



As example of this kind of work we will refer to the house of Cusenier and Company of Paris. We recently had the pleasure of visiting their factory at the Quai de Bercy, under the guidance of Mr. Pion. It is a wonder to behold the beautiful installation and division of labor, which contributes to enlightened manufacture. We will focus here only on absinthe, a specialty of Cusenier. Distillation is done in ordinary pot stills, while rectification occurs in column stills of 6 plates; thereby, it is distinguished from what is done in most other factories. This special rectification eliminates heavy and coarse elements, as well as those which are too light and fugacious. It is this that gives Cusenier absinthe its qualities of individuality and smoothness of taste which have found great favor with the public. After rectification, which by itself constitutes a sort of aging, Cusenier absinthe is subjected to another operation which completes its maturation and gives to it qualities which are usually only acquired by the passage of time. This operation is oxygenation in the William Saint-Martin apparatus (fig. 55).

This apparatus has been known to us since its inception, as we attended the first experiments made by the inventor at his factory located on the Rue de Gavarni, in Passy, located there for more than 30 years. We did not make mention of it in the first edition of this work, because at that time, it had not come into any great use. The principle of the apparatus is thus: Based on the fact that the aging of spirits is merely the slow oxidation of certain volatile compounds and their transformation into inoffensive ethers, some distillers had foreseen the possibility of aging alcoholic liquids by means of oxygen and ozone, and thus compensating for the action of nature and time. However, practically, one had not found the means yet of putting each molecule of liquid in intimate contact with oxygen or ozone. William Saint-Martin's process solved this problem: it consists of pulverizing (atomizing) the liquid by means of a special apparatus under pressure to such a degree so that the spirit undergoes a true molecular division; oxygen or ozone, also under pressure, comes consequently into close contact with the liquid and takes effect almost instantaneously. It transforms certain volatile compounds contained in essential oils to inoffensive ethers, while the aldehydes and the furfuryl alcohol are forced out of the apparatus by the oxygen surplus. The spirit thus purified and matured can be delivered for consumption after a few days of rest in barrels. This operation is done with little expense and produces, ultimately, the same result as aging the product for several years. The operation of the apparatus is also very simple: only one person is required for handling the apparatus, and its installation does not require more than one square metre. With it, one can treat 30 to 50 liters per minute. The cost of the treatment is approximately 0,25 fr. per hectolitre. The apparatus can be used for the aging of all spirits.

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