

C H A P. XI.

TOKAY—ITS VINEYARDS AND WINE—SOIL—LITHOLOGY—
AND SALT MAGAZINE.

FROM the situation of this town, on a rich soil, and at the junction of two considerable rivers, one would expect to find it great and opulent: why it is not, I do not know. It is but a little paltry town, though it has certainly a fine situation. The inn was so bad, that the Director of the Royal Salt Magazine, to whom I had a letter of introduction, would not suffer me to stay there, but brought me to his own house, where I remained, and was hospitably entertained during my stay here.

Tokay, not unlike a great part of mankind, derives fame from the merits of others. It produces only a small part of the excellent wine that bears its name; but it has had the good fortune of giving it to a hilly district extending twenty or thirty miles northward: in breadth it is much less considerable. In this tract of country lie Tarezal, Zombor, Made, Ratka, Talya, Szanto, Keresztur, Kifs-falu, Benye, Tolcsva, Liszka, Horvati, Zfadany, Vames-Uifalu, Olaszi, Patak, Karoly falva, Trautzon falva and Uihilly. Some of these towns

are much greater than Tokay, and produce a wine no ways inferior to it. But Tokay has not always had this honour. Nicholas Olaus, who wrote in the sixteenth century, does not place the county of Zemplin, which Tokay is in, amongst those which produce the best wine; he enumerates only Sermia, Sumeg, Barony, Presburgh, Oedenberg, Heves Borfod, Abäuivar, Vesprim, and Salad; yet he speaks of Szanto and Lifzka, which belong to the Tokay district, and says "*Oppida vini optimi feracia.*" It seems that Tokay obtained this distinguishing honour under the government of Rakotzy, through his keeping here the wine which he received from this district.

But the wine generally known in foreign countries by the name of Tokay, is a particular kind, and made only in small quantities in different parts of this district, and is sold even here very dear; it is here called *Ausbruche*, and is made by mixing a portion of luscious half-dried and shrivelled grapes with the common ones. As it will probably be agreeable to most of my readers to know the whole œconomy of the vineyards of the celebrated Tokay; I will devote the greatest part of the present chapter to this subject, and relate the management of them from the first planting of the vine to the perfection of its juice.

The vines when first planted are cut down at a knot, to within a span of the soil, and the superfluous young shoots are cut off every spring at the same place: by this means a head is formed, which
increases

increases yearly; sometimes they are very large, but the best size is that of a child's head. When the vines have repaid by their fruit the industrious labourer for his trouble, which is late in autumn, the stumps are covered an inch or two thick with foil, and then each represents a mole-hill. Often, it is said, the husbandman is seen following his gatherers occupied in this work, lest early frost or snow should prevent its being done; sometimes even the branches, if designed for layers, are covered. Some vine-dressers take out the sticks and lay them in bundles, others leave them standing. As soon as the winter is over, and the weather begins to grow milder, which is about the middle of March, and often at the beginning, the stumps are again uncovered, and the foil about them turned up: this labour is followed by the dressing, which is generally done as soon as the season will permit; that is, at the end of March, or at the beginning of April. Time, severe winters, and spring frosts, cause ravages in the vineyards: to make good these deficiencies, fresh vines must be raised. This is done in different ways, by transplanting, and more commonly by planting the cuttings of known good and sound vines; and this is the next business to be performed. The cuttings (the points of which soon withering must be cut away) should be put knee-deep in the soil, with a little dung; the other end to be only a span above ground, which should be covered up till it is probable it has begun to shoot, and the spring weather is no longer to be feared. Or they are raised by layers. Here the foil is dug out from about the stump and roots till the hole is a foot and a half deep; these then are
trod:

trod to the bottom of it, so that the branches, where they are inserted in the stump, are under ground, and the remaining part is laid down and covered with the soil mixed with a little dung; so that their points only reach a few inches above the surface of the soil. To each of these branches, which with time becomes a new vine, a stick is given. Then follows the severest labour of the vineyard, the digging or turning up the soil: this is repeated three or four times before the vintage. Soon after the first digging, the sticks are driven in, to which the shoots, when they are about two feet long, are lightly bound: when they are grown to five feet they are better bound, once pretty fast above, and once looser in the middle. Weeds by this time again begin to grow, and the soil is again turned up to destroy them, and to keep it light: but during the flowering of the vine, nothing is done; Nature is left entirely to herself. This being over, the sticks are driven firmer in the ground; the vines which may have come untied are better secured; the too luxurious growth is taken away, and the vines are so ordered that they may require no farther care till the vintage; only the soil is once more turned up. Now the husbandman's toil is over, and he waits for the blessing of Providence in a fine vintage—with anxiety—for very uncertain are his profits.

Though in warm seasons the earliest grapes are ripe in the middle of August, it is the latter end of September before the greater part are eatable; and as the grapes for pressing must be fully ripe, the
vintage

vintage is delayed as long as possible; generally to the feast of Saint Simon and Saint Jude, which is the 28th of October; and if the weather is fine, the later the better, on account of having the greater quantity of the half-dried luscious grapes, or, as they are here called, *Troken-beers*; which are absolutely necessary to form the *Aufbruche*, that kind of Tokay wine which is so much esteemed, and which is called by us Tokay. As soon as the grapes begin to grow ripe, guards are placed in the vineyards, not only to prevent the grapes from being stolen, but to drive away the birds from them.

At last the season of rejoicing comes, the vintage. In every country this is a time of mirth and gaiety; but particularly so about Tokay. Many of the great nobility, though they have no estate here, and live in distant parts of Hungary, have a vineyard here, and business as well as pleasure brings many of them at this season; and the dealers in this article come likewise to make their contracts, and the friends of all concerned, from a tacit invitation, come to join in the general festivity: the vintage is preceded by fairs, so that during this season all is life and bustle.

To the *Troken-beers*, or half-dried luscious grapes, Tokay, that is, the Tokay *Aufbruche*, is indebted for all its richness: but these depend greatly on the weather; every year does not produce them either in the same quantity or quality; in some years they fail altogether. If the frosty mornings set in too soon, and, before the grapes are

ripe, destroy the connection between them and the vines, the *Ausbruche* is harsh and sour; yet frosty mornings, when not too soon, are advantageous to them: if wet weather sets in at the time they ought, through the influence of the sun, to lose their watery parts, and to be turned to sirup, it may easily be conceived what will be the consequence. These *Troken-beers* are always trifling in quantity compared with the other grapes; and in some years, as I have just said, there are none at all.

The season for gathering being come, young and old, with merry hearts and active hands, repair to the vineyards, and ease the vines of their precious loads: but in doing this, the *Troken-beers* are picked from the rest, and kept apart; and they are often sold to those who make *Ausbruche*, by those who do not. The spoil carried home, the ordinary grapes are trod apart, and the juice is taken out, and then the remaining juice is pressed out from the skins and stalks: both are commonly put together in tubs, no difference being generally made between the juice trod out and that pressed out. This when fermented forms the common wine; which is not sent out of the country as a delicacy, and never reaches our island. The *Troken-beers* are likewise trod, and then have the consistency of honey: to this is added the common juice; and as the richness of the *Ausbruche* or *Mascklafs* depends on the greater quantity of the juice of the *Troken-beers*, the proportions vary according to the intent of the owner. The common proportion for an *antal* of *Ausbruche*,
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which contains seventeen or eighteen English gallons, is two bushels of *Troken-beers*; and for a cask of *Maschblafs*, which is only a less rich liquor, the same quantity is taken: but then the cask is about equal to two *antals*; so that only half the quantity of *Troken-beers* are used to make *Maschblafs* as are used to make *Aufbruche*. But as the *police* does not interfere in this matter, and every one does as he thinks proper, these two liquors are often very near alike, and the principal difference then consists in the size of the casks.

The mixture being made, it is strongly stirred together. By this operation the seeds are separated from the flesh of the grapes, and come to the top, and are taken out with a net or sieve: thus it remains in the same vessel, covered over for a couple of days, till fermentation begins; and this is suffered to continue about three days, according to the weather; that is, till the fermentation has properly mixed the fleshy pulp of the *Troken-beers* with the common juice: it should be stirred every morning and evening, and the seeds carefully taken out. If the fermentation is continued too long, the wine receives from the skins a disagreeable brown colour, and forms a deal of yeast and sediment in the cask. Nothing now remains to be done, but to pour this liquor through a cloth or sieve into the barrels in which it is to be kept. The residuum is then pressed; some even after this, pour the common juice upon this pressed residuum; but if the press is good the common wine gains little by it.

When a considerable quantity of the *Troken-beers* remains a short time together, some of their thick juice or sirup is expressed and runs out: this is carefully collected as a great delicacy; it is called *essence*, and has the consistence of treacle. No art is used to fine these wines, nor to make them keep. The barrels should be kept full, and their outsides free from wet and mildew.

Ausbruche is not exclusively made about Tokay: there is a Saint George, a Ratschdorf, and a Menische *Ausbruche*, and this latter I prefer to that of Tokay; it is red: some is made likewise in the county of Oedenberg.

The best wine does not long remain in the place of its growth: a great part of it is soon sent into the cellars of the nobility in other parts of Hungary; and the greatest quantity is to be found in the counties of Zips and Liptau in the north, from whence it is sent into Poland. The Polish Magnates are the best customers, particularly for the *Ausbruche*, which is the dearest European wine that is: here in the country, a bottle of the best is valued always at about a ducat, that is near half-a-guinea. I dined once at the coffee-house at Pest with a few friends: we had only a plain dinner, for which we paid but a moderate price: besides common wine we had some Tokay: when the waiter came to be paid, he asked each how many glasses he had drank of it, and then added twenty creutzers (about eight-pence) for each glass to the scot of every drinker of Tokay.—

Tokay

Tokay is no doubt a fine wine, but I think no ways adequate to its price: there are few of my countrymen, except on account of its scarceness, who would not prefer to it good claret or burgundy, which do not cost above one-fourth of the price. Some of the sweetish Spanish wines, begging its pardon, are in my opinion equally good; and unless it be very old, it is too sweet for an Englishman's palate: but, as I have often said, *de gustibus non est disputandum*; and I hope my good Hungarian friends will pardon my want of judgment, though I know how much they are prepossessed in favour of their *cara patria* and its dear produce. I have heard many of them say, that the worst Hungarian wines were superior to the best French. How much they have said about *their vegetable gold*, found growing amongst the bunches of grapes, is pretty well known, as this story is to be found almost in every Hungarian author who has sung the praises of his country, though the *gens éclairés* pretend not to believe it. Mr. Groffinger, who within this year or two has written a large work in Latin upon the natural history of Hungary, gives this explanation of the colour of the teeth of sheep. "*Si vero fulgor perennis est, auro tribui potest, quod in vegetabilibus Montanæ Hungariæ delitescit.*" And Mr. Windish, one of their best Geographers, says in a work written about 1780, nay I will write it at full length, about *seventeen hundred and eighty*, lest the reader should think the printer by mistake had put a seven for a four, that rye, through the excellency of the Hungarian soil, is turned into wheat. — But happy are the people who are thus proud of their country,

and who think their territory an earthly paradise, and their government a model of perfection; yes, and happy is the pair who find in each other every charm and every virtue; and the parents who see in their children every juvenile merit; and the children who look up to their parents as their guardian angels. Without these instinctive attachments, patriotism, connubial love, parental kindness, and filial affection, would hang by a very slender thread, and the smallest breath of jarring interests would overturn public and private felicity: and so I am glad when I see the Hollander look sour when he hears his country cursed as a foggy bog, fit only to serve as a peat-moss for the rest of Europe; and I have often at *Auld Reeky* heard with pleasure the North Briton greet his friend with:—"Weel, Donald, is na this a *fine* cauld rainy morning?"—"Indeed is it, Sandy, a *fine* cauld rainy morning."

Though all Tokay wine does not grow at Tokay, yet all the favourable situations about this town are covered with vines. The soil is remarkably fine and light, just like *Tripoli*: it is quite a powder, of a light brown colour, and makes a considerable effervescence with acids: it has nothing of the nature of sand, nor is it at all mixed with gravel or stones; only now and then a few loose pieces of Porphyry are found amongst it. It is very deep: where ravines have been formed by the rains it may be seen that it is several yards thick. Towards the top of the hill, immediately above the town, it is more rocky, and there probably it is not so deep. I was
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in doubt of what nature I should consider this soil to be; and at a loss to explain how so deep and light a soil should exist upon so rapidly sloping a hill. Towards the bottom, facing the river, there are some precipices which throw, I think, considerable light upon this matter. Here, in this soft, friable soil, I observed the same structure I had often seen in traps and basaltes, when in an incipient state of decomposition—a disposition to assume rude and irregular prismatic and columnar forms: but a large angular block imbedded in the soil threw the greatest light upon it. This, though with the angular shape of a fragment of stone, differed from the soil only in being a little darker in colour, and not quite so friable; yet it might be cut like cheese, and it made an effervescence with acids. From these circumstances, I am led to consider the soil, as well as the block, to be some kind of trap or basalt decomposed.

In a deep ravine, where a narrow road has been made, I found the rocks composed of that kind of Porphyry called by Mr. Werner *Porphyrschiefer*, the *Porphyrius schistofus* of the Syst. N. Lin.*; though Mr. Born, in his nineteenth letter to Mr. Ferber, says, the hill on which the Tokay wine grows, is Argillaceous Shistus (*Thonschiefer*), and from hence infers that the *Obsidian* found here is not indigenous,

* *Porphyrius schistofus*.

Ex Petrofilice fusca lineis vel venis interruptis tenuibus subparallelis albidis, particulis albis Feldspati, & pellucidis Adulariæ.

but has been brought by some means or other from the Carpathian mountains. It must be mentioned in extenuation of such an erroneous account, that Mr. Born's journey to Tokay happened soon after he met with the dreadful accident at Felfo-Banya; and this so ruined his health as to prevent him from examining these hills himself: and this he confesses in his nineteenth letter to his friend Ferber, dated at Schemnitz—"It is impossible (says he) for me to tell you how much I have suffered in my journey of ten days from Nagy-Banya to this place: I was chiefly carried in and out the carriage; each stone on which I touched; each shaking of the carriage, doubled the pains which I feel throughout my whole body. The dry cough, which does not leave me, still prevents my sleep. In this painful state of body it was impossible for me to examine the hills I passed by." Indeed, in his last work, his *Catalogue Méthodique*, he gives a quite different account of these hills, and on the same subject, the Obsidian. For on the article "*Verre volcanique en grains noirs, &c.*" he says, "*Les collines de Tokay sont formées d'un Tuf Volcanique, qui, dans quelques endroits, est entrecoupé de bandes larges d'une ou de deux toises de lave compacte renfermant de ses grains vitreux, noirs opaques.*"—As Mr. Born was never here after his return in 1770, he must have obtained this intelligence likewise from his friends. No one, I hope, will think, from my taking now and then the liberty of correcting the mistakes of this great man, that I do not feel the greatest respect for him: he was the very light of Austria.

On the back of this hill, towards the top, which is covered, not with vines, but with under-wood, I found a great many loose blocks of a very remarkable kind of *Pitch-stone Porphyry*. Its base, or ground, is a black *Pitch-stone*, containing red feldspar, chiefly in fragments, or in very irregular shaped parallelopipedal crystals: this is the best characterized. But this fossil by degrees changes materially its nature; the feldspar becomes more terreous and of a duller colour; and the black pitch-stone loses its shining glassy appearance, and only forms spots and streaks mixed with red matter. The red feldspar, under the blowpipe, melts into a white enamel: the pitch-stone likewise melts, and forms a black glass. The Botanist might have amused himself here as well as the Mineralist. I found three species of *Linum*, exotics of our island, the *hirsutum*, *tenuifolium*, and *flavum*, and some other plants; and some of the insects mentioned in the annexed catalogue I collected here. From this hill there is a very fine extensive prospect of the neighbouring hills, and of those which run towards Marmarus: these skirt the great plain on this side, which lies below like the bed of the retired ocean. With a good mineralogical guide, and a longer stay, I doubt not but I might have collected some curious fossils, and have made some interesting geognostic remarks.

An immense quantity of salt comes here down the river from the county of Marmarus. Near a hundred thousand hundred weight is annually

annually sold at this magazine: the price is three florins and thirty-two creutzers (about seven shillings) per cwt. and the price throughout Hungary is the same, making allowance for the difference of the price of carriage to different places.