carat gold hunter ticking inside a boiled egg?

"These, of course, are new wines," he explains. "The addition of a teaspoonful of sterilized glycerin ages them at once. You might remember that when you've got a new whisky. It's worth knowing."

I know some whiskies that would need a pint of glycerin to the bottle at least to make them palatable, and I begin for the first time to suspect their source!

"A whisky or brandy properly made ought not to want glycerin, though," he observes, as if he had read my thoughts. "Here's a brandy that I made yesterday from silent spirit and oenanthic ether, colored and sweetened with caramel, that hardly differs from well matured cognac. That's because it's been heated to 140 degrees F."

My palate may be getting corrupted, I do not know, but in spite of natural suspicions the brandy seems above reproach. So does the champagne, which is his next dexterous concoction. As far as I can see it consists merely of a mixture of chablis and hock, with which a little aerated water is required. He calls it extra dry. I admit that is what I should have thought it under the disguise of tinfoil and a label.

The doctor shrugs his shoulders. "Anybody can print labels and brand corks," he declares contemptuously. "Labels! The average man will drink anything and enjoy it so long as it's labeled with one of the few names he's acquainted with—beaune or rudshelmer, for instance. He imagines these are vintages, but they're only districts and don't mean more than the collective expressions beer or whisky. The thing is to adapt the liquor to the label. If you want an illustration of what I mean, here's one."

From the bottles on the shelf he takes benzoic acid, benzoic ether, acetic acid and ether, oenanthic ether and glycerin, a drop or two of each, and fills up the glass with the ever indispensable alcohol. I raise the colorless

mixture to my lips, and, behold, it is maraschino!

"No troublesome or expensive processes for me," he protests. "There you have about a pennyworth of different essences that you'd pay sixpence for in a restaurant. I add cochineal to it and it's kirschwasser, vanilla and it's whatever you like to call or label it. You're astonished."

"If you were to tell a wine merchant what I've told and shown you he'd pretend astonishment, and if you printed it some of them—the ones the cap fits—would write to the papers for the sake of advertisement and call you names."

"What about yourself, though?" I ask, with polite anxiety.

"Oh, I'm all right," he declares. "In the first place, I'm of a retiring nature. I'm doing a respectable trade in 'minerals' and only deal with reliable people. Besides, I take precautions—protect myself. You've got to with a government like ours. I buy an occasional cask of real stuff from a good wine district, with labels for bottling. Yes, it lasts me a good while—a few thousand bottles to the cask, in fact!" He allows himself a wise little smile.

"But that's not what I wanted to talk to you about. I've been thinking. You can see for yourself what a lot of money there is in my business—about 200 per cent profit roughly. Now, can't we deal? If you were to stand in with me—put in a bit so as to enable me to increase my turnover—your name needn't appear, you know—we might do big things. You see, my wines!"

It sounds tempting. I almost yield to it.

"Do you drink them yourself?" I ask cautiously.

"Not me!" disclaims the wine doctor. That settles it. I believe he's a fraud after all. Anyhow I've never yet seen "conscience money" to the chancellor of the exchequer, and I never will.—Armiger Barclay in London Mail.

WAVE CARVING.

Queer Franks Played by the Sea on the Yuha Plain.

In the southeastern portion of California is a great desert plain known as the Yuha plain, which lies below the level of the sea. It is a portion of the Colorado desert, in which is a depression below sea level having an area of 3,900 square miles. Some portions of this great sink are 265 feet below the level of the sea. The Yuha plain is less than fifty feet below.

One portion of this plain several miles in extent is covered with remarkable stones—remarkable in that they have been shaped into many curious forms, and that independent of the hand of man. The waves of an ancient sea which covered the region in the prehistoric ages fashioned the stones, producing many resemblances to objects manufactured in workshops today or found in nature. There are stone balls varying in size from a marble to a cannon ball, many of them as round and smooth as those cast for the great guns of a man-of-war.

There are stone dinner plates as thin as the porcelain or china found on the tables of our dining room and nearly as perfect in shape. Sometimes these are found in piles two or three feet high, as though arranged by the hand of man. There are stone flowers, stone cabbages, stone dumbbells, stone canes, stone quoits, stone boomerangs, and even resemblances to birds and animals are discovered.

The peculiar freak of the waves in taking up the art of carving in this part of the plain is accounted for by the conformation of the desert at this point. When the waters of the sea occupied this region they were a part of the gulf of California, the nearest point of which is now ninety miles distant. The tides came in to this ancient sea through the gulf from the south. They rolled up against what is now known as Superstition mountain. The waters swept back against a low range of hills on the opposite side of the Yuha plain and, recoiling, were again thrown back toward the Superstition mountain, finally passing out at about the point whence they entered this arm of the gulf. This kept the waters at that particular point always in a swirl. This circular motion wore the rocks round or nearly so, laminated some of them, carving the plates and thin pieces, kept small rocks and boulders revolving, turning out the balls and dumbbells and in like manner shaping up other freaks by their peculiar actions.—St. Nicholas.

Hawaii's Show Volcano. Kilauea, the spur of the great Mauna Loa, is a well behaved volcano, as it can be visited with perfect safety, even if in eruption—as it is from time to time—when exhibitions of activity are given that are worth traveling thousands of miles to witness. This volcano is on the island of Hawaii, and the shortest possible trip that can be made to it from Honolulu covers four days. This allows only half a day at the volcano, which is much too short a time to study the workings of what is considered one of the world's wonders. A week at least should be given to the trip. The sea voyage is always more or less rough, but the boats, although small, are comfortable. From Hilo, where the water trip ends, there is a railroad ride of about eighteen miles through the big Olaa sugar plantation. This is followed by a stage run of eleven miles over a road leading through a perfect fairyland of tropical foliage, the highway being lined on either side with roses, magnolias and ferns, which last grow to the size of trees without losing any of their delicate beauty. Returning by the other route, there is a stage drive of thirty-five miles over lava runs and across the great flow which ran into the sea from Mauna Loa several years ago.—Leslie's Weekly.

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