

## THE BEACONSFIELD VINEYARD.

"The vine, too, here her curling tendrils shoots,  
Hangs out her clusters, glowing to the south,  
And scarcely wishes for a warmer sky."

The cultivation of the vine appears to have attracted the attention of man from the earliest times of which we have any account. The Scripture informs us that "Noah planted vineyards, and made wine." Vines are mentioned among the blessings of the promised land, "A land of wheat and barley and vines."

Judging from a recent visit to Pointe Claire, in the chronicles of 1889 it will have to be written of the Island of Montreal: "It is a land of wheat and barley and vines."

Before describing the Beaconsfield Vineyard, which is now only awaiting the sunshine for the ingathering of its harvest, it may be interesting to give a brief history of the grape-vine and its introduction into northern climes.

Many authors are of opinion that the vine was not introduced into England until about the year 280, when Probus, who greatly encouraged agricultural pursuits in all the provinces under Rome, was Emperor. That England is indebted to the Romans for the first introduction of the vine is generally allowed, although it is possible it might have been introduced by the Phœnicians, who, when trading to Britain for tin, might have planted it in Cornwall; but this must remain a matter of conjecture, any further than as it confirms the vine to have been originally brought from Palestine.

Julius Cæsar found vines growing in Languedoc and Provence; but other parts of Gaul were totally without vines at that time. Strabo remarks that Languedoc and Provence produced the same fruit as Italy; but it was not until about the year 270, that the vine was planted in the northern parts of Gaul, and about the Rivers Rhine, Maine and Moselle, and in Hungary. Tacitus states that vineyards were planted by the Romans in Britain. Vineyards are noticed in the Domesday Book, as also by Bede, as early as the commencement of the eighth century. The neighbourhood of Winchester was so famous for its vines, that it is supposed to have taken its name from that circumstance. Canterbury was celebrated for its vines. Somner tells us, that, in the year 1258 both the abbey and the priory of that city were plentifully furnished with vineyards. At Rochester, a large plot of ground, contiguous to the city, is still called the Vine; and at Halling, near Rochester, the bishop of that see had formerly a vineyard; for when Edward the Second was at Bockingfield, in 1316, bishop Hamson sent him thither, as Lambert tells us, "a present of his drinkes, and withal both wines and grapes of his own growth in his vineyarde at Halling." In Kent, Philipot says:—"Captain Nicholas Toke hath so industriously cultivated and improved our English vines, that the wine pressed and extracted out of their grapes, seems not only to parallel, but almost to outrival that of France." The plot of ground called East Smithfield, London, was at one time converted into a vineyard, and held by four successive constables of the Tower in the reigns of Rufus, Henry and Stephen, to their great emolument and profit. Various parts of London, by their names, give evident proof of their having been formerly planted with grapes, as Vine streets in Hatton-garden, St. Giles, and Piccadilly; the vineyards by Hounds-ditch, and Coldbath-fields. The Little Park at Windsor was appropriated as a vineyard for the use of the Castle, even so late as the reign of Richard the Second. Lambard observes that some part of the wine was spent in the King's household, and some sold for the King's profit. We also read that in different years of Henry the Second's reign, allowances were made to the officer who farmed Windsor of that prince, for wine, perry and cider.

The Isle of Ely was expressly denominated the *Isle of Vines* by the Normans. The Bishop of Ely, shortly after the Conquest, appears to have received at least three or four tuns of wine annually, as tithes from the vines in his diocese; and in his leases he made frequent reservations of a certain quantity of wine by way of rent: many of these wines were little inferior to the French wines in sweetness. Few ancient Monasteries were without a vineyard attached to them. From the archives of the Cathedral of Ely it appears plainly that at Ely grapes would ripen, and the Convent made wine from them. William of Malmsbury mentions the County of Gloucester as excelling every other part of the country, in the twelfth century, in the number and richness of its vineyards. The first Earl of Salisbury planted a vineyard in his park adjoining Hatfield-house, Hertfordshire, which was in existence when Charles the First was conveyed there a prisoner to the army. Evelyn says in his Diary, May 8, 1654: "Returning from Hackney, I visited one Mr. Tomb's garden; it has a vineyard, planted in strawberry borders, staked at ten-foot distances." On the 26th September, the following year, he observes: "I went to see Col. Blount's subterranean warren, and drank of the wine of this vineyard, which was good for little."

Strype, in his Life of Grindal, Bishop of London, writes that his grapes at Fulham "were esteemed of that value, and a fruit that Queen Elizabeth stood so well affected to, and so early ripe, that the Bishop used every year to send her Majesty a present of them."

We read in the *Museum Rusticum* that there was, in the year 1763, a noble vineyard attached to Arundel Castle, in Sussex, and that it succeeded so

well that it annually yielded a considerable quantity of wine. At that period there were sixty pipes of this wine in the cellar at Arundel; it was a kind of Burgundy; and we are told that although it was not of quite so fine a flavour as the wines of Beaune, yet it much exceeded quantities of Burgundy annually imported into England. "I have known," says Mr. Hanbury, "good wine made of grapes grown in England, and have drunk our Burgundy no way inferior, as my taste could find out, to that noted wine which we have constantly imported from that country." Hales, in his *Practical Husbandry*, says "that he drank with Dr. Shaw wines made under his own care, from a little vineyard behind his garden at Kensington, which equalled many of the lighter wines of France." Henry Phillips, author of *The Companion for the Kitchen Garden*, says, writing in 1831: "There were lately several flourishing vineyards in Somersetshire; the late Sir William Bassett, of that county, annually made some hogsheads of wine, which was palatable and well bodied." And he adds: "In some instances, when kept for eight or ten years, it has been drunk as Hock by the nicest judges."

Enough has been gleaned from the history of the grape vine to show that it can be, and has been successfully grown in England, which has by no means a very genial climate, and that a good palatable wine has been made from the grapes grown north of the line fifty-two, or more than from five to six degrees north of the latitude of Montreal. This fact is worth considering when the question is asked: "Is it possible to make wine in the Province of Quebec?" We probably shall not have long to wait for the solution of the question, for Messrs. Menzies and Gallagher have established the fact that the grape can be as successfully grown in Canada as in England, and that their special vine, which is named after the Prime Minister of England, will withstand the rigour of our climate in winter and will yield solid compact bunches, weighing about one pound each, which will ripen by the end of August or beginning of September.

Recently I paid a visit to the Beaconsfield Vineyard, and, had the weather been fine, should have witnessed the vintage, which is later this year in consequence of the comparatively cold summer. Last year, as I was informed by Mr. George Garner, the courteous agent of the vineyard, the grapes ripened before the calends of September,—about the time, according to Pliny, when "the star named in Latin *Vindemiator*—i. e., the *Vintager*—beginneth to show in the morning both to the Assyrians and Italians.

The vineyard is about half a mile westward of the village of Pointe Claire, and is pleasantly situated on the north bank of Lake St. Louis. In area it is about three acres, and consists of about three thousand vines, placed in horizontal and parallel rows and trained on espaliers about five or six feet high, and six apart. The vines, which are only two years' old, are very prolific, and it is calculated that they will yield a crop this year of about ten tons per acre. It is amazing to see these vines—

"Whose bunches hanging down, seem to entice  
All passers by to taste their luscious wine,  
And do themselves into their hands incline,  
As freely offering to be gathered."

Looking at the successful results obtained by Messrs. Menzies and Gallagher, and seeing that the vine does neither require a rich soil nor that depth of soil so necessary to ensure good crops of corn, what is there to prevent the culture of the grape from being a very profitable source of income to our Canadian farmers? Some affirm that poor soils are improved by making of vineyards, and that the vine is known to prosper best where the soil is not more than sixteen or eighteen inches above the chalk or gravel. It is hard to account for the remissness of the French Canadians in their almost total neglect of the cultivation of the grape vine, when it is known that Jacques Cartier found the shores of the Island of Orleans so luxuriously hung with grapes that he called it the Isle of Bacchus. The *Chronicles* say that in 1535 when Cartier explored the shores of the Island of Orleans he records having found there grape vines such as he had not seen before in all the world. Assuredly, if the Indians had on their island in 1535 a flourishing vineyard, ought not the descendants of the men of Bordeaux and Medoc, on the Garonne, who are now living on the banks of the St. Lawrence, to be able to produce the grape in abundance? and ought they not to try their skill to rival the wines of France,—

"The Claret smooth,  
The mellow-tasted Burgundy, and quick  
As the wit it gives, the gay Champagne?"

And why should not our distillers try to rival the brandies of Bordeaux, Rochelle, and Cognac, if grapes of good quality can be produced in the country at the rate of ten tons to the acre?

The fruit is large, of a dark purple colour, tolerably sweet, with a beautiful plum-like bloom, and is free from that acrid taste noticeable in the "*Isabella*," which has to be gathered unripe before exportation. The vines are not only prolific but they are hardy, and, as already shown, will withstand the extreme winter cold, and the grapes themselves are not affected by our early autumnal frosts. The grapes may be preserved for winter use after a fashion known to the ancient Romans. Columella gives a particular account of the manner in which they were preserved, both in his time and in the time of his uncle Marcus Columella. He recommends them to be put into small jars that will only