

**A BRIEF HISTORY
OF THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT
OF
THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION
CO-OPERATIVE WINE SOCIETY,
LIMITED.**

BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT,
AN ORIGINAL MEMBER.

AFTER the Great Exhibitions of 1851 and 1862, it was generally realised that any future displays of the kind were likely to attain a magnitude which would render them unmanageable; and it was resolved by the British Commissioners that objects suitable for exhibition should be divided into groups, and that exhibitions of selections from these groups should be held at shorter intervals. A plan was arranged for a series of annual Exhibitions of the Fine Arts, recent scientific inventions and discoveries, and of two or three branches only of manufactures, providing at the same time for the representation of each distinct manufacture once in the course of ten years. Exhibitions of this kind were held in 1871, 1872, 1873 and 1874, but at last it was found that they ceased to attract the public, and they were abandoned.

The Exhibition of 1874 included foods and drinks, and a very large quantity of wine in the wood was sent from various countries and was stored in the cellars of the Royal Albert Hall, where it entirely escaped notice from visitors. The Portuguese growers, who had taken great pains and incurred considerable expense in the preparation of their exhibits, appealed to their Government for assistance in making them better known, and the Portuguese Government entered into communication with the British Foreign Office on the subject. The English Government said they could do nothing officially, but that they might be helpful privately; and they arranged with the late General H. Y. D. Scott, R.E., the architect of the Royal Albert Hall, that he should give a series of large luncheon parties at South Kensington, and that the wines from the cellars should be placed on the table. General Scott applied to the late Mr. Scrivenor (a senior official of the Board of Customs) and to the writer of this memorandum, to assist him in selecting the wines for each

luncheon; and we each ordered a cask or two of wine which had appealed to us in the course of our tasting, and arranged for division among ourselves in accordance with our several requirements. This was mentioned at the first luncheon, after which a dozen or so of the guests asked to join with us in purchasing, and it was agreed that we should form a small wine club. A second and a third luncheon followed the first, and, by the end of the third, the number of persons desirous of joining the club had so increased that it was decided to constitute it as a Friendly Society, under the law governing such Institutions.

McLeod of McLeod became the first Chairman, General Scott, Mr. Scrivenor, Sir George Birdwood, the writer, and others, were appointed a Committee: Mr. Scrivenor undertook to be Honorary General Manager, and the late Mr. Richards, of the Accountancy Department of the Exhibition Commissioners, to be Honorary Secretary. The proceedings were at first upon a very small scale; before long Mr. Scrivenor was appointed to remodel the Egyptian Custom House and we were deprived of his assistance. He was succeeded by another gentleman from the Customs, the late Colonel Keene, V.D., who held office until his decease in 1910.

As the business done by the Society increased, and the call upon the time of the Officials and of the Committee became considerable, honoraria were voted to them at various annual Meetings, and on the decease respectively of Mr. Richards and of Colonel Keene, the prefix of "Honorary" to the designations of their offices was finally abandoned.

The policy of the Society has from the beginning been to supply wines and spirits to the members at the lowest possible prices that necessary working expenses would allow. The capital required at the commencement was lent on debentures by members, and these debentures have been paid off, so that the Society is free from debt, and is now in possession of a stock of Wine worth £14,000, the property of the Members, and constituting the actual value of their shares.

On the decease of a Member, his representatives receive the value of his share in cash, a value representing his proportion of the stock, but no Member derives any pecuniary advantage from the sale of wines and spirits; nor is any profit made upon the sales beyond what is necessary to secure a margin of safety.

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