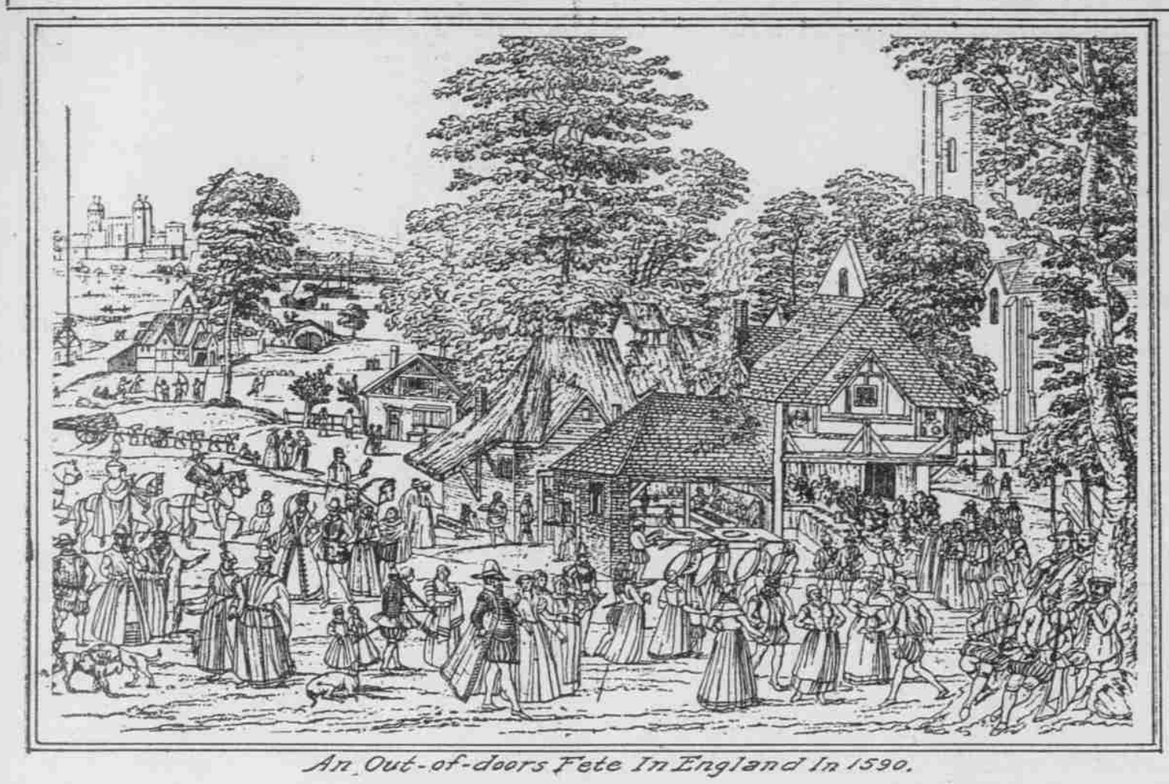
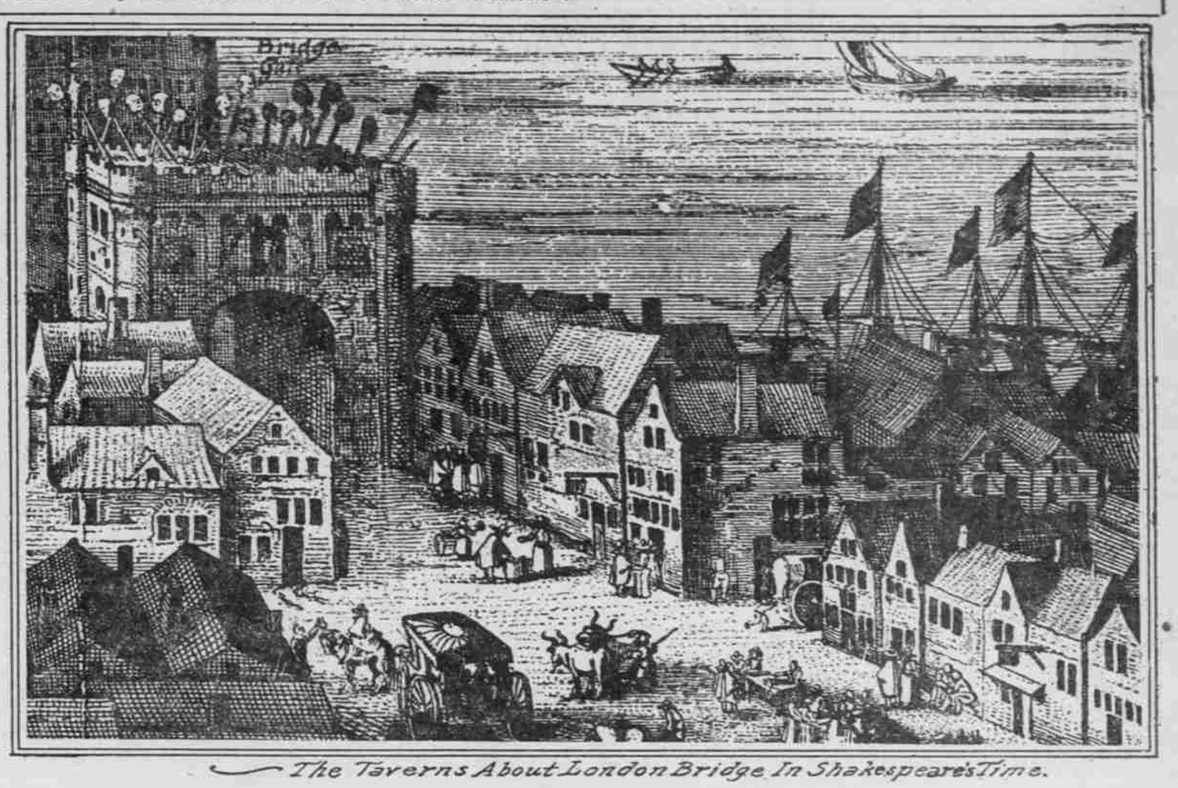
FRANCE LEADING COUNTRY IN WORLD IN WINE PRODUCTION

Joy and Merrymaking of Vintage Season Often Marred by Drunkenness and Deeds of Violence.



An Out-of-doors Fete In England In 1590.



The Taverns About London Bridge In Shakespeare's Time.

FRANCE has long been, in every way, the leading wine-producing country of the world. The people make more wine and consume more than the people of any other country. There have been bad years when the total French production has been surpassed by that of Italy, but these have been rare. In quality of wine produced, France is also far in the van. Certain districts in Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Spain and other countries make wines that are highly prized and eagerly bought at high prices, but the general superiority of French wines is almost everywhere acknowledged.

The scenes in the wine-producing districts at the vintage season are attractive. The gay groups of laughing girls who pass along the rows of vines gathering the great bunches of grapes make an animated picture. Quaint customs that originated centuries ago have been jealously preserved—processions, dances, observances that can sometimes be traced back to the ancient rites of the vintage season in Greece and Rome.

There is, however, a dark season to all this gaiety and happiness. Some of the French wine-growing districts are very much affected by drunkenness. The peasants of certain sections have been degenerated by wine drinking through generations. They are sullen, resentful, swift to quarrel. The joy and innocent merrymaking of the vintage season is often marred by deeds of violence. It is impossible to generalize upon drinking in France. One can go into certain sections and almost never see a drunken man or woman. And yet everyone seems to drink. A few miles away one may find a village where brawls and reeling vintagers are the rule rather than the exception.

So many more people in France are dependent upon wine making than peoples of other lands and the French have such a different attitude toward intoxicating liquors than Americans that prohibition does not seem probable there in the near future. France might agree to close her distilleries and to forbid the importation of hard liquor, but it is doubtful if the people will be willing in the near future to put a ban upon wine.

More than 1,000,000,000 gallons are made annually. This has not, of course, held true through the war, but it was considerably over this figure when the war opened, so that it is probable that the billion-gallon mark will soon be reached again. In the United States, with its tremendously greater extent of territory and its much greater population, the production of wine in normal times is hardly more than a 20th of the French figures. Even little Portugal produces twice as much wine annually as does this country.

In consumption the figures are even more startling. In this country very little wine is used. The average consumption per head is less than half a gallon in a year. In France the average consumption is more than 30 gallons per year to each individual.

Jealous producers in other districts circulated stories that champagne produced all sorts of terrible diseases and that it could not be made without the assistance of the devil. These tales were widely believed and, for a considerable period, champagne went into eclipse. Most people were afraid to drink it and bottles could be bought at ridiculously low prices. But when other growers found out how to make bubbling wine, the prejudice disappeared and champagne came back into favor.

There are almost countless districts and separate vineyards in France that have as much reputation with epicures as the champagne country. The region about Bordeaux is said to have the finest soil and the best climatic conditions in France. About 500,000 acres of this Gironde country, a fifth of the total acreage, is given over to vineyards. For average excellence, the Gironde wines rank first among all the wines of France. From one comparatively small vineyard in the Gironde comes the St. Emilion wine, so highly regarded by connoisseurs that only those with the incomes of millionaires can have many bottles in their cellars.

Among wine lovers the Burgundy vintages are almost as renowned as those of the Champagne and Gironde districts. Then there are the sparkling wines of the Saumur country on the Loire and the wines from the Midi in the south of France, where a quarter of all the French wines is made. And there are almost countless other districts that might be mentioned where most of the wine made goes down the throats of the French themselves, but where some prized vintages for exportation are also bottled.

The Vintagers.—From a painting by Jules Breton.

Shakespeare's England a Drunken One.

Wars in Holland Blamed for Habits of Inebriety.

LOOKING backward from rural France of today to Elizabethan England, the change is not one toward sobriety. It is not exaggerated to say that Shakespeare's England was a drunken England. The contemporary drawing reproduced above shows how the inns were crowded about the Southwark entrance to London bridge. Almost everywhere along the London water front were clustered these inns and taverns, and a great many of them were places of evil resort. In town and country, on city streets and on slightly frequented lanes in rural districts, one had not far to travel to find a place where alcoholic drinks could be bought.

Camden, a trustworthy chronicler of the period, says that there had been an age when Englishmen were more sober than all other peoples of the north. By the time of Elizabeth, however, drunkenness was common. Camden thought the habit was fastened on England by the wars in Holland where the soldiers "first learned to drown themselves with immoderate drinking, and by drinking others' health to impair their own." Philip Stubbes, another writer about things that he himself saw, declared that all the inns in London were crowded from morn to night with determined drinkers.

If the Englishman was slow in learning how to drink as deeply as other peoples of northern Europe, he seems to have caught up quickly to his competitors. Massinger, one of the dramatists of the age, says that an Englishman of his time was able to "drink more in two hours than the Dutchman or the Dane in four and twenty." And when Rabelais wanted to find a fit expression for a man hopelessly intoxicated, he said that he "was drunk as an Englishman."

In the reign of Henry VIII drunkenness and dissipation were so popular at court that even the Germans, who had an unpleasant reputation for hard drinking, confessed that they could not compete with the English. An official of the German court who belonged to a temperance society was sent as envoy to London and Henry VIII did not rest content until he had made the envoy break his vows of sobriety. Throughout Elizabeth's reign hard drinking was just as popular.

James I, who succeeded Elizabeth, was not so passionate a person as the robust Henry VIII and the quick-tempered Elizabeth, but conditions did not improve. We have a very detailed account of an entertainment given at this time by the earl of Salisbury in honor of King Christian of Denmark, and there is nothing in the worst periods of Rome to match it. The women at this reception drank as heavily as the men, and soon the whole assemblage was reeling about in a disgusting condition.

One noble lady, playing the part of the queen of Sheba in a representation of her visit to King Solomon, stepped forward with presents for the Danish and English kings. Unfortunately she had imbibed too freely, tripped over some steps and pitched her presents into the lap of the surprised Danish monarch. In an effort to show that he forgave her, the king gallantly arose and offered to dance with the lady, but he, too, had poured so much wine down his throat that he could not stand and had to be carried away to bed.

After this intermission an attempt was made to carry on with the festivities, but they broke down disastrously when three ladies impersonating Faith, Hope and Charity proved unable to speak or to keep their feet moving in straight lines.

Herrick's Poems Depict Riotous Scenes.

Descriptions of Festivities Mention Heavy Drinking.

WITHIN recent years open air festivals and entertainments have been gaining favor in America. In Shakespeare's time they were even more common. Merry-makings on holidays were observed in all the towns and villages. Dancing was much indulged in and on these occasions it must be recorded that the men drank as freely as they did indoors. But these festivities were not new to Shakespeare's time. From time immemorial the English had held all sorts of merry-makings in the open. "England had adored mummings, pageants and interludes for generations when Elizabeth came to her throne," says one historian. "There had been, time out of mind, disguisings and masquerading on high days and holidays, puppets in booths at fairs, and bride-ales,' as the commoner wedding festivities were called, theatricals in barns, inn yards and on London streets."

One reason for the popularity of these out-of-doors fetes was because suitable indoor accommodations were not so available. Another was perhaps because the population was much smaller and strangers were not so apt to join or to look on.

Robert Herrick, exiled from his beloved London to a small parish in Devonshire, is the laureate of these curious open-air observances of the rural population. And it is significant that in nearly all of his poems describing wakes and other festivities, there is always mention of the heavy drinking indulged in. Here are the closing lines to "The Wake," which apparently depicts the riotous scenes in scores of English villages in Shakespeare's time:

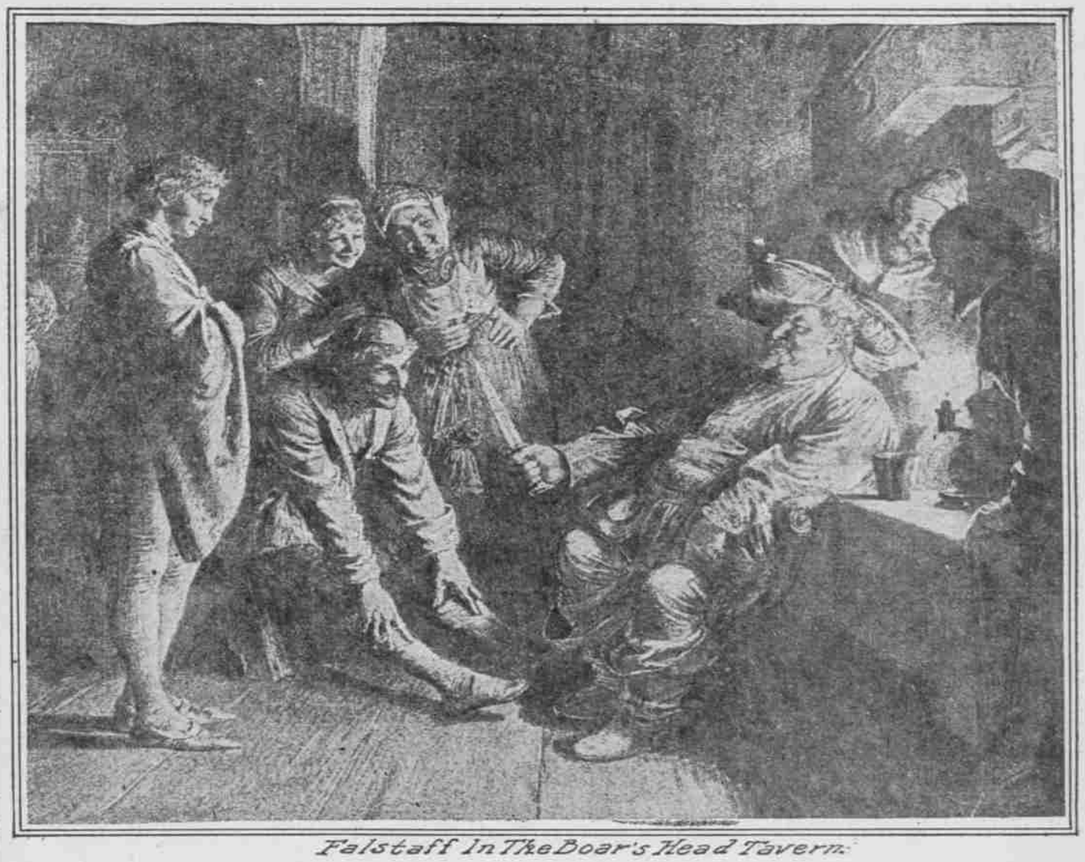
> Near the dying of the day,
> There will be a cudgel-play,
> Where a coxcomb will be broke,
> Ere a good word can be spoke;
> But the anger ends all here,
> Drenched in ale or drowned in beer.
> Happy rustics, best content
> With the cheapest merriment;
> And possess no other fear,
> Than to want the wake next year.

At these fetes there was probably wine for the aristocrats present, but the majority of the people drank ale and beer. They put many things into these, however, to make various drinks that do not seem especially palatable to us, but which found great favor. One drink, popularly known as lamb's wool, was ale to which had been added toasts, nutmeg, roasted crab apples and sugar. This was comparatively simple as contrasted with the fearsome liquor called egg ale.

The maker of this drew 12 gallons of ale to which he added the juice from eight pounds of beef, a pound of raisins, oranges and spice. Then a dozen eggs and the beef were put into a bag and left in the barrel until the ale had stopped fermenting. Then two quarts of Malaga sack, a sweet wine, were added, the ale was bottled and was soon ready for use.

The country people also made intoxicating drinks from many growing things in the gardens and woods. Some of these included blackberry ale, cowslip ale, horseradish ale, apricot ale and elderberry beer.

The curiosities of Elizabethan drinking were not confined to the drinks themselves. Mention must be made of the "ale-yard," a drinking vessel. This was 'made of glass and was just a yard in length. It was slender, holding little more than a pint, and the closed end terminated in a ball. Good drinkers were supposed to empty these without taking the glass from their mouths. It was not a difficult task while the tube was filled with the ale, but when air reached the expanded bulb at the end, the liquor came out with a splash, and usually gave the drinker a shower bath, very much to the delight of the onlookers.



Falstaff In The Boar's Head Tavern.

Drinking Scenes Abound in Shakespeare Plays.

Sir John Falstaff Representative Character of the Time.

THERE are many drinking scenes in Shakespeare's plays that prove how much in favor alcoholic drinks were in the Elizabethan period. Drunken mirth rings through the pages of "Antony and Cleopatra," some of it taken from Plutarch, but a good deal of it probably observed by the dramatist in London taverns. There is a tragic drinking bout in "Othello" and "Twelfth Night" is jubilant in its praise of alcohol. The joke that is played on Sly in "The Taming of the Shrew" had its origin in drink. And there are other scenes that might be mentioned, but it is time to notice Sir John Falstaff in the two parts of "King Henry IV," Shakespeare's greatest comic character.

Sir John is so complete in all ways that it is probable that Shakespeare must have known people like him. And the dramatist gives us so much information in these plays about tavern life that he must have pictured scenes that he knew.

We know from countless books of the period that the young aristocrats were much less exclusive than youth of the same relative station are today. They did not patronize hotels or clubs where they met only men and women of their own world. They wandered gayly through the most disreputable haunts of London and they made friends there among the lowly born, not mere friends of a night, but brilliant dramatists and merry rogues with whom they were glad to frolic when they were sober.

At the more famous taverns, at places like the Mitre, the Falcon, the Boar's Head, and especially at the Mermaid, the nightly gathering was a brilliant and democratic one. Aristocrats of the bluest blood sat shoulder to shoulder with play-writers and actors, poets and hangers-on, whose skill at repartee made them welcome. There was much less family life than today. Women attended the play, but they then went home if they belonged to good families. They did not expect to be taken with their husbands or fathers to the taverns.

At these assemblages money or birth counted for less than a nimble wit. When Shakespeare and Ben Jonson crossed swords in debate, the young noblemen kept silent. One of the needy and out-of-elbows dramatists of the period who was a great frequenter of taverns was Henry Chettle, a hack-writer who was always ready to write a play at order or to collaborate with a better-known author who wanted some one else to do the hard work. In a pamphlet of the period Chettle is thus described: "In comes Chettle sweating and blowing, by reason of his fatness; to welcome whom, because he was of old acquaintance, all rose up, and fell presently on their knees, to drink a health to all the lovers of Helican." It is credible that Shakespeare, seeing this puffing fat man waddle into a tavern, might well have had the picture in his mind when he brought Falstaff to the Boar's Head and had him welcomed there by merry cronies.

Falstaff has been called "the wine-god of merry England." He certainly resembles the Greek Silenus, the fat old man who always accompanied Bacchus. And Falstaff, like Silenus, cared much more for quantity in his drinks than he did for quality. The sack that he loved so much was a sweet wine, but he put more sugar in it. Sometimes he liked a toast added. But he did not want anything in it that made it weaker. He would not have it mulled with eggs nor would he have lime added.

Wine Regarded Just as Americans Do Coffee.

Recent Novel Portrays Blighted Communities Due to Drinking.

THIS painting of a rural drinking scene in France by a well-known artist is a depiction of wine in its most pleasant aspect. Such a picture might be duplicated in all parts of the country. The people drink a great deal, but seldom to excess. They look upon wine almost as Americans do upon coffee. The native products that are not highly prized and that are sold at hundreds of little inns or taverns are pure but rough, intoxicating but not highly so.

The other side of the picture, however, should not be overlooked. It is possible to find almost countless rural places where wine is constantly abused. "Nono," a French novel recently translated into English, is an unflinching portrayal of one of these blighted communities where wine has wrought evil to a whole countryside.

Americans who seldom drink wine always think of champagne when they feel opulent enough to buy French wine. It is the most famous of all the French vineyard products, but the industry of wine making in France would not be very important if champagne were the only variety made. Everyone knows now, if they did not before 1914, that the champagne district extends for miles about Rheims and Epernay. The vineyards along both banks of the Marne and in what is known as the mountain district are attractive places when the grapes are hanging in great bunches to the green vines, but the natural scenery is not so picturesque as in many other French wine-growing districts.

Champagne is a very modern wine, the secret of making sparkling drinks having been discovered in the champagne country a year or two before 1700. A monk named Dom Perigord is regarded as the first maker of this wine that is so famous today, but not much is known of the discovery. It is generally thought that he probably came upon the secret by accident, having corked some bottles filled with partly fermented wine which bubbled readily when opened. The new wine became popular at once and for a long time only the growers in the champagne country were able to furnish this product.