

THE GREAT WINES OF FRANCE

The Champagne Vine Country and Champagne Wine

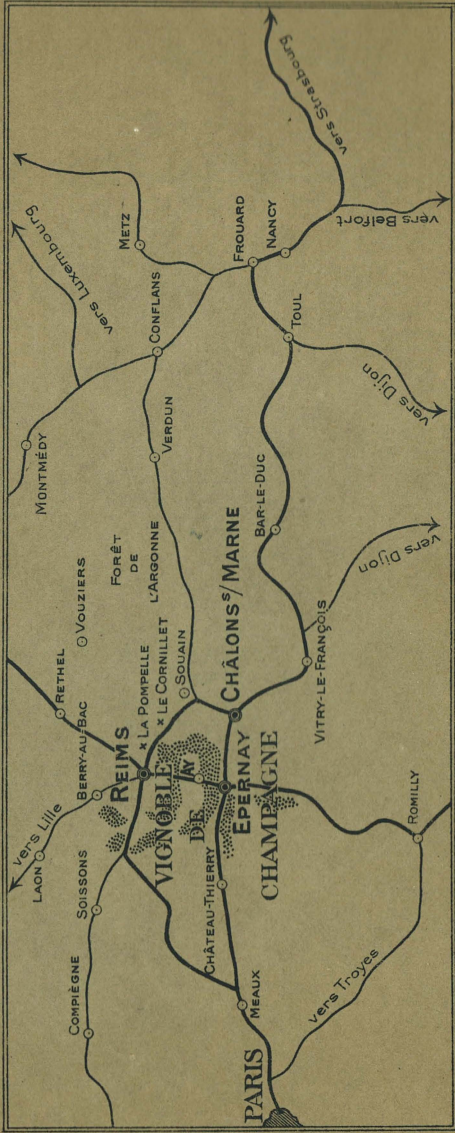
By **GEORGES CHAPPAZ**

Manager of the "Association Viticole Champenoise"
(Champagne Vine Growers Association)

and **ALEXANDRE HENRIOT**

Delegate Secretary of the
"Syndicat du Commerce des Vins de Champagne"
(Champagne Wine Merchants Syndicate)





Railroad connections between the Champagne vine country and the principal towns of the north and north-east of France

CA. 1920
PG 24-25

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S/©

BY
APPOINTMENT

S. M. ALBERT ROI
DES BELGES

S. M. LE ROI
DE SUEDE

S. M. LE ROI
DE ROUMANIE

S. M. LE ROI
D'ANGLETERRE

S. M. LA
REINE DOWAÏRÈRES
DES PAYS BAS

"CHARLES HEIDSIECK"
REIMS

CHAMPAGNE
"CHARLES HEIDSIECK"
ESTABLISHED 1851
REIMS



CHAMPAGNE " CHARLES HEIDSIECK " REIMS



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I am Health, I am Heart, I am Life.
(W.-E. HENLEY. The spirit of Wine).



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VISITOR, WINE-GROWER
and CHAMPAGNE
WINE MERCHANT.

.....

Visitor.—*How clever you must be to make such a delicious drink!*

Merchant.—*It's no make of ours, but Nature's own make. Our wine is one of her best creations, and it is to her that your thanks are due.*

Wine-Grower.—*Come and have a walk in our vineyards, on the sunny slopes which are cultivated by our industrious wine-growers with such love and craftsmanship: there you will see the very birth of our wines.*

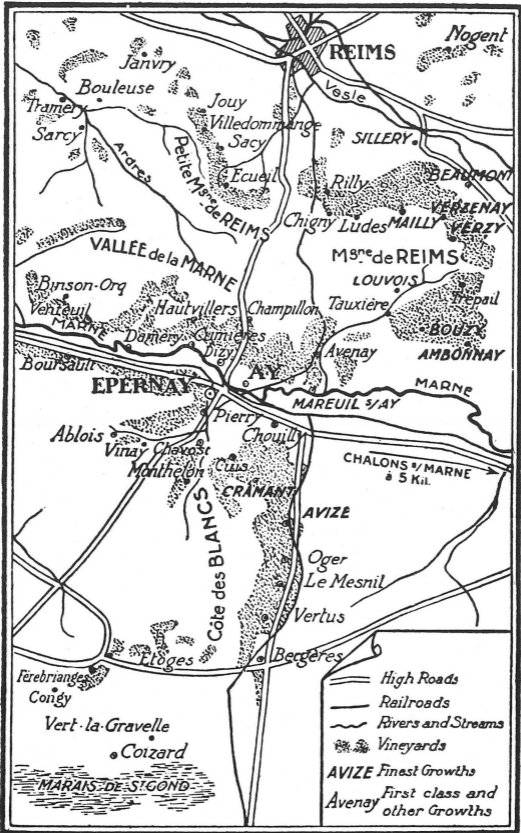
Merchant.—*After that come and visit our cellars, the pride of many generations; where you will become acquainted with our methods and our men.*

Wine-Grower.—*Your visit will enable you to realize how grower and merchant work hand in hand to produce the pure and golden wine which adorns the table of the connoisseur.*

Visitor.—*I'll follow you with all my heart.*



THE GREAT CHAMPAGNE DISTRICT



The best part of the Champagne Vine-Country lies some hundred miles to the east of Paris, in the districts of Reims, Epernay and Châlons.

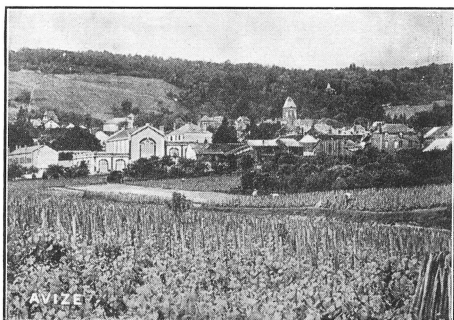
The vines grow on slopes, of which the northern boundary is the Reims mountain and the southern limit is the Brie country. The river Marne, celebrated by its victories, forms the central valley.

Magnificent forests crown these slopes, and the undulating vineyards with their woodland background afford many picturesque features, with extensive views over the surrounding country.

The peculiar character of the soil is one of the chief causes of the remarkable quality of the wine.

The trade in Champagne wines is an extremely ancient one ; its principal centres are Reims, Epernay

AVIZE



(Editions Choque)

and Ay, but Châlons-sur-Marne and other places such as Mareuil, Avize and Vertus, are also the homes of well known firms.

The whole region of the vineyards is well worth a visit, and the roads are excellent for motoring.

Several railway lines running between Paris and Reims, Paris-Epernay-Châlons, and Epernay-Ay-Reims, make it possible to travel from Paris and back the same day.

On the slopes of the Mountain of Reims lie the leading first growths of Verzenay, Verzy and Mailly, to the west of which are many secondary growths of great value.

Between the Mountain and the Marne valley are Bouzy and Ambonnay, also leading first growths.

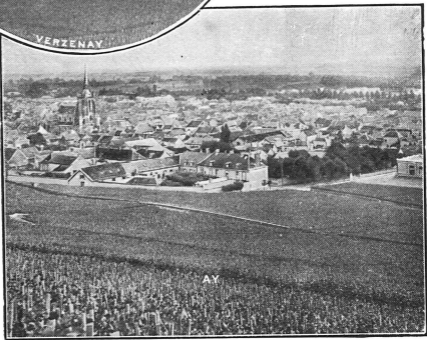
Ay, with the neighbouring villages of Mareuil, Dizy, Hautvillers and Cumières, is the centre of the Marne valley district.

To the south of the River lies the "Côte des Blancs", where white grapes are grown.

Cramant and Avize are perhaps the best parts of this region, with Oger and Le Mesnil. Further south are the slopes of Vertus, where black grapes reappear.

Champagne with its pale golden tint, is made, contrary to what might be supposed, mostly from black grapes.

On the Mountain and in the Valley of the Marne,



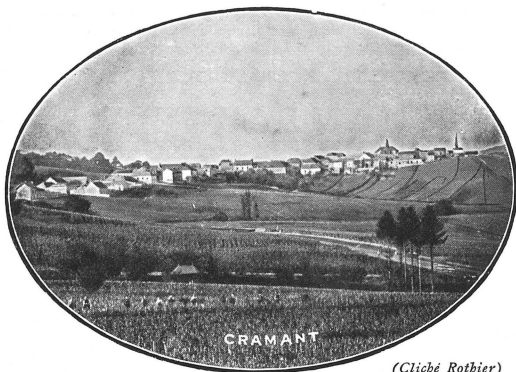
AY

(Clichés Rotbier)

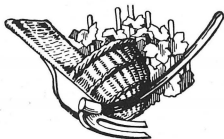
as well as at Vertus, the vine is the "black Pinot" together with the "Pinot Meunier" also a black grape. On the Côte des Blancs the "White Pinot Chardonnay" only is grown.

The excellent quality of the wine is largely due to the "Pinot", to which the soil is suitable.

Champagne, as presented by the great firms, is invariably a blend in which each of the three great



districts is represented, and the excellent quality is the result of skilful and harmonious blending in such a way as to bring out the qualities of each.





A SHORT HISTORY OF CHAMPAGNE WINE

The vines imported into Champagne by the Romans about the third century were cultivated and improved by the religious orders, who immediately recognized that wine was a source of progress, of activity and of health; it was therefore under the protection of the monasteries that most of our vineyards rose to prosperity.

Saint Remy, the celebrated archbishop of Reims in the year 530 A. D. mentioned the Champagne vines in his will, and the Pope, Urbain II, a native of Champagne, who died in 1099 A. D. was particularly fond of his own Ay wine.

About the fourteenth century vineyards covered the district, and from that time onwards the wine was proudly offered to the Kings of France, when they came to be crowned at Reims.

Champagne was then looked upon as the greatest treasure in the cellars of kings and nobles; good king Henri IV delighted in bedecking himself with the title of "Lord of Ay".

The most consummate tasters at the Court of Louis XIV, who instituted the "Order of the Hill-sides", made the reputation of Champagne. "Spare no expense", wrote Saint-Evremont to the Count of Olonne "to get some Champagne; no district supplies better wine for all Seasons".

At the end of the seventeenth century a Benedictin monk, belonging to the Abbey of Hautvillers near Epernay, discovered the method of bottling the wine

at the right season, and making it retain its sparkling qualities, together with perfect limpidity and a pale colour, hitherto unknown.

This discovery led to a great development of the renown of Champagne, and the memory of Dom Perignon, who is buried at Hautvillers, is duly honoured in the country.



(Cliché Foyot)

DOM PÉRIGNON
by Chavaillaud.

THE CULTURE OF THE VINE

.....

The culture of the Vine in Champagne requires much care, and is very costly, as is the case with all plants whose culture aims at obtaining the very best possible quality of fruit.

The work is carried on by families of peasant proprietors, attached to their vineyard with pride and love, from father to son, and sometimes for centuries together.

When the ground suitable for the culture of the vine has been prepared and the vine planted, it takes six years before it begins to yield grapes of the requisite quality, after which the vine-plant lives on for many years, but at the cost of constant labour.

The work begins in February with the pruning of the old wood, in order to prepare the plant for the new sprout.



(Cliche Rothier)

PRUNING THE VINES

Pruning is generally performed by women who cut off the branches that bore the grapes in the previous year, only one of these branches being preserved and cut short.



(Cliché Rothier)

DIGGING IN

Pruning is followed by digging in ; each vine plant is buried, only the shortened branch, which has been left by the pruner, being allowed to emerge from the soil.



(Cliché Rothier)

PLACING THE PROPS

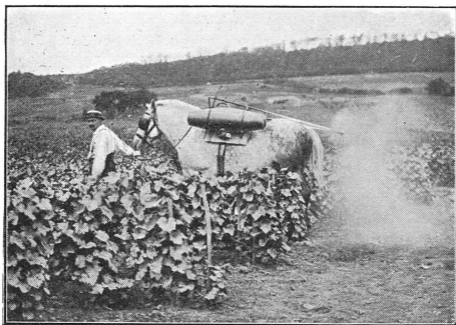
After digging in comes the placing of the wooden props which had been removed at the beginning of the winter, and which serve as supports for the new shoots.

TYING

*(Cliché Rotbier)*

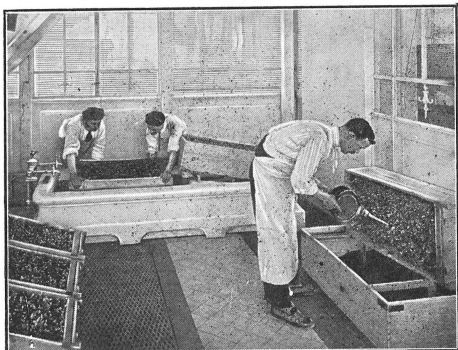
As the vine grows, the surface of the soil has to be hoed over lightly, and the shoots are tied to the props with straw. Finally the shoots are cut down to a height of about 3 feet.

The various operations described above are complicated by constant warfare against the enemies which attack the vine. The two pests known as "oidium" and "mildew" are kept in check by powdering with sulphur and by spraying with a composition containing sulphate of copper.



Modern method of spraying
to prevent mildew.

The Phylloxera is a terribly destructive insect pest, the progress of which it has been possible to retard for many years. The cultivation of new plantations of vines is carried out by new methods which enable the vinegrower to combat this redoubtable enemy without prejudice to the traditions which ensure an excellent quality of grapes. The "Pinot" is grafted on to plants which have been specially selected. The vinegrowers syndicates provide establishments where the growers can carry out the task scientifically.



(Editions Choque)

Care of young grafted plants.

GRAPE GATHERING IN CHAMPAGNE

.....

After many days of hard work and of anxiety the grower welcomes the approach of the vintage.

Beneath the big green leaves are hidden the pretty bunches of champagne grapes. On the vines which produce black grapes the colour has gradually changed from pale green to pink and finally to dark purple ; on the white vines the shade is a delicate transparent gold ; it is about the end of September and the time to gather is at hand.



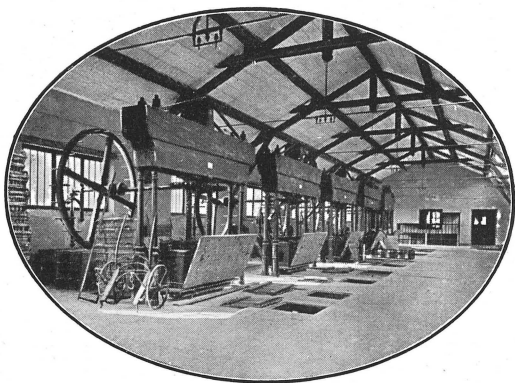
A GROUP OF GRAPE-PICKERS

The grape-pickers, men, women, and children arrive in families and spread all over the district.

The work must be completed within a few days, at the perfection of ripeness, and all defective berries must be cut from each bunch.

Baskets of grapes are ranged along the borders of the vineyard, and light carts with soft springs carry them off to the presses.

In each district are vast press houses belonging either to the leading firms or to commission agents, where everything is suitably arranged for dealing with the grapes which arrive from the neighbouring hill-sides.



(Cliché Simonin)

A MODERN PRESS-HOUSE

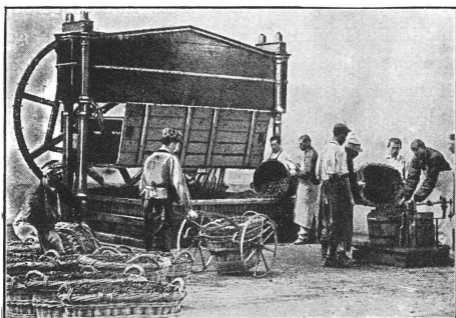
In the interior of the press houses are rows of presses, of vats and of barrels ready to receive the grape juice.

LOADING A PRESS

The utmost care is necessary in pressing the grapes, which must be perfectly fresh and unbruised.

Gentle continuous pressure separates the juice from the pulps and skins, which latter contain the colouring matter : it is thus that black grapes produce golden wine.

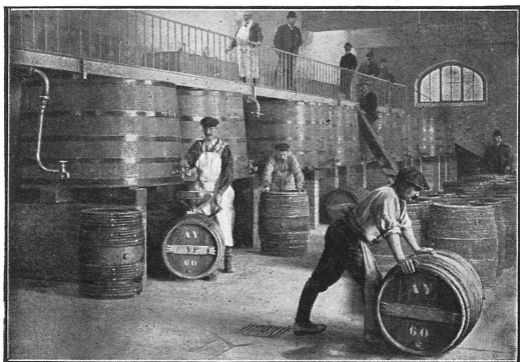
The juice extracted by the first applications of pressure is alone suitable for Champagne.



(Cliché Rotbier)

Loading a press.

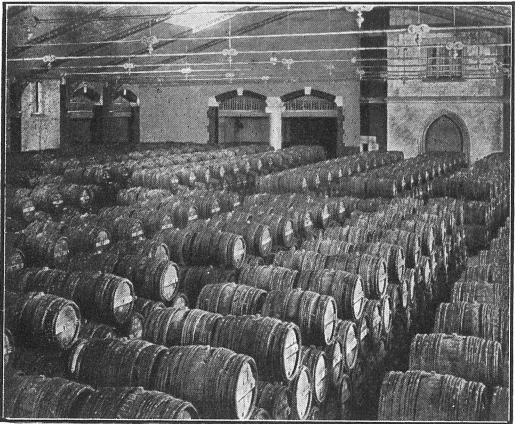
The juice or "must" is immediately put into barrels and carried off as rapidly as possible by motor lorry or other means to the establishments of the buyers.



(Cliché Rotbier)

Filling the must into casks.

HOW THE WINE IS MADE



(Cliché Rothier)

FERMENTATION OF THE NEW WINE IN BARRELS

It is during these few weeks that the visitor will be most interested by the feverish activity throughout the country. While gathering is in full swing on the hills, carts go to and fro between the vineyards and the press houses; the presses are worked day and night, and thousands of barrels of the precious must are carried off to the merchants' establishments.

The fermentation, due to ferments which are naturally present in the juice, begins at once in the barrels; the must appears to be in a state of ebullition, and swells and hisses under the influence of the changes which are taking place in its composition. Little by little everything calms down, and the miracle of fermentation is accomplished. What was only sweet grape juice is now magnificent wine.

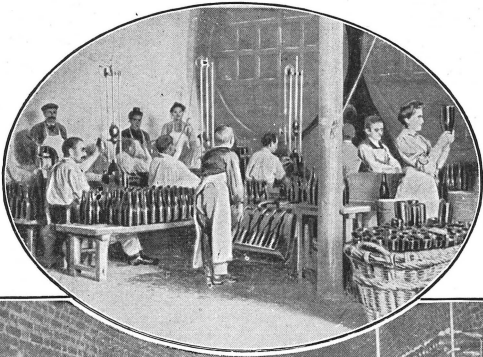
The ferments, exhausted and paralysed by the cold of winter now become quiescent. The wine becomes clear and limpid. This is the time for the managers to taste and blend in enormous vats the "cuvées" which will be bottled later.

BOTTLING

.....

In the spring time, when nature gives an impulse to all natural activities, the bottling begins.

To the wine, in order to facilitate the fermentation, a small quantity of pure candy sugar is added ; and the bottles are securely corked and lowered to the cellars,



(Cliches Royer)

PILING THE WINE IN CELLARS

.....

SECOND FERMENTATION

The ferments which have been sleeping during the winter, are roused by the mysterious influence of spring, and set to work afresh to transform the sugar in the wine, with the result of producing the delicate sparkling quality which is characteristic of Champagne.

The bottles are piled in vast cellars where they remain for several years until the wine is mature.

EJECTION OF THE SEDIMENT

Various ingenious operations are now necessary to get rid of the sediment produced by the second fermentation in bottle.

The deposit must first be worked down on to the cork; this result is obtained by skilful shaking and twisting of the bottles, which are placed in holes in a board, in a sloping position, with the cork downwards; after some three months of this treatment, the whole of the deposit collects close to the cork.

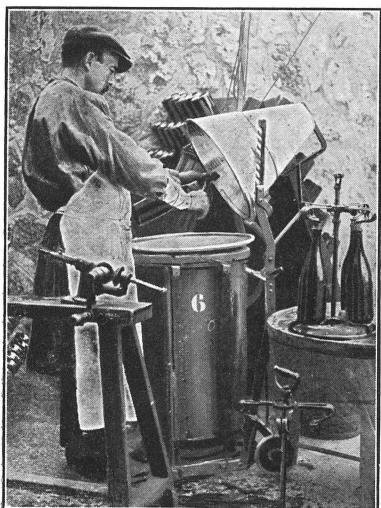


(Cliche Seeberger)

Shaking down the sediment.

The deposit must now be ejected from the bottle. The workman holds it neck downwards, and carefully loosens the cork ; at the exact moment when the latter is driven out by the pressure, the bottle is turned neck upwards, and the escaping gas carries off the deposit.

The wine is now perfectly limpid ; the necessary sweetening sugar is added, and the bottle receives a new cork, cut from the best Spanish bark.



(Cliché Poirier)

Ejection of the sediment.

.....



(Cliché Poyet)

GROUP OF WORKERS

The sweetening is effected by the addition of a small quantity of candy sugar dissolved in Champagne of the best quality. The object is to meet the taste of the consumer, who, according to different countries, may prefer wines more or less sweetened.

Before shipping the bottle is "dressed" with a capsule and label bearing the name of the firm and the word "Champagne" which is a legal guaranty of its origin.

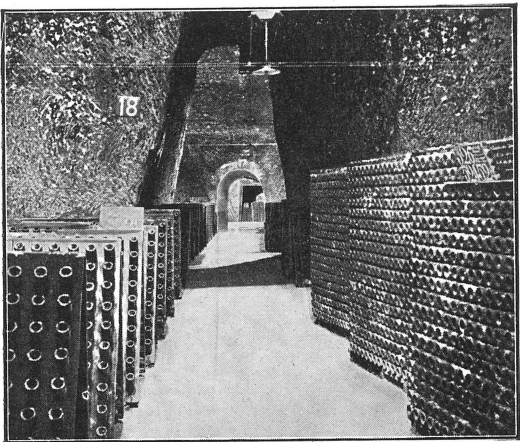


STATISTICS

The district which the French law has authorized to give the name of Champagne to its wine is small compared with other vinegrowing regions. The nature of the soil, the sorts of vine grown, and the special methods of cultivation in use result in the production of a high quality at the sacrifice of quantity; here, as elsewhere quality is scarcely compatible with quantity.

The crop varies considerably from year to year, and can only be estimated by taking an average over a long period. For the last period of thirty normal years, 1885 to 1915, the average production was 450.000 hectolitres or about 10.000.000 gallons a year.

During this same period, the Champagne district shipped a yearly average of only 30 millions of bottles, corresponding to 250.000 hectolitres or 5.550.000 gallons. The quantity shipped has therefore always been much less than the quantity produced, the reason being that only the better portions of the vintage are made use of for wine intended to be presented as Champagne.



(Cliché Rothier)

Reserves of wine.

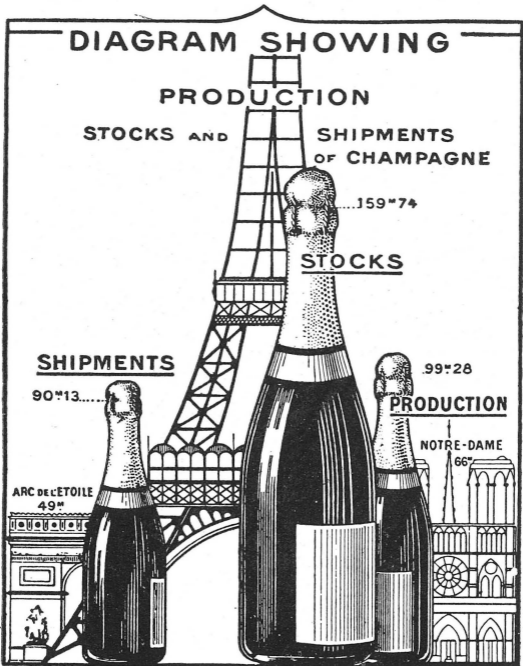
THE STOCKS

The wine shipped each year is not taken from the vintage of the previous year, but from reserves stored in the cellars of the great firms, which have been kept the number of years necessary to attain maturity.

Merchants are therefore obliged to hold immense stocks of wine in bottle, in addition to reserves in the wood of the best vintages to be employed in the composition of the cuvées.

The total stocks correspond to about five years shipments, and are kept in enormous cellars, which are often old quarries and which are very interesting to the visitor.

Production, stocks and shipments.



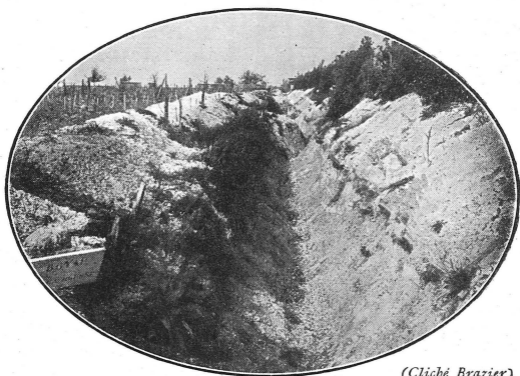
THE CHAMPAGNE COUNTRY DURING THE WAR OF 1914-1918

.....

Throughout the war the Champagne country was the scene of a tragic but glorious struggle. It was in front of the Reims Mountain that the German front was immobilized from 1914 to 1918, and along the slopes of this same mountain, at the foot of the hills of the Marne, and in the neighbourhood of Epernay, that the last German offensive in July 1918 was broken.

The vineyards naturally suffered severe damage.

Trenches furrowed the vines, and shells uprooted them; peasants saw their houses and furniture destroyed by fire, and many lives were lost. But their activity never failed and in spite of shells and aeroplanes, they kept on with their work as far as possible until 1918.



(Cliché Brazier)

Trench dug across a vineyard.

As soon as ever the enemy were gone, in October 1918, they camped out in their ruined villages, started to put the vineyards in order, and cultivated such vines as had been spared.

So it was that as early as 1920 an excellent vintage was gathered amounting to nearly 7,000,000 gallons.

THE CHAMPAGNE HOUSES DURING THE WAR



(Cliche Lemercier)

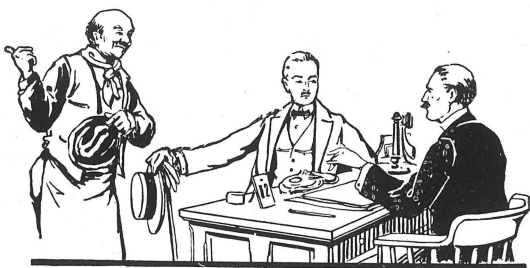
Interior of the establishment of a great firm at Epernay
July 1918.

The merchants too suffered severely : from 1914 to 1918 the Germans were at the very gates of Reims, and bombarded the city every day, often with gas and incendiary shells. All of the houses in Reims were more or less destroyed, and many of those in Epernay suffered the same fate.

Fortunately not a single shell, however big, was sufficiently powerful to break through into the cellars, which are deep and well built, and the stocks of wine were not damaged.

Like the peasants, the champagne merchants showed great pertinacity and never ceased working except from April to November 1918, when all civilians had to be sent away.

Immediately after the armistice, the merchants and their men got to work again in temporary buildings hastily thrown together over the cellars, and by 1920 work was again in full swing.



THE VISITOR ASKS QUESTIONS

The Visitor.—A very interesting visit; many thanks. It is a pity people do not come oftener to see your vines and your cellars. Many of those who drink champagne have no idea of the work and care required to produce such excellent wine.

Now may I ask you a few questions.

The Grower and the Merchant.—By all means.

The Visitor.—I have grasped how important it is for me to be certain that the Champagne I buy really comes from your cellars. How can I be sure of this.

Then again one of my worries is to know whether I can drink this excellent wine in quantities, without injury to my health.

Finally I should like you to tell me how the wine I have bought should be kept in good condition and how it should best be served.

The Grower and the Merchant.—We were afraid of wearying you with too much information, but shall be only too pleased to reply to your questions if you will take a seat.

HOW THE FRENCH LAW ENSURES THE BUYER AGAINST FRAUDULENT USE OF NAMES INDICATING THE ORIGIN OF PRODUCTS

Very few articles present such complete legal guaranties as to their origin as French wines and especially Champagne, but the buyer must know of these guaranties and insist upon them.

The French law provides as follows :

1° The Champagne district has definitely defined boundaries, within which are included only those vineyards which fulfil the conditions laid down by the law.

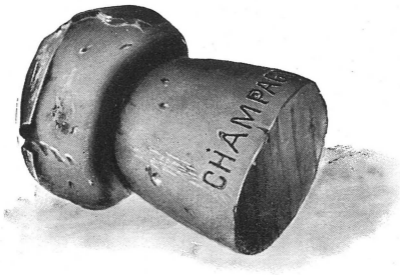
2° Only wine grown within these boundaries has the right to the name of "CHAMPAGNE".

3° At vintage time the crop of each vineyard within these boundaries is verified by the authorities, and from that moment onwards the wine is never lost sight of by them until it either reaches the French consumer or is exported.

4° The bottles of Champagne thus accounted for and only these bottles, must bear the word "CHAMPAGNE" upon the label ; this word must also figure on that part of the cork which is inside the neck of the bottle and on all packing cases or baskets.

The buyer who wishes to make sure that he is getting genuine Champagne, should, if he lives outside France, first of all require from the seller an absolute assurance that the bottles came from France, in their original cases or baskets.

It should be remembered that outside France the French authorities are powerless, and in certain countries, in the absence of efficient laws for preventing such practices, it is possible to make and export wine which is called Champagne, and which has nothing in common with the real article ; but, if the bottles come from France, no doubt can exist as to their origin, for the French authorities have kept them constantly in view. *So long as these bottles bear the word "CHAMPAGNE" on the label, and on the part of the cork inside the bottle, they certainly contain genuine Champagne.*



Cork bearing the word "CHAMPAGNE".

WINE AND HEALTH

.....

Wine is a natural product of the soil, and is nourishing, comforting and wholesome. Like all alimentary substances it must be consumed with the moderation which is natural to civilized men and women.

To drink too much wine is as bad as eating or drinking too much of anything else, and one should not lay the blame on wine because some people do not know how to drink it in moderation.

In regions where the vine has been cultivated for centuries, it would have long ago been found out if wine were injurious; as a matter of fact it is well known and recognized that it is not so. It is easy to prove that it contributes to health and long life, and is the best means of preventing alcoholism with all its consequences. In wine growing districts alcoholism is kept in check and the use of drugs is unknown while drunkenness is quite exceptional; the people know how to drink it in moderation, and recognize it as a source of good humour, and as a safeguard against epidemics.



(Cliché Poyet)

The family of a Champagne wine grower who has always drunk wine.



(Cliché Braun)

PASTEUR

From a portrait by Edelfelt

These are facts which are obvious to all those who come and study the question in wine growing districts. They have been observed by the most eminent authorities on the question of public health, amongst whom may be mentioned the following :

The illustrious Pasteur, one of the most eminent authorities on this subject, wrote as follows in his book *Études sur le Vin* : " Wine is justly looked upon as the most wholesome of beverages ".

Duclaux and Doctor Roux, the successors of Pasteur at the institution which bears his name, both of them members of the Academy of Science have, proclaimed that " the moderate use of wine has never done harm, as is proved by centuries of experience among whole nations ".

Doctor Layet, Professor of Medicine at Bordeaux, says : " Wine is the drink which is the most strengthening and the most suitable for the countryman. One of its best qualities is to prevent drunkenness to a certain extent in the districts where the people make use of it ".

Doctor Proust, Professor at College of Medicine in Paris, in his *Traité d'Hygiène*, MM. Albertini and Rossi, in treatises presented to the Academy of Science at Bologna, Dr Peton, and many other Scientific authorities have drawn attention to the substances contained in wine which are of value to the human organism, to its qualities from an aliment-

ary and fortifying point of view and to its efficacy in preventing epidemics.

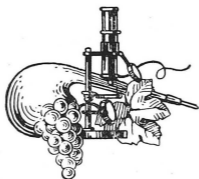
But of all wines, if there is one which can claim the honour of uniting with the pleasure of drinking it, a medical value of the first order, that wine is assuredly Champagne.



A Champagne wine grower aged 90, who is well and happy, and who rightly believes that wine is the old man's milk.

It is therefore not surprising if Champagne has always been used in cases of convalescence. No proof is needed, for all the great hospitals have for years past made use of Champagne as a "pick-me-up", especially after operations. The British medical corps during the South African war used it extensively. The great war of 1914-1918

furnished a new proof of the value of wine; those who were in the trenches well know how the red wine of France, which the soldiers called "The General Pinard" enabled them to resist exposure to cold and kept up their strength and spirits. The wounded remember the joy of drinking a glass of Champagne whenever they could get it.



HOW CHAMPAGNE SHOULD BE KEPT, SERVED AND DRUNK

Champagne must be treated with the respect due to a superb but delicate wine.

It is preferable not to ship it during the heat of summer, nor during periods of hard frost.

On arrival it should be placed in cellars at a temperature of about 50° to 55° Fahrenheit.

The bottles must always be kept lying horizontally for if left too long upright the cork will dry up little by little which may cause flatness and other troubles.

When serving, Champagne should never be poured into a jug or other recipient, but should be poured straight from the bottles into the glass ; to do otherwise would result in a serious loss of its best qualities.

The connoisseur is recognized by the way he serves his wines ; his Champagne will be cooled some time in advance by placing the bottle in an ice pail, but ice should never be put into the glass.

A slight mist on the outside of the glass is an indication that the temperature is right ; the glass should be thin and of elegant shape.



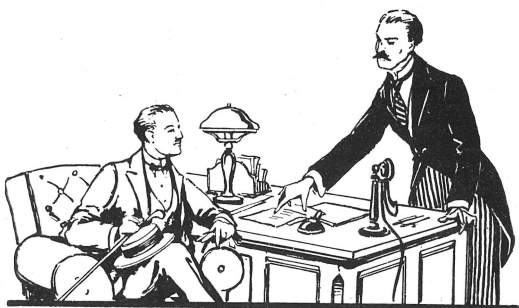
Various forms of elegant champagne glasses.

Finally one must know how to drink a fine wine like Champagne which deserves to be tasted attentively. The real connoisseur prefers to drink it while eating, if it be only a biscuit ; he will be careful to offer different kinds of wine with eatables which suit them. Champagne can be drunk throughout a repast, dry with meat and less dry with the sweets.

Its golden colour and sparkle help to decorate the dinner table, while its excellence is certain to be appreciated by the guests.

.....

A SHORT ADIEU



The Visitor.—*Grower and merchant, you both have my best thanks. At last I know all that the word "Champagne" means, and I shall feel pity for those who are not acquainted with the salutary virtues of your marvellous wine. For the future I shall drink it with all the more pleasure because, knowing it better, I shall treat it with due respect.*

The Merchant.—*And we who, throughout the worst hardships, were able to "keep smiling", like the celebrated angel of Reims Cathedral, will do our best to keep on sending you the most perfect wine of our Champagne country.*



The Smile of Reims



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