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XXXII. *An Account of the Tokay and other Wines of Hungary, by Sylveſter Douglafs, Eſquire: Communicated by Edward Poore, Eſq, F. R. S.*

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1773. **A**S the growth, quantity, and value of the Tokay wine are little known in this country, and the popular notions concerning them are in general erroneous, it may be a matter both of ſome curioſity and uſe, to throw together what I was able to collect on this ſubject, in the country where it grows, as well as from the chief proprietors of it, both in Hungary and at Vienna. I ſhall ſubjoin a brief account of the other moſt remarkable Hungarian wines.

Geography.

The town, or rather village, of Tokay, from whence this celebrated wine derives its name, ſtands at the foot, and to the eaſt of a high hill, cloſe by the conflux of the river Bodrug, with the Theis or Tibiſcus. In the Norimberg map of Hungary, it is erroneouſly placed between theſe rivers, for it is on the weſt ſide of both. The inhabitants are chiefly either Hungarians of the Proteſtant religion, or Greeks, who came originally from Turkey, but have

have been long settled here for the purpose of carrying on the wine trade. During the two last centuries, this country being almost the constant theatre of war, there was a citadel near the town, but now there is not the smallest vestige of it remaining.

The hills on which the wine grows lie all to the west of the river Bodrog, and beginning close by the town of Tokay, extend westward and northward from thence, and occupy a space of perhaps ten English miles square; but they are interrupted and interspersed with a great many extensive plains, and several villages, such as Talia, Mada, Tarczal, Szombor, Benye, and Toleswa. Near some of these, particularly Talia and Tarczal, the wine is better than what grows on the hill of Tokay, but it all goes under the same general name.

The vineyards extend beyond the 48th degree of *Latitude*. northern latitude.

The soil, on all the hills where the wine grows, *Soil*. is a yellow clayish earth, extremely deep, and there are interspersed through it large loose stones, which, as I was told, are limestone; but I had not an opportunity of examining them.

As the hills do not run in a regular chain, but are *Exposure*. scattered among the intervening plains, you meet with all kinds of exposures upon them, and there is wine on them all, except perhaps where they are turned directly towards the south. Yet the general rule is, that the exposures most inclining to the south, the steepest declivities, and the highest part of those declivities, produce the best wine. These circumstances shew the advantage of choosing your wine on the ground.

ague was so well convinced of this, that a few years before his death he undertook a journey from England to Tokay, and continued there several months, in order to be sure of having the best and most genuine wine.

**Quantity.**

It is a vulgar error, that the Tokay wine is in so small quantity, as never to be found genuine, unless when given in presents by the court of Vienna. The extent of ground on which it grows is a sufficient proof to the contrary. It is a common desert wine in all the great families at Vienna, and in Hungary, and is very generally drank in Poland and Russia, being used at table in those countries, like Madeira in this.

**Proprietors.**

Another vulgar error is, that all the Tokay wine is the property of the Empress Queen. She is not even the most considerable proprietor, nor of the best wine; so that every year she sells off her own, and purchases from the other proprietors, to supply her own table, and the presents she makes of it. The greatest proprietor is the Prince Trautzon, an old man, at whose death, indeed, his estate will escheat to the crown; but many others of the German and Hungarian nobility have large vineyards at Tokay; most of the gentlemen in the neighbourhood have part of their estates there; the Jesuits college at Ungwar has a considerable share of the best wine; and besides these, there are many of the peasants who have vineyards, which they hold of the Queen, or other lords, by paying a tythe of the annual produce.

**Grapes.**

There is never any red wine made at Tokay, and, as far as I recollect, the grapes are all white. They

They are supposed to have a particular flavour, which I own I could not perceive, though they were beginning to be ripe when I was there, in the end of August (1768), and I have often eat of such as have been brought to Vienna.

The vintage is always as late as possible. It commonly begins at the feast of St. Simon and Jude, October 28, sometimes as late as St. Martin's, November 11. This is determined by the season, for they have the grapes on the vines as long as the weather permits, as the frosts, which from the end of August are very keen during the nights, are thought to be of great service to the wine. By this means it happens, that when the vintage begins, a great many of the grapes are shrivelled, and have, in some measure, the appearance of dried raisins. Vintage.

There are four sorts of wine made from the same grapes, which they distinguish at Tokay by the names of Essence, Auspruch, Maslsasch, and the common wine. Different sorts.

The process for making them is as follows.

The half-dried and shriveled grapes, being carefully picked out from the others, are put into a perforated vessel, where they remain as long as any juice runs off by the mere pressure of their own weight. This is put into small casks, and is called the Essence. 1. The Essence.

On the grapes from which the essence has run off, is poured the expressed juice of the others from which they had been picked, and then they tread them with their feet. The liquor obtained in this manner stands to ferment during a day or two, after which it is poured into small casks, which are kept in 2. Auspruch.

in the air for about a month, and afterwards put into the cellars. This is the *Auspruch*.

3. *Mafslafch*.

The same process is again repeated, by the addition of more of the common juice to the grapes which have already undergone the two former pressures, only they are now also wrung with the hands, and this gives the *Mafslafch* \*.

The fourth kind.

The fourth kind is made by taking all the grapes together at first, and submitting them to the greatest pressure. It is chiefly prepared by the peasants, who have not a sufficient quantity of grapes, and cannot afford the time and apparatus necessary for making the different sorts. It is, I believe, entirely consumed in the country, and forms the common *Vin du pais*.

The *Essence* is thick, and never perfectly clear, very sweet and luscious. It is chiefly used to mix with the other kinds, and when joined to the *Mafslafch*, forms a wine equally good with the *Auspruch*, and often sold for it.

The *Auspruch* is the wine commonly exported, and what is known in foreign countries under the name of *Tokay*. The following are the best rules for judging of it; though in this, and all similar cases, it requires experience to be able to put such rules in practice.

1. The colour should neither be reddish (which it often is) nor very pale, but a light silver.

2. In trying it, you should not swallow it immediately, but only wet your palate and the tip of the

\* I cannot answer for the orthography of this and the foregoing term, having written them by the ear, as they were pronounced.

tongue. If it discover any acrimony to the tongue (or bite it), it is not good. The taste ought to be soft and mild.

3. It should, when poured out, form globules in the glass, and have an oily appearance.

4. When genuine, the strongest is always of the best quality.

5. When swallowed, it should have an earthy astringent taste in the mouth, which they call the *Taste of the root*. The Poles, particularly, are fond of this astringency and austerity in their Tokay. There is so great a difference between the Tokay used in Poland and what I drank both at Tokay and Vienna, which, I am sure, was of the best and most genuine kind, that I am inclined to think their wine is composed of the *Maslsch*, which, by the severe pressure it suffers, must carry with it much of the astringent quality which, in all grapes, resides in the skin, and a smaller proportion than usual of the essence. But this is mere conjecture.

Besides the qualities already mentioned, all Tokay wine has an aromatic taste; so peculiar, that nobody, who has ever drank it genuine, can confound it with any other species of wine. The only species that bears a resemblance to it grows, in a very small quantity, in the Venetian Friule, and is only to be met with in private families at Venice, where, in the dialect of the place, it is called *Vin piccolit*.

The Tokay wine, both the *Essence* and *Auspruch*, Age- keeps to any age, and improves by time. I have drank of the latter at Vienna, which had been in the same cellar since the year 1686. It is never good till it is about three years old.

Measure.

All the sorts are generally kept in small casks, called antheils, which *legally* hold 80 Hungarian mediæ, a measure containing about two thirds of an English quart. When you buy it of the gentlemen who are proprietors, you have commonly more than the legal quantity in the antheil; if from the Greek merchants, always less.

Price.

The particular year, or vintage, and the age, vary the price of this as of all other wines.

The medium price of the antheil of Essence is between 60 and 70 ducats. It is sometimes sold on the spot for more than 100. Prince Radzivil paid 300 ducats for two antheils about four years ago. When the price is 60 ducats, and the antheil large measure, that is, about 90 mediæ, it is exactly a ducat the English quart.

The price of the Auspruch is from 26 to about 30 ducats the antheil. This is at the rate of two florins, or near a crown the English quart. The Empress Queen, a little before I was at Tokay, purchased some of vintage 1754 at 33 ducats, and this was looked upon as an extraordinary price. The variety in the prices of the Essence and Auspruch, accounts for the opposite relations of people, who say sometimes that it costs half a guinea, sometimes five shillings, on the spot.

There are people who come every year from Poland, about the time of the vintage, to choose their own wine on the ground, and see it carefully managed. But it is a false opinion of many, that they contract for the wine of several years forwards: no such thing has ever been practised. For these last twenty years the court of Petersburg has had an

agent, who resides constantly at Tokay, for the purpose of buying wine. The present agent is a major in the Russian service, and formerly was a major-general. He commonly purchases every year from 40 to 60 antheils of Auspruch, but never of any other sort.

One of the principal proprietors, who resides at Caschaw \*, told me, that he would engage to deliver the best old Tokay (i. e. Auspruch), in bottles, at London, for a ducat a bottle, containing two thirds of a quart, or considerably cheaper in cask, and would put his own seal on it, and insure it.

It is much the best way to transport it in casks; for when it is on the seas, it ferments three times every season, and refines itself by these repeated fermentations. When in bottles, there must be an empty space left between the wine and the cork, otherwise it would burst the bottle. They put a little oil on the surface, and tie a piece of bladder on the cork. The bottles are always laid on their sides in sand.

I am persuaded an English merchant, or company of merchants, would find their account in establishing a correspondence with one of the principal proprietors in the country, or in sending an agent to reside at Tokay, who might watch the opportunity of the good vintages, choose the best exposures, and bargain with the proprietors themselves. They should have cellars there to keep the wine to a proper age, and an agent at Warsaw, and another at Dantzic, to receive it. This is the road it must take. The carriage, as I was informed, from Tokay to the fron-

\* The Baron Vefey, president of the chamber of Caschaw.



tiers of Poland, costs the Polish merchants two ducats the antheil, and three florins of duty. The duties in Poland amount to about 14 florins the antheil. The carriage down the Vistula cannot be very expensive. Every charge included, I am persuaded the best old Tokay might be sold in London at half a guinea the quart bottle, which is 100 *per cent.* less than what the worst often costs.

### OF THE OTHER HUNGARIAN WINES.

There is not, I believe, in Europe any country which produces a greater variety of wines than Hungary. I have been told, at Vienna, of an entertainment given to the Empress Queen at Presburg, by an Hungarian nobleman, where there were above a hundred different sorts of wine produced, all the growth of that country. Many of them are of an excellent quality, and would undoubtedly be a source of great commerce and riches to that kingdom, if it enjoyed a maritime, instead of its inland, situation.

The most valuable white wines after the Tokay, are,

1. *The St. George wine*, which grows near a village of that name, about two German miles north of Presburg, and in the same latitude with Vienna. This wine approaches the nearest of any Hungarian wine to Tokay. Formerly they used to make Aufpruch at St. George; but this was prohibited by the court about sixteen years ago, it being supposed that it might hurt the traffic of the Tokay wine. The prohibition shews, that the method of preparing the

the Tokay is thought to have a share in its peculiar qualities.

2. *The Edenburg wine*, resembling the St. George, but inferior in quality and value. Edenburg is a town situate about nine German miles north-west of Presburg.

3. *The Carlowitz wine*, something like that of the *Côte rotie* on the banks of the Rhone. Carlowitz is the seat of the metropolitan of the Greek church in Hungary. It stands on the banks of the Danube, between 45 and 46 degrees of latitude.

The best red wines are,

1. *The Buda wine*, which grows in the neighbourhood of the antient capital of the kingdom. This wine is like, and perhaps equal to, Burgundy, and is often sold for it in Germany. A German \* author of the last century says, that a great quantity of this wine used to be sent to England in the reign of James I. over land by Breslaw and Hamburg, and that it was the favourite wine both at court and all over England.

2. *The Sexard wine*, a strong deep-coloured wine, not unlike the strong wine of Languedoc, which is said to be sold at Bordeaux for claret. The Sexard wine on the spot costs about 5 creuzers, or  $2\frac{1}{2}$  d. a bottle. It belongs to the Abbot of Constance, and is chiefly consumed in Germany. Sexard is on the Danube, between Buda and Esseh.

3. *The Erlaw wine*, which is reckoned at Vienna almost equal to that of Buda. Erlaw is in Upper

\* Hevelius Silesiograph. 2 vols. art. *Breslaw*.

Hungary, south-west of Tokay, between 47 and 48 degrees of latitude.

4. *The Gros Wardein wine*, a strong bodied wine, and very cheap. It belongs chiefly to the Duke of Modena, whose ancestor got a large estate in this country, in grant from the Emperor Leopold, as a reward for his services in the Hungarian wars. Gros Wardein is an old fortress near the confines of Transylvania, between 46 and 47 degrees of latitude.