
THE ART OF
SCENT
AND
ELEGANCE

Powdered ambergris is used in the manufacture of cassolettes—little ivory or bone boxes perforated—which are made to contain a paste of strong-smelling substances, to carry in the pocket or reticule; also in the making of peau d'Espagne, or Spanish skin, used for perfuming writing paper and envelopes, and which will be described hereafter. CIVET.—This substance is secreted by the Viverra civetta, or civet cat. It is formed in a large double glandular receptacle between the anus and the pudendum of the creature. Like many other substances of Oriental origin, it was first brought to this country by the Dutch. When the civet cats are kept in a state of confinement, which at one time was common in Amsterdam, they are placed in strong cages, so constructed as to prevent the animal from turning round and biting the person employed in collecting the secreted substance.

This operation is said to be performed twice a week, and is done by scraping out the civet with a small spoon: about a drachm at a time is thus obtained. A good deal of the civet now brought to European markets is from Calicut, capital of the province of Malabar, and from Bassora on the Euphrates. In its pure state, civet has, to nearly all persons, a most disgusting odor; but when diluted to an infinitesimal portion, its perfume is agreeable. It is difficult to ascertain the reason why the same substance, modified only by the quantity of matter presented to the nose, should produce an opposite effect on the olfactory nerve; but such is the case with nearly all odorous bodies, especially with ottos, which, if smelled at, are far from nice, and in some cases, positively nasty—such as otto of neroli, otto of thyme, otto of patchouly; but if diluted with a thousand times its volume of oil, spirit, then their fragrance is delightful.

Otto of rose to many has a sickly odor, but when eliminated in the homeopathic quantities as it rises from a single rose-bloom, who is it that will not admit that "the rose is sweet?" The odor of civet is best imparted, not by actual contact, but by being placed in the neighborhood of absorbent materials. Thus, when spread upon leather, which, being covered with silk and placed in a writing-desk, perfumes the paper and envelopes delightfully, and so much so, that they retain the odor after passing through the post.

EXTRACT OF CIVET is prepared by rubbing in a mortar one ounce of civet with an ounce of orris-root powder, or any other similar material that will assist to break up or divide the civet; and then placing the whole into a gallon of rectified spirits; after macerating for a month, it is fit to strain off. It is principally used as a "fixing" ingredient, in mixing essences of delicate odor. The French perfumers use the extract of civet more than English manufacturers, who seem to prefer extract of musk. From a quarter of a pint to half a pint is the utmost that ought to be mixed with a gallon of any other perfume. CASTOR is a secretion of the Castor fiber, or beaver, very similar to civet. Though we have often heard of its being used in perfumery, we do not personally know that such is the case.

MUSK.—This extraordinary substance, like civet, is an animal secretion; it is contained in excretory follicles about the navel of the male animal. In the perfumery trade these little bags are called "pods," and as imported it is called "pod musk." When the musk is separated from the skin or sack in which it is contained, it is then called "grain musk." The musk deer (Moschus moschatus) is an inhabitant of the great mountain range which belts the north of India, and branches out into Siberia, Thibet, and China. And it is also found in the Altaic range, near Lake Baikal, and in some other mountain ranges, but always on the borders of the line of perpetual snow. It is from the male animal only that the musk is produced. It formerly was held in high repute as a medicine, and is still so among Eastern nations.

The musk from Boutan, Tonquin, and Thibet, is most esteemed, that from Bengal is inferior, and from Russia is of still lower quality. The strength and the quantity produced by a single animal varies with the season of the year and the age of the animal. A single musk pod usually contains from two to drachms of grain musk. Musk is imported into England from China, in caddies of from each. When adulterated with the animal's blood, which is often the case, it forms into lumps or clots; it is sometimes also mixed with a dark, friable earth. Those pods in which little pieces of lead are discovered, as a general rule, yield the finest quality of musk.

Upon this rule, we presume that the best musk is the most worthy of adulteration. Musk is remarkable for the diffusiveness and subtlety of its scent; everything in its vicinity soon becomes affected by it, and long retains its odor, although not in actual contact with it. It is a fashion of the present day for people to say "that they do not like musk;" but, nevertheless, from great experience in one of the largest manufacturing perfumatories in Europe, we are of opinion that the public taste for musk is as great as any perfumer desires. Those substances containing it always take the preference in ready sale—so long as the vendor takes care to assure his customer "that there is no musk in it."

The perfumer uses musk principally in the scenting of soap, sachet powder, and in mixing for liquid perfumery. The just reputation of Paris's original Windsor soap is due, in the main, to its delightful odor. The soap is, doubtless, of the finest quality, but its perfume stamps it among the élite—its fragrance it owes to musk. The alkaline reaction of soap is favorable to the development of the odoriferous principle of musk. If, however, a strong solution of potass be poured on to grain musk, ammonia is developed instead of the true musk smell.

After standing for one month, at a summer temperature, it is fit to draw off. Such an extract is that which is used for mixing in other perfumes. That extract of musk which is prepared for retail sale, is prepared thus:— Mix and filter it; it is then fit for bottling. This preparation is sweeter than pure extract of musk made according to our first formula, and is also more profitable to the vendor. It will be seen hereafter that the original extract of musk is principally used for a fixing ingredient in other perfumes, to give permanence to a volatile odor; customers requiring, in a general way, that which is incompatible, namely, that a perfume shall be strong to smell, very volatile, and that it shall remain upon the handkerchief for a long period, ergo, not volatile! Small portions of extract of musk, mixed with esprit de rose, violet, tuberose, and others, do, in a measure, attain this object; that is, after the violet, &c., has evaporated, the handkerchief still retains an odor, which, although not that of the original smell, yet gives satisfaction, because it is pleasant to the nasal orga.

AMMONIA.—Under the various titles of "Smelling Salts," "Preston Salts," "Inexhaustible Salts," "Eau de Luce," "Sal Volatile," ammonia, mixed with other odoriferous bodies, has been very extensively consumed as material for gratifying the olfactory nerve. The perfumer uses liq. amm. fortis, that is, strong liquid ammonia, and the sesqui-carbonate of ammonia, for preparing the various "salts" that he sells. These materials he does not attempt to make; in fact, it is quite out of his province so to do, but he procures them ready for his hand through some manufacturing chemist. The best preparation for smelling-bottles is what is termed INEXHAUSTIBLE SALTS, which is prepared thus:— Mix the whole together with agitation in a very strong and well-stoppered bottle.

This mixture is used by filling the smelling-bottles with any porous absorbent material, such as asbestos, or, what is better, sponge cuttings, that have been well beaten, washed, and dried. These cuttings can be procured at a nominal price from any of the sponge-dealers, being the trimming or roots of the Turkey sponge, which are cut off before the merchants send it into the retail market. After the bottles are filled with the sponge, it is thoroughly saturated with the scented ammonia, but no more is poured in than the sponge will retain, when the bottles are inverted; as, if by any chance the ammonia runs out and is spilt over certain colored fabrics, it causes a stain. When such an accident happens, the person who sold it is invariably blamed.

When the sponge is saturated properly, it will retain the ammoniacal odor longer than any other material; hence, we presume, bottles filled in this way are called "inexhaustible," which name, however, they do not sustain more than months with any credit; the warm hand soon dissipates the ammonia under any circumstances, and they require to be refilled. For transparent colored bottles, instead of sponge, the perfumers use what they call insoluble crystal salts (sulphate of potass). The bottles being filled with crystals, are covered either with the liquid ammonia, scented as above, or with alcoholic ammonia. The necks of the bottles are filled with a piece of white cotton; otherwise, when inverted, from the non-absorbent quality of the crystals, the ammonia runs out, and causes complaints to be made. The crystals are prettier in colored bottles than the sponge; but in plain bottles the sponge appears quite as handsome, and, as before observed.

It holds the ammonia better than any other material. Perfumers sell also what is called WHITE SMELLING SALTS, and PRESTON SALTS. The White Smelling Salt is the sesqui-carbonate of ammonia in powder, with which is mixed any perfuming otto that is thought fit,—lavender otto giving, as a general rule, the most satisfaction. PRESTON SALTS, which is the cheapest of all the ammoniacal compounds, is composed of some easily decomposable salt of ammonia and lime, such as equal parts of muriate of ammonia, or of sesqui-carbonate of ammonia, and of freshslaked lime. When the bottles are filled with this compound, rammed in very hard, a drop or two of some cheap otto is poured on the top prior to corking. For this purpose otto of French lavender, or otto of bergamot, answers very well. We need scarcely mention that the corks are dipped into melted sealing-wax, or brushed over with liquid wax, that is, red or black wax dissolved in alcohol, to which a small portion of ether is added.

The only other compound of ammonia that is sold in the perfumery trade is Eau de Luce, though properly it belongs to the druggist. When correctly made—which is very rarely the case—it retains the remarkable odor of oil of amber, which renders it characteristic. If requisite, strain through cotton wool, but it must not be filtered, as it should have the appearance of a milk-white emulsion. ACETIC ACID AND ITS USE IN PERFUMERY.—The pungency of the odor of vinegar naturally brought it into the earliest use in the art of perfumery. The acetic acid, evolved by distilling acetate of copper (verdigris), is the true "aromatic" vinegar of the old alchemists.

The modern aromatic vinegar is the concentrated acetic acid aromatized with various ottos, camphor, thus—First dissolve the bruised camphor in the acetic acid, then add the perfumes; after remaining together for a few days, with occasional agitation, it is to be strained, and is then ready for use. Several forms for the preparation of this substance have been published, almost all of which, however, appear to complicate and mystify a process that is all simplicity. The most popular article of this kind is—Macerate the materials for a day in the spirit; then add the acid, and digest for a week longer, at a temperature of about Finally, press out the new aromatized acid, and filter it.

As this mixture must not go into the ordinary metallic tincture press, for the obvious reason of the chemical action that would ensue. It is best to drain as much of the liquor away as we can, by means of a common funnel, and then to save the residue from the interstices of the herbs, by tying them up in a linen cloth, and subjecting them to pressure by means of an ordinary lemon-squeezer, or similar device. Well shaken together. It is obvious that vinegars differently perfumed may be made in a similar manner to the above, by using other ottos in place of the otto of roses. All these concentrated vinegars are used in the same way as perfumed ammonia, that is, by pouring three or four drachms into an ornamental "smelling" bottle, previously filled with crystals of sulphate of potash, which forms the "sel de vinaigre" of the shops; or upon sponge into little silver boxes, called vinaigrettes, from their French origin.

The use of these vinegars had their origin in the presumption of keeping those who carried them from the effects of infectious disease, doubtless springing out of the story of the "four thieves' vinegar," which is thus rendered in Lewis's Dispensatory: "It is said that during the plague at Marseilles, four persons, by the use of this preservative, attended, unhurt, multitudes of those that were affected; that under the color of these services, they robbed both the sick and the dead; and that being afterwards apprehended, one of them saved himself from the gallows by disclosing the composition of the prophylactic (a very likely story!!), which was as follows:— Digest all the materials, except the camphor and spirit, in a closely covered vessel for a fortnight, at a summer heat; then express and filter the vinaigre produced, and add the camphor previously dissolved in the brandy or spirit."

A very similar and quite as effective a preparation may be made by dissolving the odorous principle of the plants indicated in a mixture of alcohol and acetic acid. Such preparations, however, are more within the province of the druggist than perfumer. There are, however, several preparations of vinegar which are sold to some extent for mixing with the water for lavatory purposes and the bath, their vendors endeavoring to place them in competition with Eau de Cologne, but with little avail. Among them may be enumerated—and strain or filter, if requisite, to be bright.

Macerate in a close vessel for a fortnight, then filter and bottle for sale. Filter if necessary. Without unnecessarily repeating similar formulæ, it will be obvious to the reader that vinegar of any flower may be prepared in a similar way to those above noticed; thus, for vinaigre à la jasmine, or for vinaigre à la fleur d'orange, we have only to substitute the esprit de jasmine, or the esprit de fleur d'orange, in place of the Eau de Cologne, to produce orange-flower or jasmine vinegars; however, these latter articles are not in demand, and our only reason for explaining how such preparations may be made, is in order to suggest the methods of procedure to any one desirous of making them leading articles in their trade. We perhaps may observe, en passant, that where economy in the production of any of the toilet vinegars is a matter of consideration, they have only to be diluted with rose-water down to the profitable strength required.

Any of the perfumed vinegars that are required to produce opalescence, when mixed with water, must contain some gum-resin, like the hygienic vinegar, as above. Either myrrh, benzoin, storax, or tolu, answer equally well. In the previous articles we have endeavored to explain the mode of preparing the primitive perfumes—the original odors of plants. It will have been observed, that while the majority can be obtained under the form of otto or essential oil, there are others which hitherto have not been isolated, but exist only in solution in alcohol, or in a fatty body. Of the latter are included all that are most prized, with the exception of otto of rose—that diamond among the odoriferous gems.

Practically, we have no essential oils or ottos of Jasmine, Vanilla, Acacia, Tuberose, Cassie, Syringa, Violets, and others. What we know of these odors is derived from esprits, obtained from oils or fats, in which the several flowers have been repeatedly infused, and afterwards infusing such fats or oils in alcohol. Undoubtedly, these odors are the most generally pleasing, while those made from the essential oils, dissolved in spirit, are of a secondary character. The simple odors, when isolated, are called ESSENTIAL OILS or OTTOS; when dissolved or existing in solution in alcohol, by the English they are termed ESSENCES, and by the French EXTRAITS or ESPRITS; a few exceptions prove this rule. Essential oil of orange-peel, and of lemon-peel, are frequently termed in the trade "Essence" of orange and "Essence" of lemons, instead of essential oil or otto of lemons.

The sooner the correct nomenclature is used in perfumery, as well as in the allied arts, the better, and the fewer blunders will be made in the dispensatory. It appears to the writer, that if the nomenclature of these substances were revised, it would be serviceable; and he would suggest that, as a significant, brief, and comprehensive term, Otto be used as a prefix to denote that such and such a body is the odoriferous principle of the plant. We should then have otto of lavender instead of essential oil of lavender, In this work it will be seen that the writer has generally used the word OTTO in place of "essential oil," in accordance with his views. Where there exists a solution of an essential oil in a fat oil, the necessity of some such significant distinction is rendered obvious, for commercially such articles are still called "oils"—oil of jasmine, oil of roses, It cannot be expected that the public will use the words "fat" oil and "essential" oil, to distinguish these differences of composition.

There are several good reasons why the odoriferous principle of plants should not be denominated oils. In the first place, it is a bad principle to give any class of substances the same signification as those belonging to another. Surely, there are enough distinguishing qualities in their composition, their physical character, and chemical reaction, to warrant the application of a significant name to that large class of substances known as the aroma of plants! When the chemical nomenclature was last revised, the organic bodies were little dealt with. We know that we owe this universal "oil" to the old alchemist, much in the same way as "spirit" has been used, but a little consideration quickly indicates the folly of its continued use.

We can no longer call otto of rosemary, or otto of nutmegs, essential oil of rosemary or nutmegs, with any more propriety than we can term sulphuric acid "oil" of vitriol. All the chemical works speak of the odoriferous bodies as "essential" or "volatile" oils, and of the greasy bodies as "fat" or "unctuous" oils. Oils, properly so called, unite with salifiable bases and form soap; whereas the essential or volatile oils, what we would please to call the ottos, do no such thing. On the contrary, they unite with acids in the majority of instances. The word oil must hereafter be confined to those bodies to which its literal meaning refers—fat, unctuous, inodorous (when pure), greasy substances—and can no longer be applied to those odoriferous materials which possess qualities diametrically opposite to oil.

We have grappled with "spirit," and fixed its meaning in a chemical sense; we have no longer "spirit" of salt, or "spirit" of hartshorn. Let us no longer have almond oil "essential," almond oil "unctuous," and the like. It remains only for us to complete the branch of perfumery which relates to odors for the handkerchief, by giving the formulæ for preparing the most favorite "bouquets" and "nosegays." These, as before stated, are but mixtures of the simple ottos in spirit, which, properly blended, produce an agreeable and characteristic odor,—an effect upon the smelling nerve similar to that which music or the mixture of harmonious sounds produces upon the nerve of hearing, that of pleasure.

This is an old-fashioned French perfume, presumed to be derived from the Cyperus esculentus by some, and by others to be so named after the Island of Cyprus; the article sold, however, is made thus—The mixture thus formed is one of the most lasting odors that can be made. Notwithstanding the complex mixture here given, it is the vitivert that gives this bouquet its peculiar character. Few perfumes have excited greater furor while in fashion. The reputation of this perfume has given rise to numerous imitations of the original article, more particularly on the continent. In many of the shops in Germany and in France will be seen bottles labelled in close imitation of those sent out by Bayley and Cockspur Street, London, who are, in truth, the original makers. The name "Ess" bouquet, which appears to puzzle some folk, is but a mere contraction of "essence" of bouquet. Mix with agitation; then allow it to stand for a few days perfectly quiet, before bottling.

Although Eau de Cologne was originally introduced to the public as a sort of "cure-all," a regular "elixir of life," it now takes its place, not as a pharmaceutical product, but among perfumery. Of its remedial qualities we can say nothing, such matter being irrelevant to the purpose of this book. Considered, however, as a perfume, with the public taste it ranks very high; and although it is exceedingly volatile and evanescent, yet it has that excellent quality which is called "refreshing." Whether this be due to the rosemary or to the spirit, we cannot say, but think something may be attributed to both. One important thing relating to Eau de Cologne must not, however, pass unnoticed, and that is, the quality of the spirit used in its manufacture.

The utter impossibility of making brandy with English spirit in any way to resemble the real Cognac, is well known. It is equally impossible to make Eau de Cologne with English spirit, to resemble the original article. To speak of the "purity" of French spirit, or of the "impurity" of English spirit, is equally absurd. The fact is, that spirit derived from grapes, and spirit obtained from corn, have each so distinct and characteristic an aroma, that the one cannot be mistaken for the other. The odor of grape spirit is said to be due to the œanthic ether which it contains.

The English spirit, on the other hand, owes its odor to fusel oil. So powerful is the œanthic ether in the French spirit, that notwithstanding the addition to it of such intensely odoriferous substances as the ottos of neroli, rosemary, and others, it still gives a characteristic perfume to the products made containing it, and hence the difficulty of preparing Eau de Cologne with any spirit destitute of this substance.

Although very fine Eau de Cologne is often made by merely mixing the ingredients as indicated in the recipe as above, yet it is better, first, to mix all the citrine ottos with spirit, and then to distil the mixture, afterwards adding to the distillate the rosemary and nerolies, such process being the one adopted by the most popular house at Cologne. A great many forms for the manufacture of Eau de Cologne have been published, the authors of some of the recipes evidently having no knowledge, in a practical sense, of what they were putting by theory on paper; other venturers, to show their lore, have searched out all the aromatics of Lindley's Botany, and would persuade us to use absinthe, hyssop, anise, juniper, marjoram, caraway, fennel, cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, nutmeg, serpolet, angelica, cloves, lavender, camphor, balm, peppermint, galanga, lemon thyme, All these, however, are but hum—!

Where it is a mere matter of profit, and the formula that we have given is too expensive to produce the article required, it is better to dilute the said Cologne with a weak spirit, or with rose-water, rather than otherwise alter its form; because, although weak, the true aroma of the original article is retained. The recipe of the second quality of Eau de Cologne is given, to show that a very decent article can be produced with English spirit.