

SAN DIEGO RAISINS.

Another Critic on Commissioner Blowers.

[From the San Diego Union, Feb. 14th.]

It has been a source of chagrin to all true friends of the State Viticultural Commission that it has done so little to advance the raisin interests of the State. In the first annual report of the Commission, published in 1881, Mr. Blowers, who appears to have been until lately recognized by the Board as the sole person authorized to discuss raisin making, devoted two printed pages to the entire subject matter and the interest of the vast Sacramento Valley which he represents in the Commission. It had not been for the instructive address on raisin making in Spain prepared by Mr. Wm. West, of Stockton, and appended to Mr. Blowers' report, there would have been nothing worthy of the State's funds published thereon on this subject. To Wm. West the State is indebted for some most valuable information, which should have received greater attention.

The next year Mr. Blowers strings together a lot of unimportant details and leaves out of consideration the most interesting developments not only of the State, but of his own district. At the Los Angeles Convention last Summer, notwithstanding the Board was otherwise well represented, he failed to appear, and had it not been for Dr. Conger, of Pasadena, and William McTherson, of Orange, the raisin interest would again have gone by default. At the second annual State Convention held later in San Francisco, we were again surprised to find that the day devoted to raisin and table grapes, the supervision of which had been assumed by Mr. Blowers, proved a dismal failure; on account of his neglect to prepare for the occasion. Since then it seems that the Chief Executive Officer of the Board, Mr. Wetmore, whose duty it is to visit all parts of the State and to assist everywhere that he can in the development of viticulture and to report on all branches of the work, has given mortal offense to Mr. Blowers by presuming to discuss the proper methods of cultivating and curing the raisin grape. Mr. Wetmore has at last opened a true discussion of principles interesting to all sections of the State, but in some instances he has expressed views that do not agree with Mr. Blowers. He has, as one instance of his unpardonable audacity, shown a clear distinction between a raisin and a dried grape.

Mr. Blowers feels offended, because he is able to cure them in the sun. Mr. Wetmore says that in many cases in the State there is no difference between the so-called "Muscatel Gordo Blanco" and the commonly known Muscat of Alexandria, the names having been used without true applications. Mr. Blowers has been making a few thousand dollars annually by selling "Gordo Blanco" cuttings to growers, who imagined that they were getting something superior to the Muscats of their neighbors. The explanation of this is given by Mr. Wetmore to have hurt Mr. Blowers, where he is most sensitive, viz: in the region of his pocket. These and other similar sins of the Chief Executive Officer have brought down on him a peculiar attack from Mr. Blowers, who imagines that the true way to hurt an opponent is to strike at his pocket. For the first time this year there is really something new in one of the reports of the Commissioner for the great Sacramento district, and that consists in an attack on San Diego. The vine growers of that district must be proud of their valiant representative; it must make them smile with joy to find out that there is four times as much rainfall in Shasta as there is in San Diego, and similar instructions on grape growing.

Is it not then true, however, that some more competent man should champion the raisin industry in the State Board? Mr. Blowers may be named up as follows: He owns about forty acres of bearing vines in Yolo county, a large part of which are table and shipping varieties; he cannot always cure his grapes by sun drying, because his methods prevent perfect maturity of the fruit;—therefore he dries them artificially; he has a big pump, a big dryer, gets big grapes and a big head; he makes dried grapes that do not compare in the market with the or-

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RAISINS.

Mr. W. B. West, of Stockton, showed us, this week, a letter from Malaga, dated January 20th. The writer is the largest exporter of raisins to the United States. He says the Malaga crop has not been much diminished by the phylloxera, though there has been a good deal of talk and considerable anxiety for the future. The crop of "Layers" for 1883 was 1,850,000 to 1,900,000 boxes, of 22 lbs each; the average of the past few years has been 2,000,000 boxes. The Denia raisins, better known in the United States as "Valencia," yielded a crop in 1883 of 2,800,000 boxes, of 28 lbs each. These latter raisins, Mr. West says, are partially cured by dipping in lye, and are of a quality that our second-class raisins can easily be brought to compete with. Mr. West's Malaga correspondent says that the United States takes, annually, about 1,000,000 to 1,125,000 boxes each of Malaga and Denia raisins. Assuming our present California production to be 100,000 to 120,000 boxes, and the imports of the United States from these two places at 2,000,000 to 2,500,000 boxes, it will be seen that we produce only one box in twenty to twenty-five of what is now easily consumed in the country. This shows how wide a field there is here for raisin culture, if the political lawyers in Congress can be restrained from meddling with what they do not understand and sacrificing the material prosperity of the country to their worn out party dogmas. The choicest of our raisins, Mr. West says, will fairly compete with the London Layers of Malaga, though it may be some years before we produce many of those choicer grades which go to England for consumption at the tables of the rich. Mr. West gave us another point: In Malaga, they never irrigate raisin vines, though they use irrigation in cultivating the orange and the lemon.

Before you plant a vineyard, determine in your own mind whether you want to sell table fruit, make raisins or wine. If the latter, come to some conclusion as to what kind and quality of wine you want to make.

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