

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

THE importance, among other things, of the organisation you wish to set up, is that it would at last fill the gap left by the disappearance of the work sections which we attended during the 'forties within the Groupement Technique de la Parfumerie.

Research workers of all kinds, both in this country and in countries where similar bodies might be created, would thus have a permanent meeting ground. I have in mind in particular the scientists concerned with the theory of odour, who might thus be able to continue their efforts more easily.

This theory of odour, while it may not solve all our problems, will enable us to tackle some very important problems that are to-day out of reach. For instance, as regards the definition of the attributes of an odour and the corresponding units of measurement. Given that as a basis, one could begin to treat the subject rationally.

Many precious years have been wasted, during which scientists have taken little interest in this research. Those who might have been qualified to conduct it satisfactorily have disappeared. The sense of smell was regarded as a secondary sense, just as if anything concerned with life could be secondary, and as if one discovery did not lead to a series of others.

THEORY OF ODOUR

One of your tasks should be to stimulate energy and worry the researchers, chemists and above all physicists until the theory of odour is finally elaborated.

These questions are unfortunately outside my sphere of competence, and it is therefore only timidly that I place before you some reflections of mine on certain work by Louis de Broglie and the quantum theory.

I recapitulate :

It occurred to Louis de Broglie to allot a mass to the photon. The idea has been debated.

Light contains photons, it is a wave, and they must therefore co-exist.

Light and matter are forms of energy. According to Planck, energy equals h times the fre-

quency, whence the sequence :

asks EDMOND ROUDNITSKA
discussing some of the
problems currently facing
perfumers and the
perfumery industry *

quency, whence the sequence :

Particles of matter have mass.

Mass is a form of energy.

Energy implies frequency.

Frequency implies vibrations.

The result of this is that the particles are endowed with vibrations.

Particles endowed with vibrations resemble photons.

Photons bear a relationship to light waves.

Therefore, matter should have a relationship with the "waves of matter".

Einstein has shown that light, which was for a long time conceived as a wave, resembled a particle. Broglie went full circle by suggesting that matter, for a long time considered as made of particles, must be accompanied by waves and therefore partake somewhat of their nature. Einstein approved.

Is it absurd to imagine something similar for odour? Even if odour consists of particles of matter, may it not be thought that this particle can display behaviour similar to that of photons and give rise to vibrations?

If it has been possible for radiation to be transformed into matter, according to Einstein's law of the equivalence of mass and energy, it seems more plausible for matter to be transformed into radiation. Odour could be an aspect of a transfer of energy from

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matter. I confine myself to submitting this reflection to those more qualified to consider it.

MATERIALS AND THEIR SUPPLY

From a practical point of view, however, where are we going at the start of this last third of the century?

Chemical synthesis continues its progress in a particularly dazzling way. The elaboration of substances to which great importance attaches continues at accelerated pace; the development is more difficult to follow since the cost prices are sometimes high. A great effort should be made by organic chemists to improve their processes and the cost of their syntheses, if they wish to bring them within our reach and not confine themselves to theoretical research.

The producers of jasmin who have just gone through quite a foreseeable crisis, after excesses that we have always denounced, have received the just need of their weakness in following the bad shepherds.

The return to normal should restore some sanity to the situation and if, as we have urged, prices are stabilised at a reasonable level for several years, perfumers will again be encouraged to make wider use of jasmin in their formulae. It will then become possible to conclude between perfumers and producers contracts covering 3, 4 or 5 years and to ensure price stability to the former and guaranteed markets to the latter.

There is not, and never has been, an over-production of jasmin, but there has been an under-consumption as a result of prohibitive prices. There have also been bad jasmins. May those who have embarked on fresh plantations continue unruffled; if the price remains reasonable and the quality as it should be, jasmin will sell well and its use will develop.

Some producers are boldly deciding to follow our advice on growing and treatment. The results obtained are so convincing that those who have not lent themselves to the same disciplines will be outdistanced in canvassing a market which is more and more open to competition.

The improvement thus obtained in quality will allow and justify transfers (carry-overs) of harvests from year to year, which transfers must be kept in cold store, stainless packings, under nitrogen. An intelligent inventory of world needs would enable producers to allow a certain harvest surplus which, if properly stored, would act as a regulating reserve and would further promote price stability. Stabilisation of this kind has in fact taken place this year with Rose Maroc (Moroccan Rose), which in spite of reduced production has been able to maintain its price, thanks to the surplus from last year.

All these efforts take the form of a new contribution of outstanding products, whose influence will make itself doubly felt: first of all by sharpening the sense of smell and the minds of the creators, to whom finer models are offered; next, by enriching their palette and opening up horizons that had hitherto been closed.

PERFUME QUALITY AND THE FUTURE

Generally speaking, how will the next few decades shape themselves?

With the scientific and technical revolution, which confirms the right of all to live in contact with beauty, it is to be expected that the public will display an increasing appetite for beautiful things, which will end by extending to all products on the market. In collective civilisation, in which we are already involved, happiness implies aesthetic compensations.

However, there is a risk of aesthetics losing in quality what it will gain in quantity. To a certain extent, the high price of quality, by sustaining the religion of the beautiful among an élite of fastidious connoisseurs, opposes a barrier to bad taste, while popularisation, by exceeding its aims, sometimes leads to vulgarity. Nevertheless, the beautiful is not necessarily expensive and yields a large return, simply because it is generally the sign of success.

It is because the beautiful is one of France's traditional exports that we must have the courage to eliminate the merchants of what is mediocre. What is more, Foundations should be encouraged by tax exemptions.

Furthermore, aesthetics must be given the place which it deserves in modern education. Education in all its domains— aesthetics in particular— should be the major care of those responsible for training people.

It is said that we are moving towards an audio-visual civilisation. It is more likely that we are moving towards a *sensorial* civilisation in which perfume should be able to play a large part. Perhaps films and lectures will be accompanied by olfactory demonstrations. Will it one day be feasible, as has been done for images, to transmit odours through space? This would be the ideal solution for perfuming shows and spectacles, the odours ceasing to be perceived as soon as transmission has ceased.

In antiquity, perfumes impregnated everything. In a few years we may witness the same frenzy. There is therefore no occasion for anxiety in connection with the perfumery industry as such or for worrying over the future of the "odour merchants". However, *perfume* itself is threatened; it is more than threatened, it is attacked. Thus, instead of asking whether perfumery is still an art, it would be better to give it every chance of showing that it can still be one. The cinema, which was regarded as an industry, has changed to become an art. Television is moving in the same direction.

When our friend Billot wished for perfumery "a place where perfumes can be made for their own sake, without any other consideration", he knew that there is at least one such place, whence scarcely one perfume emerges every ten years, and where only what is thought right is done, without any commercialism. This method of approach nevertheless proves very remunerative, since the well-known House which applies it is thriving, and its use of this method or formula is often quoted as an example of good management. Those who are *only* concerned with profit should meditate on this modest example.

THE ROOTS OF INNOVATION

In 1962, I did not allow ten years for the new wave to become brilliantly manifest, and I still hope that it will not give me the lie. However, he

who succeeds is not likely to be one who has had ideas instilled into him by others, or even one who, in search of profit, has sensed where the wind is coming from. It will be he who, without looking over his shoulder, as McLuhan says, has a really personal idea, will maintain it until some work is completed, and will remain himself proof against wind and tide.

I do not think it is the creative capacity that is lacking, or the capacity for understanding on the part of the public (which remains what it has always been). What is in process of petering out is the capacity for starting something. It is really *responsible people* who are lacking, and it seems that to-day there is no man capable of launching a Chanel No. 5. Here is the problem of perfumery, a problem of giving orders, a problem of authority. Above all else, this is the problem that must be tackled, and the rest will follow. However, authority is nothing without competence, and in a profession such as ours competence is not acquired overnight.

I therefore do not see any immediate way out. It is urgently indispensable for an animator, such as Coty was in his day, to come forward, stand out, and be listened to. His task will be the more difficult, since he will not be on virgin soil; he will have to eliminate a considerable number of parasites which occur in different forms. He will require much clarity of mind, much courage, energy and self-sacrifice. A kind of white blackbird! Who will discover him and persuade him to pick up a torch which has been dropped for so many years? For, through some kind of fatality, transfers take place with difficulty from generation to generation in our profession. This is not only true of perfumery in its final state, but also of the raw materials industry. The number of abandoned items is on the increase.

Whereas in the motor car industry, for instance, in spite of the disappearance of the Citroën and the Renault, and in spite of pitiless competition, those makes are more prosperous than ever. In the case of Peugeot, quality has never been raised to so high a degree. In those large firms, the reins have most felicitously been placed in



"Art et Parfum"—centre of the author's work at Cabris, A.-M., some 2,100 ft. above sea level

the hands of capable and conscientious managers who are capable not only of maintaining the reputation of their makes, but, enhancing them still further.

Why is not this the case in our industry? Doubtless because perfumery is essentially based on *taste*, and that to be successful other qualities are needed than those of skilled engineers and clever businessmen. It is high time that those financially responsible should take note and learn the art of discovering and then using the available skills (which implies that they must alter their criteria in the recruitment of top staff), if they do not wish to see the gradual crumbling of what has been the apanage of our country.

In cosmetics, which is a technologist's industry based on science, it is possible to succeed with technical staff, by applying business methods. Perfume, however, is *not* just based on technique; it aims at expressing beauty. Its ambition is not to be

useful, like a cream, but to please. In these two activities the design of the products is quite different, just as the reasons for purchase are different. It is not possible to manage these two industries with the same mentality, with the same methods, with the same men. If this is not realised, the splendid perfumery industry will be finally condemned and this will be the death of the goose that laid the golden eggs, whose sole desire is to lay them.

NOT MADE TO ORDER

It is said that innovation is the modern form of competition. If this formula is true for the products of industry, we must be careful not to apply it blindly to perfumery.

A perfume is not a practical object, it is a work which, not being merely subject to reason, has required research

of an aesthetic order. Experience shows that true innovation in this domain is arduous and often a burden because it is laborious, and its acceptance by the public needs a period of adaptation, sometimes even after a period of rejection.

These factors curb the rhythm of bringing out perfumes. It is not possible to accelerate this rhythm without falling into the slough of contingencies and tiring the public's patience by repeated failures. This is what happens.

Jacques Maisonrouge says that "a product is arrived at in two ways. On the one hand the discoveries made in the domain of technology, which make it possible to carry out certain functions; and on the other the needs expressed by a certain market, showing that it must be possible to solve such and such a problem or meet such and such a need on the part of customers.

This synthesis that is necessary between the market demand and the possibility of technological achievements is one of the salient points of modern industry. It seems (he adds) that quite often in Europe, in the presence of new technological ideas, commercial services are quickly consulted which, not having very powerful market research services, reject or accept the product according to the intuition of the departmental manager."

The conflict with us is born of the confusion between these two roads. "Mass" perfumery might attempt to take the second road (provided that the market is capable of expressing its needs), but "high grade perfumery" owes it to itself to take the first road. And when quality products are really concerned, this first road leads to world success and finally to large-

scale production. Such success, if well exploited, can even end in mass production.

Cases are known in which market research services have rejected high-grade products which, taking their chance elsewhere, have later succeeded. They have also granted their favours to notoriously worthless objects, which the referendum had not set on one side and which constituted as many setbacks. In the present circumstances, it is not possible to use scientific foresight in the realm of aesthetics.

In order to be able to create a really new perfume, we must not be stampeded either by time or by men. *This is not done to order.* It sometimes takes years just to collect the necessary materials. The time must also be allowed for many repentances!

It is all these aspects that show the

difference between creative perfumery and industrial perfumery. The former represents an innovation, while the second seldom does so. Heads of firms, who do not understand this and think that by increasing the attempts they automatically increase their chances, are acting against their interests and do wrong to the whole profession.

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

It may be the role of this academy to provide those responsible for perfumery with information devoid of all prejudice and to present it with courage and mature reflection. It could constitute a medium in which free opinions would be freely expressed and debated. It would thus become a living and fruitful centre, not confined or limited to merely academic debates.

Concerning the Author

"In 1926, at the age of 21, Edmond-Fernand Roudnitska entered perfumery quite by chance. He started in Grasse, the perfume city, and then obtained employment with de Laire, where he remained a certain number of years.

"Until 1949 he remained at Paris making bases, composing perfumes, and showing himself to be a talented perfumer.

"As in the case of many other perfumers, it is impossible to speak of his outstanding or sensational creations without raising violent reactions on the part of those using them.

"In 1946 Roudnitska became his own master by establishing 'Art et Parfum', installed at Cabris. There he composes perfumes. He sells to users the compounded oils of his own creation. These customers are commercial organisations, perfumers or dress designers who make up his products in solution, look after packaging, or approach manufacturing works or packagers themselves, organising publicity and then sales.

"It will be appreciated that, in these circumstances, it is impossible to enumerate Roudnitska's achievements.

"Independently of his actual creations, Roudnitska has an active interest in the Sté. Technique des Parfumeurs de France. He has very often taken part in discussions, when that society was known as the Groupement Technique de la Parfumerie, always safeguarding the interests of our profession and helping to reveal its true artistic character.

"He published, in the journal *Parfumerie*, in 1944, a very interesting paper on the perceptibility of odours. Prior to this, in the *Revue des Marques* (now defunct) he had written some highly interesting technical articles.

"A few years ago he suggested an original and interesting solution for stabilising the jasmin market, but unfortunately nothing came of this.

"Roudnitska is a truly creative perfumer in the fullest meaning of the word."—Marcel Billot. "A Short History of the Great Perfumers," *Soap, Perfumery & Cosmetics*, June 1962.