

# the WAYWARD TENDRILS Newsletter

Vol.4 No.4

A WINE BOOK COLLECTOR'S CLUB

October 1994

## BETWEEN SMILES: An Appreciation of A.J. Liebling's *Between Meals: An Appetite for Paris* by Bo Simons



erald Asher, the Wine Editor of *Gourmet* magazine, had been speaking for about thirty minutes when, smiling at his audience and intoning, "Now we are coming to home ground," he introduced a passage from the work of A.J. Liebling. Asher had been quoting passages from literature concerning wine, speaking at a benefit dinner for the Sonoma County Wine Library. Asher's reference to coming home referred to the fact that Liebling was an American, and Asher had been quoting lovely, medium-to-long passages from Atheneaus, Collette, and Thomas Love Peacock, among others, before launching into a passage from Liebling's marvelous little book, *Between Meals: An Appetite for Paris* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1962; 191 pp). Liebling was a student of sorts living in Paris supported by his father. Both Liebling and this century were in their twenties. He later wrote of this time, his haphazard pursuit of Medieval studies at the Sorbonne and his methodical yet lyrical studies of food, wine and the good life in Paris in a series of pieces in *The New Yorker* and one in *Vogue*, which were collected into *Between Meals*. Asher read from a chapter called "Just Enough Money":

The reference room where I pursued my own first researches as a feeder without the crippling handicap of affluence was the Restaurant des Beaux-Arts, on the Rue Bonaparte, 1926-27. I was a student, in a highly generalized way, at the Sorbonne, taking targets of opportunity for study. Eating soon developed into one of my major subjects. The franc was at twenty-six to the dollar, and the researcher, if he had only a

certain sum -- say, six francs -- to spend, soon established for himself whether, for example, a half bottle of Tavel *supérieur*, at three and a half francs, and braised beef heart and yellow turnips, at two and a half, gave him more or less pleasure than a *contre-filet* of beef, at five francs, and a half bottle of *ordinaire*, at one franc. He might find that he liked the heart, with its strong, rich flavor and odd texture, nearly as well as the beef, and that since the Tavel was overwhelmingly better than the cheap wine, he had done well to order the first pair. Or he might find that he so much preferred the generous, sanguine *contre-filet* that he could accept the undistinguished *picrate* instead of the Tavel. As in a bridge tournament, the learner played duplicate hands, making the opposite choice of fare the next time the problem presented itself. (It was seldom as simple as my example, of course, because a meal usually included at least an *hors d'oeuvre* and a cheese, and there was a complexity of each to choose from...).

I had had my first taste of Liebling's prose, and I liked it. He was sweeping, subtle, knowing and knowledgeable, disarming and capable of gentle self effacement with his tone of mock pedantry. I wanted more. I got my hands on a copy of *Between Meals* and consumed it in several leisurely sittings, savoring the terse, understated mastery of the writing; the factual precision coupled the narrator's strong point of view and presence. Raymond Sokolov, in his biography of Liebling, *The Wayward Reporter: The Life of A.J. Liebling* (New York: Harper, 1980), states, "Joe Liebling was always there on the page, a vivid presence. He insisted on the personal note, on the importance and relevance of his, the reporter's,

reaction to the event he was covering." Liebling thus became one of the first writers to work in the genre that was to become known as the New Journalism, and Tom Wolfe looks upon Liebling as a mentor.

Something of Liebling's legacy, his enduring strength, can be sensed in what one of his colleagues, Joseph Mitchell at *The New Yorker*, said at his funeral in 1963. Mitchell remembered speaking with the proprietor of an out-of-print bookstore about Liebling: "He said that every few days all through the year someone...came in and asked if he had *Back Where I Came From* or *The Telephone Indian* or some other book by A.J. Liebling... The man went on to say that he and other veteran second-hand book dealers felt that this was a certain sign that a book would endure. 'Literary critics don't know which book will last,' he said, 'and literary historians don't know. We are the ones who know. We know which books can be read only once, and we know which ones can be read and reread and reread.'"

I have only known Liebling's work for a short time, but I trust that bookdealer's call. Liebling's published books number almost twenty, beginning in 1934 with a book on Broadway written with Edward B. Marks titled *They All Sang*, and extending beyond his death with several posthumous collections. His books embraced numerous subjects, many being collections of his *New Yorker* articles: the press in America, its shortcomings and Liebling's longstanding feud with publisher Colonel Robert McCormick of the *Chicago Tribune*, World War II, boxing, Gov. Earl Long of Louisiana, food, France, especially Paris, and New York City, clearly Liebling's first and last love.

Abbott Joseph Liebling was born there in 1904. His father Joseph, a furrier, took him with the family to visit Paris in his youth, but it was not until 1926 that he was able to enjoy an extended stay in the city. He had attended Dartmouth from 1920 to 1923 when he was expelled for repeated absences from chapel. He later graduated from Columbia University. He worked briefly for the *New York Times* before being fired. He then had a job with the *Providence (Rhode Island) Journal*, at which time he went home for a weekend in New York and his father suggested a year of study in Europe might broaden him. "I sensed my father's generous intention," Liebling writes in *Between Meals*, "and, fearing he might change his mind, I told him I didn't feel I should go, since I was indeed thinking of getting married. 'The girl is ten years older than I am,' I said, 'and Mother might think she is kind of fast, because she is being kept by a cotton broker from Memphis, Tennessee, who only comes North once in a while. But you are a man of the world, and you understand that a woman can't always keep herself. Basically...'. Within the week, I had a letter of credit

on the Irving Trust for two thousand dollars, and a reservation on the *Caronia* for late in the summer."

How he spent "that soft Paris year" constitutes much of *Between Meals* which he wrote shortly before his death in 1963. "If I had compared my life to a cake, the sojourns in Paris would have represented the chocolate filling. The intervening layers were plain sponge," he writes.

The first chapter, "A Good Appetite," takes its name from Liebling's primary requirement for writing well about food. "Each day brings only two opportunities for field work, and they are not to be wasted minimizing the intake of cholesterol." Liebling takes as a model of this tenet, "one of the last of the great around-the-clock gastronomes of France...Yves Mirande, a small, merry author of farces and musical comedy books." He describes Mirande's prodigious appetite and some truly gargantuan meals they both enjoyed. The trouble was that at 80 in 1955, Mirande started to act on the advice of his doctor and his solicitous friends and believe in moderation. He had for years been able to eat in the grand manner at the restaurant on the Rue Saint-Augustin that he had founded for his protégée, Mme. G., a Gasconne and a magnificent cook. He also backed and helped manage the Théâtre Antoine with a Mme. B. According to Liebling, the 80 year old Mirande had "his mind kept young by the theater of Mme. B., his metabolism protected by the restaurant of Mme.G." Then, unfortunately, Mirande started moderating when Mme.G. retired from the restaurant business, robbing Mirande of the ease with which he had been able to eat in the grand manner.

After the closing of Mme. G's, Liebling accompanied Mirande to a dinner hosted by Mme B., who had always counseled forbearance and healthy eating, but whom Mirande had always been able to ignore while Mme. G. had her restaurant. Among the other guests "was an amiable couple in their advanced sixties or beginning seventies of whom the husband was the grand manitou of Veuve Clicquot Champagne. Mirande introduced them by their right name, which I forget, and during the rest of the evening addressed them as M. and Mme. Clicquot." The guests included a boorish vintner from the Midi.

For the second wine, the man from the Midi proudly produced a red, in a bottle without a label, which he offered to M. Clicquot with the air of a tomcat bringing a field mouse to its master's feet. "Tell me what you think of this," he said as he filled the champagne man's glass.

M. Clicquot -- a veteran of such challenges, I could well imagine -- held the glass against the light,

dramatically inhaled the bouquet, and then drank, after a slight stiffening of the features that indicated to me that he knew what he was in for. Having emptied half the glass, he deliberated.

"It has a lovely color," he said.

"But what is it? What is it?" the man from the Midi insisted.

"There are things about it that remind me of a Beaujolais," M. Clicquot said (he must have meant that it was wet), "but on the whole I should compare it to a Bordeaux" (without doubt unfavorably).

Mirande and Liebling exchanged glances, and Liebling thought of the Pétrus and the Cheval Blanc they had enjoyed at their last meal together at *chez Madame G.*

Liebling attributes Mirande's death not to his decades of gourmandizing, but to the retirement of Mme.G., and Mirande's weaning from the exquisite and bountiful meals which he had loved and to which his system had become accustomed. During Mirande's long rich years of good eating, "the organs of the interior -- never very intelligent, in spite of what the psychosomatic quacks say -- received each day the amount of pleasure to which they were accustomed, and never marked the passage of time... When Mme. G., good soul, retired, moderation began its fatal inroads on his resistance."

In addition to such lovely memories and speculations, *Between Meals* brims with astute wine appreciation. The presence of the narrator remains in the forefront. Liebling's keen appreciation of a good *rosé* as well as his strong abhorrence of most that passed for *rosé* in 1962 shows in the following passage:

In 1926, there were in all France only two well-known wines that were neither red nor white. One was Tavel, and the other Arbois, from the Jura -- and Arbois is not a rose-colored wine but an "onion-peel" wine, with russet and purple glints. In the late thirties, the *rosés* began to proliferate in wine regions where they had never been known before, as growers discovered how marketable they were, and to this day continue to pop up like measles on the wine map. Most often *rosés* are made from red wine grapes, but the process is abbreviated by removing the liquid prematurely from contact with the grape skins. This saves time and trouble. The product is a semi-aborted red wine. Any normally white wine can be converted into a

*rosé* simply by adding a dosage of red wine or cochineal.

In 1926 and 1927, for example, I never heard of Anjou *rosé* wine, although I read wine cards every day and spent a week of purposeful drinking in Angers, a glorious white-wine city. Alsace is another famous white-wine country that now lends its name to countless cases of a pinkish cross between No-Cal and vinegar; if, in 1926, I had crossed the sacred threshold of Valentin Sorg's restaurant in Strasbourg and asked the sommelier for a *rose d'Alsace*, he would have, quite properly, kicked me into Germany. The list is endless now; ... you see the *rosés* from Bordeaux, Burgundy, all the South of France, California, Chile, Algeria, and heaven knows where else. Pink champagne, colored by the same procedure, has existed for a century and was invented for the African and Anglo-Saxon trade. The "discovery" of the demand for pink wine approximately coincided with the repeal of prohibition in the United States. (The American housewife is susceptible to eye and color appeal.)...

Logically, there is no reason any good white- or red-wine region should not produce equally good *rosé*, but in practice the proprietors of the good vineyards have no cause to change the nature of their wines; they can sell every drop they make. It is impossible to imagine a proprietor at Montrachet, or Chablis, Pouilly, for example, tinting his wine to make a Bourgogne *rosé*. It is almost as hard to imagine it of a producer of first-rate Alsatian or Angevin wines. The wine converted to *rosé* in the great-wine provinces are therefore, I suspect, the worst ones -- a suspicion confirmed by almost every experience I have had of them.

Liebling distills the pink wine phenomenon into a cogent, forceful and personal argument. The whole explosion of Mateus and Lancers, the Portuguese *rosés*, was still a few years off when Liebling wrote this, but I do not think he would have been surprised by it. The entire white zinfandel episode can also fit into Liebling's scenario even though it came fifteen years after his death.

Between the smiles Liebling brings with his wry anecdotes and deft sketches, one nods at bits of wisdom, and one sighs at the craft and the elegance of the prose. I leave you with Liebling's description of his introduction to drinking Burgundy, where he brings in similes from literature, boxing and art to approximate the power of the wines. He describes an afternoon spent drinking the best Burgundies in a restaurant at Nuits-Saint-Georges and in the cellars of a local wine merchant, and then tries to evoke that feeling through mere language, discovering a truth about Burgundy along the way.

...my true initiation into the drinking of Burgundy...at its best and in profusion can only be compared to the experience of a young woman I know who, having attended progressive schools all the way to college, had her first massive introduction to Shakespeare and the Old Testament in the same year. My introduction was a bit overwhelming, but I had had a stout preparation for it during the academic year at the Sorbonne, when I passed my oenological novitiate experimenting among the Tavel and the Côte Rôties of the Restaurant des Beaux Arts. Drinking Richbourg without this training would have been like a debutante prizefighter meeting Archie Moore in a feature bout; he would not have been up to it and would never know what hit him. Burgundy has the advantage -- to which a young palate is particularly sensitive -- of a clear, direct appeal, immediately appealing and easy to comprehend on a primary level. This is a quality compatible with greatness. Shakespeare and Tolstoy, because more accessible, are not inferior to, say, Donne and Dostoevski. The merits of the Parthenon sculptors are not inferior to those of the primitives for being easier to recognize. Burgundy thus has two publics: one (which it shares with Bordeaux) that likes it for its profound as well as its superior qualities, and one that likes it only because it is easy to like.



# WILD BILL NEELY, CONTINUED: A BOOK REVIEW by Roy Brady

**O.S.S.: One Sad Sack, Pvt. Neely Disciplines the Military.** Drawings and Journals by William L. Neely. Edited by Allan Shields. Mariposa, CA: Jerseydale Ranch Press, 1994. Available from Jerseydale Ranch Press, 6506 Jerseydale Road, Mariposa, CA 95338. \$8.95 + 75¢ CA tax + \$1.50 S/H for single copy, and 50¢ for each additional.



his small volume is recommended to wine book collectors because attention has already been called to its predecessor, *Wild Bill Neely and the Pagan Brothers' Golden Goat Winery*, from the same publisher [Tendrils Newsletter Vol.4 No.1]. These selections from his journal cover the period of his military service in World War II when he was 19 to 22. I count 77 references to wine in the 149 pages. References to girls and music are probably more extensive, but I did not count them since those subjects do not lie within our purview. (In Neely's time "girls" was a term applied without opprobrium to human females from prepuberty to postmenopause; I defer to that usage.)

Since I cannot improve on the excellent summary of Bill's book by Allan Shields, his sympathetic editor, I simply lift it:

"In these pages you will find love, hate, rage, fear, death, injury, riotous living, military stupidity, travel, a philosophy of nature, amusing observations, high culture, hilarious incidents told so well you will slap your leg and share them with the nearest person. Make no mistake: These are unexpurgated true-to-life journals by a gifted, articulate writer.

"Bill Neely was cleverer than the Sad Sack in that he immediately and swiftly sized up the military life and transformed his duties into a life of gratification and sensuality. He sublimated bivouacs into nature studies, training assignments into educational opportunities, his uniform into a girl magnet, leisure into cultural development, and carved unique places for himself in every military station for three years."

There, you are keen to read it, aren't you?



## NEWS & NOTES

**Welcome new members:** **Bruce Douglas** (P.O. Box 2099, Salem, Oregon; 503-371-0723, fax 503-371-6708). Bruce has been collecting English language wine books for 10 years. **Arthur Spector** (312 River Road, Gladwyne, PA 19035); **Dr. Peter Winding** (Vandvaerksvey 11, DK-5690 Tommerup, Denmark) - a wine journalist and publisher of *Vinbladet*; **Mrs. Vernon Piper** (24 Log Cabin Drive, St. Louis, MO 63124).

**Warren Johnson** (Second Harvest Books) writes to let us know that he has "made the move north." His new address is P.O. Box 1388, Cobb Mountain, CA 95426. Phone/Fax 707-928-5206. He hopes to get his first wine book catalogue out as soon as he - and his computer - get settled in.

"Psychological Profile of Book Collectors" is a research project being conducted by Dr. Ruth Ann Smith, associate professor of marketing at Virginia Tech. It is too late for Tendrils to participate in the first phase of this research, but she hopes we might assist in a follow-up study. Prof. Smith will share her findings on the "characteristics and behaviors of book collectors" as soon as they are available. Sounds like great reading, doesn't it! (We know we have "the disease," but now we might learn why...)

Tendrils who are fond of California wine history will be especially saddened to learn of the death of Ruth Teiser, director of the California Wine Industry Oral History Series and author (along with Catherine Harroun) of the excellent California wine history, *Winemaking in California* (New York, 1983). She died one day short of her 79th birthday in June. The Oral History series, started at the University of California at Berkeley in 1969, and later sponsored by the *Wine Spectator* Scholarship Foundation, now contains over 50 volumes of oral histories. Every two years the *Wine Spectator* publishes a booklet summarizing the biographies of the interviewees, *California Wine Pioneers: Profiles of the State's Wine Industry Leaders*. A letter and a phone call to the *Spectator* asking about the publishing history and availability of these booklets have gone unanswered - but will keep trying.

"Rare Book Sleuth Uncovered." Los Angeles Tendril **Angela Stewart** clipped and sent us a feature article from the *L.A. Times* on Genevieve Krueger, a former librarian who runs a search service from her book-filled home. Angela forewarns that she has been unable to reach Ms. Krueger (only her answering machine) - must be out sleuthing hard-to-find titles. But, her number is 818-353-0525.

From the Editor's Page of *Wine East* magazine (Tendril Hudson Cattell) we learn that

Gene Ford is retiring as editor/publisher of *The Moderation Reader* to pursue other related projects that need attention. The magazine will continue to "present the research and argumentation for responsible drinking" under new ownership. Ford has also given us several books: *The Benefits of Moderate Drinking: Alcohol, Health & Society*; *The French Paradox and Drinking for Health*; *Ford's Illustrated Guide to Wines, Brews and Spirits* and *ABCs of Wine, Brew and Spirits*. Subscription to *The Moderation Reader* (6 issues yearly) is \$12 USA / \$18 foreign: 4714 N.E. 50th Street, Seattle, Wash 98105. Salut , Gene!

On August 26th **Gerald Asher** entertained a gathering of Sonoma County Wine Library friends with a delicious talk and readings on wine from favorite books. The Library Associates is publishing a transcribed booklet of his talk (cost not yet known, but minimal). Order from the S.C.W.L. Associates, P.O. Box 43, Healdsburg, CA 95448. If you were not there, this is the next best thing... Highly recommended!

**Wine & Health Checklist** - continued: **Dr. Erik Skovenborg** (Denmark) has compiled a 9-page "Select Checklist" of wine & health books, incorporating the list earlier compiled by **Bo Simons** and **Gail Unzelman**. The checklist is limited to monographs (omitting journal articles); works on alcohol are included "since the subjects of wine and alcohol often overlap in many books," and also a few temperance books that have "interesting information on the subject." Please contact the Editor if you would like a copy of the Checklist.

**Hans Weiss** (Bibliotheca Gastronomica, Zurich) came through with a citation for **Lloyd Hartley's** "mystery book" mentioned in the last Newsletter. The book is listed in F. Schoellhorn's *Bibliographie des Brauwesens* (Berlin, 1928). Thanks, Hans!

"Ah, most interesting!" begins the query letter of **Roy Brady** accompanying a recent *Los Angeles Times* article on Warsaw, illustrated with a photo showing the Fukier Restaurant in the background. Roy continues, "The Fukier was the restaurant in that old *Wine & Food Quarterly* article ("Warsaw Wine" by A. Deutschbein, *Wine & Food Bedside Book*, ed. Claude Morny, 1972) that had wine from the Franciscan missions of California grown a century and a half ago. Old Warsaw was totally destroyed by the Nazis, but does anyone still living know anything about the old Fukier?"



**WANTED PLEASE!!** The W-T Newsletter is looking for a copy of... copy. Can any Tendrils supply? Condition not important.

# .. NEW RELEASES ...

♦ John Ayto, a freelance lexicographer (co-editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang*) is responsible for *The Diner's Dictionary: Food and Drink from A to Z* (NY: Oxford Univ Press, 1993, \$25). Originally published by Routledge as *The Gluttons Glossary* in 1990, this 387-page dictionary has definitions of more than 1200 gastronomical words and phrases. More than a mere dictionary, this reference provides interesting lore and the origin of many dishes, while offering insight into our evolving dining habits over the centuries and differences between cultures.

♦ After a one year lapse, Napa Valley resident Richards Lyon is once again publishing his spectacular Journal-Datebook *Vine to Wine*. Illustrated with beautiful, color "photographs with explanations understandable to all...in tempo with the seasons and changes in the vineyards - this year with particular attention to phylloxera," the spiral-bound *Vine to Wine 1995* is available from Dr. Lyon, 600 Stonecrest, Napa, CA 94558 (707-255-8702) for \$14.95 post paid. CA residents please add \$1.08 sales tax.

♦ A new murder mystery: *A Vintage Murder* by Janet L. Smith (NY: Fawcett, 1994). Not to be confused with Ngaio Marsh's book of the same title published in 1937, this story takes place in the wine growing region of the Yakima Valley in western Washington.

♦ David Hughes, the brilliant and definitive writer on the wines of South Africa, has produced a luxurious "coffee table" book, *South African Wine* (\$50) - information and illustrations superb.

♦ *Corkscrews of the Eighteenth Century: Artistry in Iron and Steel* by Bertrand Giulian (1995, WhiteSpace Publishing, 236 pp). Illustrated with over 200 photographs, this welcome, well-researched reference traces the evolution of the corkscrew from its origins to the early 19th century. It is available from the author at 649 St. Johns Drive, Camp Hill, PA 17011. \$60 + \$3 U.S. shipping (\$5. overseas/Canada; \$10 Europe airmail).

♦ The one-and-only Max Lake - Australian doctor, wine maker, and wine writer - has whipped up another treat for us: *Food on the Plate, Wine in the Glass According to the Workings and Principles of Flavour* (just-published at \$12.95, 115 pp). To quote Maurice Sullivan's description of the book: "Not since the epic work of Brillat-Savarin on the Physiology of Taste has there been a scientist with the understanding of the human organism and the intricacies of the pleasures of wine and food." "Maxian" is the word Dunn-Meynell has coined to label Lake's "unique, impertinent literary style." As, it is Maxian to comment "he would rather put a fine wine

in the cook than in the cooking." Yes!

♦ The Book Club of California has recently published *The Vineyards and Wine Cellars of California: An Essay of Early California Winemaking* by Thomas Hardy. Edited and with an Introduction by Thomas Pinney. 96 pp. (large format, illustrated with duotone and color photographs), 450 copies, \$155. Hardy's book - now extremely rare - was first published in Australia in 1885. This new, superbly crafted edition can be added to our Fine Press Wine Press Checklist!

The latest news from the Wine Appreciation Guild, publisher: the long-awaited *Napa Valley* by historian Charles Sullivan and the reprint of *Ghost Wineries* by Irene Haynes are at the printer's - here by the end of October.

And, from our indefatigable correspondent, Hugo Dunn-Meynell, the following new wine books (with his comments):

♦ *The Wines of Germany*, Andrew Jefford (English ed), 100 pp, £9.99. "This has all the marks of a subsidized production. Splendidly clear maps...expensive photography... Few wine references are indispensable: this one will be. It is also the winelover's bargain of the year, so far anyway."

♦ *Discovering Wine* by Joanna Simon, 160 pp, £14.99. "There are three sections: How to get the most out of a glass of wine; The making of first-class wine; and Where the best wines are made, all superb prose with sympathetic design, art direction (marvellously imaginative) and binding."

♦ *Buying French Wine from the Château & Vineyard* by Hilary Wright, 205 pp, £6.99. "Both less and more than its name implies - less because it deals only with Burgundy, Alsace and Loire. Bordeaux barely rates a mention. On the 'more' side, however, this is one of the best handbooks for the wine-loving motorists we've seen."

♦ *Haut-Brion* by Asa Briggs, 250 pp, £8.99. "The greatest Graves château joins the ranks of Lafite, Yquem and Latour with its own "biography" - this one by the most serious historian of them all and Chancellor of the Open University. A superb piece of writing...a book as distinguished as its subject."

♦ *World Atlas of Wine* by Hugh Johnson, 1320 pp, £30. There have been many reprints of this great classic, but this is a true new edition - the fourth in 23 years.

♦ *The Oxford Companion to Wine*, edited by Jancis Robinson. 1088 pp, £30. "...very comprehensive, extremely accurate and for the most part beautifully written ... has some splendid illustrations ... it has no index, which is a pity." Included is "Literature of Wine" by André Simon.

## NOTES FROM THE "OPEN TRENCH"

by R. Hume Andrews



What piece of literature really inspires the wine enthusiast? What morsel of reading material brings that sudden flush of rabid wine interest? What words can move indolent oenophiles into instant action? Why, of course, it is the wine offering newsletter, that unique blend of truth, wisdom, and "act now before it's all gone" encouragement. Let us ponder the state of wine offering newsletters, hereinafter "WONs."

The perfect WON is a clever mixture of personal comments and quotations from professional commentators, who publish their words in wine evaluation newsletters, hereinafter "WENs." In fact, it now seems impossible for WONs to exist without the WENs. Who would buy any wine that had not received at least 90 out of 100 from Robert Parker or The Wine Spectator or the New York Wine Cellar, or 19 out of 20 from The Underground Wine Journal? Who would buy any wine unless Robert Parker had said of it, "This could equal the legendary [fill in the blank famous predecessor]," or "The spectacular bouquet offers up an exotic concoction of spices and gobs of super-ripe black fruits," or "The wine is crammed with rich, unctuous fruit," or "This is a winemaking *tour-de-force*"? Surely no one wants a wine that is loosely-packed with fruit or smells of under-ripe or regular-ripe fruit or is the result of a winemaking *tour-de-weakness*.

But we are getting ahead of our analysis. The perfect WON must set up the reader to grasp the urgent need to respond, to telephone, to write, to get out his or her credit card, to buy wine. The psychology is straightforward: "Only five cases of this blessed nectar were produced, and only three cases were allocated to California; but if you respond immediately, we can give you six bottles at our special price of \$75 per bottle (net)." If the WON is coming from a winery, the psychology is much the same but more personal: "We really, truly wish we could allocate full cases of this extraordinary nectar to each of the 8,941 people on our current mailing list, let alone the 766 retail outlets and restaurants clamoring for our wine, but we only produced 210 cases in 1991 and your allocation is one bottle, maybe, if you respond right this minute."

One intriguing variation on the winery WON is the power of indirect psychology: "We aren't going to say anything about this year's release; you can look that up for yourself; we could sell all of this wine about six times over; we had a good alfalfa crop this year, and the truck is still running pretty well." Masterful!

Certain key rules apply in all WONs. Unless the seller has an inventory of older vintages, the currently released vintage is always "possibly the best effort to date." If the producer has virtually no track record, then the winemaker must be compared with someone who does, as in "This could be the next Leonetti" or "Now being compared to the best early efforts of Joe Swan" or "His touch is very much like Dick Arrowood." If even that sort of comparison cannot be made, then we have "A property to watch out for" or non-descriptors such as "Practicing the non-interventionist school of winemaking, he has let the glorious nature of this fruit shine through a delicate sheen of wood."

But the full-blown "Open Trench" of WONs is in the numbers. Some WONSs consist only of vintages and numbers, such as "La Fleur de Gay 89 RP 95 69 ... 795." Concise! You can buy one bottle of 1989 Chateau La Fleur de Gay, which was rated 95 by Robert Parker, for \$69, or \$795 the case. Or "Fonseca 63 JS 98 128, 1490." Gosh, isn't that romantic? Doesn't that just inspire an immediate buying reaction?

Well, if it doesn't, the Power of WON has failed. ☹

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### SHOCKING REVELATION!!

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,  
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread - and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness -  
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

-- *Rubaiyat, Quatrain XII*

Mike McKirdy (Cooks Books) sent us the most interesting clipping from a recent English newspaper of a letter sent by Leila Enayat-Seraj from Geneva: "...Omar Khayyam's much quoted *Rubaiyat* ...the celebrated line 'A flask of wine, a book of verse, and thou...'.  
"

"Fitzgerald's admirable (though very free) translation of the *Rubaiyat* departed from the original in this line, as in many others. The Persian poet used the word "kebab" (meat on the skewer) and not "ketab" (book). It not only rhymes with "sherab" (wine), but also, as a literary notion, these two words are inseparable in the Persian language.

"Fitzgerald, himself, did not know Persian and had to rely on friends for the meaning of the words. Did he, perhaps, deliberately misinterpret in this case in order to give an English flavour to the verse? If so, a mistranslation has become one of the most frequently quoted lines in English poetry."

Can this be?! A juicy kebab has replaced our beloved book? Help! from all Tendrils. ☹

## THE WINE LIST

by Edward A. Bunyard

[From *The Wine & Food Bedside Book*, Claude Morny editor, London 1972. The article first appeared in Winter 1936 issue of the *Wine and Food Quarterly*, edited by André Simon.]



Among the many things anatomized by Burton, Wine Lists, I fancy, do not figure. Had they done so, I am sure he would have pointed out the subtle distinction between Wine Lists and *the* Wine List.

Wine merchants, much as they may desire it, do not have the hardihood to refer to their lists with the definite article, but in the hotel or restaurant we do so, and I suppose with exactitude, for I imagine there is never more than one copy. Menus abound on every table, but upon the mention of the Wine List a fevered movement of waiters begins. Like disturbed ants they scurry to and fro, stopping their colleagues and waving antennae, while the worlds "Wine List, Wine List," are passed from mouth to mouth. Sooner or later the panic is stilled, and from the crowding throng emerges a being of Olympian calm who advances to you with serenity dwelling in his eyes, and in his hands -- *the* Wine List. So may Ganymede have looked as he brought ambrosia to the thirsty gods. The bibliophile will note at once the binding of this rare volume: dignity and permanence are its objects; no mass machine-produced volume is here before us, but a witness of loving craftsmanship. Neophytes will be surprised at the majestic pages, often approaching an elephant folio, and the type matching the page. They will also observe a certain reluctance of the keeper of the List to let it pass out of his hands. Book collectors will understand and appreciate.

The volume is reverently opened and shown to the diner, and it will be noticed that long custom has made it prone to open at the Champagne page. To lay it on the table would require a general clearance, so it must be read in the keeper's hands at an oblique angle, which makes it a little difficult for the astigmatic. The keeper, it must be admitted, is an optimist: to all he advances with his Champagne smile, but should you linger over the Empire wines a slight cloud passes over his face; this grows to an Atlantic depression should you pause at the pages marked "Beers and Minerals." But a deadlier blow may be given if you ask for the List to be left in your hands. It is obvious that the whole business of the evening will be held up awaiting your pleasure. Unseen, but felt, the keeper lingers behind you, no guardian of Crown Jewels could look more distressed if you asked to be allowed to try on the Crown.

It might be thought by the inexperienced that a Wine List for each table would provide and stimulate an interest in the host's cellars, or if the unwritten laws of elephant folios may not be broken, a small pocketable edition might be printed and gracefully handed to those who do not dwindle to a mineral as an admirable means of recalling in tranquility the pleasant emotions of past evenings. We must, however, remind ourselves of man's commonest illusion, the idea that he could run the business of others so much better than they.

As a book collector of catholic tastes and some years' standing, it will be evident that I value very highly my small collection of Restaurant Wine Lists. I view with admiration, but without envy, my friend's superb Pliny, printed by Jenson, as I recall my Cecil '92 or Café Royal '08. Then there is that lexicon of superlatives, the Château Trompette at Bordeaux, 1925. I see the Rayne Vigneau of '22 has a tick against it, 50 frs, and well worth it, but the Domaine de Chevalier of '18 bears no such mark, a chance missed. Ah! I see, "*le magnum*" -- and there were only two of us!

Every collector, I suppose, when looking over his treasures is chastened by the memory of missed opportunities and glaring vacancies. I wonder if at the sale of the Café Voisin any bid was made for their famous Wine List, that fat, grubby volume where clarets seemed to range back almost to the days of Noah? What would one not give for a copy of such a treasure, surely the greatest Wine List ever printed! How well one remembers the black-aproned sommelier and his quiet rejoicings if one chose something really worthy! His latter days, when barbarian invasions brought Voisin, like Rome, to dust and ashes, must have been bitter indeed. The last time I passed the famous corner it was a hat shop.

But among all my treasures I most value the List of a famous restaurant, a not too-tiring walk from Piccadilly Circus; for reasons which will presently emerge I hesitate to give the name. Here I had to arrange a dinner for some hundred guests, English and foreign, and both solids and liquids met with general approval. At the end, after the guests had gone, I lingered to express my appreciation to the *Maitre d'Hôtel*. Now, thought I, is my chance to secure a copy of the famous Wine List. But alas and alas! "I much regret, Sir, it is quite impossible that I should grant your request. We have the strict orders never to give away." "But surely," I urged, "this is a special occasion. I have been able to introduce to you a party of some size, the wines have not been stinted, and it would be a most interesting souvenir for me." "*Je regrette, Monsieur, c'est impossible.*" There are moments when one sees that defeat stands inexorably before one and nothing is left but to bow the head and

pass on. "Ah well, I understand, you have your orders," and so he passed down the stairs and I turned to gather my hat and coat and shortly followed him. At the turn of the stairs stood a small table, and as I drew near I saw it was not empty: in fact, upon it lay, so innocently, so casually, a copy of the famous Wine List!

Now, candid reader -- what would you have done? . . . ?

### THE WINE LIST: 1994 by Roy Brady



The List" in Bunyard's sense doesn't exist any longer. It has been overtaken by costs of every sort, direct and indirect. Even after æons of collecting, I don't think I have seen an unquestionable example of "The List." But a recent find is of the genre.

One of the best known American lists is Jack and Charlie's "Twenty-One" Wine List (New York, 1954). It was printed in a large edition of 1,000 copies and sold by the restaurant for \$20. It received the distinction of a Library of Congress card and is noted by Gabler. But neither he nor I had noted its predecessor until I recently acquired a copy: Jack & Charlie's "21" Wine Card (August, 1944). No other bibliographic details appear. It is a sturdy bound volume, 9 x 11.4 inches in size and 80 pages in length, with gold-stamped brown covers. It is illustrated with cuts from Bertall and other sources.

Whatever deprivations were being suffered that summer, two months after D-Day, by the populace at large were not being shared by the patrons of "21." The modestly titled "Wine Card" led off with six pages of French Champagnes, one page of magnums and one of jeroboams. Dom Pérignon's first vintage of 1921 was listed.

The listings of Bordeaux and Burgundy are predictably immense. Among the many vintages of Yquem is 1921 "Crème de Tête," the last vintage in which that special selection was made. More surprising were seven pages of the greatest German wines at the moment the "Thousand Year Reich" was collapsing. Perhaps even more surprising were the six pages of California wines at a time when east coast *maitres* tended to put ordering the state's wines on a par with using the martini olive pick to explore one's dentition.

While vintage port was virtually unknown in this country, "21" offered sixteen, including Dows from 1927 back to 1896. Scotch was hard to find, but there were all the popular names at 8 to 12 years old, and

half a dozen straight malts, then as little seen as vintage port.

It is exciting to find such things because they have great intrinsic interest, and they can be so unexpected. The better known Bohemian Club lists of 1940 and 1950 and the Union League Club c.1947 are enormously superior typographically, but in offerings they are positively provincial in comparison.

I enjoy old lists for what they sometimes reveal about how people thought about wines in other times. A dozen clarets of the vintages 1865 to 1899 are listed. Today they would be hyped to the heavens as "fantastic monuments to greatness" or "superb survivors" or whatever. The "21" Card said, "Relatively few of [these very old Bordeaux] maintain their full glory after eighteen to twenty years. They must be handled with the utmost care. To taste them is to taste both wine and history." In short, the customer was fairly warned that the wines were tired old dogs, and he'd better be prepared to exercise his imagination.

One wonders how such a fabulous collection was assembled, and by whom, under the gathering clouds of WW II. Were there earlier approximations to the list?

A letter to the current "21" management seeking illumination, and hinting that a copy of the current List would not be ill received, touched no sympathetic chords. ♪

### COLLECTING EARLY LOS ANGELES and SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WINE EPHEMERA by Len Bernstein

[Len Bernstein, a Tendril since 1992, is proprietor of the Caravan Book Store in downtown Los Angeles and a collector of books - and ephemera - on wine.]



Among collectors and book dealers is a common expression: "...hasn't been seen since...", as in "Bung had one in his last catalog, but it hasn't been seen since"; or "I saw one at Charnu's booth at the '86 Fair, but it hasn't been seen since", or "That fellow in Premeaux had one years ago, but it hasn't been seen since."

The finality and authority of the expression might apply to certain early books. In the field of early California wine imprints, Hyatt, Rixford, Husmann and Truman might be described as "having been seen" - period.

Ephemera, defined as lasting a short time, a day or a few days, also fits the description of not being

common. Ephemera would include promotional pieces, advertisements, early photos, letterheads, receipts, broadsides, booklets and hand bills. These pieces tell a story of business and people: they make them come alive, they set the scene and give history a sense of time and place.

In relation to Los Angeles, where early imprints of any kind are scarce, is it possible to collect early ephemera associated with wine?

A challenging period for the collector is the adolescence of Los Angeles, from 1851 when the printing press was introduced to the city, to 1900, after the boom. This incunabular period yields few examples, and most haven't been seen since their reproduction in books and bibliographies.

The following are a few tantalizing challenges for the collector:

A receipt from the firm of Levy & Coblentz, "Importers and Dealers in Fine Wines, Liquors, Cigars and Tobacco." Several years ago, a dealer had one filled out in the name of a prominent early Los Angeles attorney, dated in the 1870s. It was for settlement on his annual account for more than eight dozen bottles of Port and Claret totaling less than \$40.

Another might be an example of the two color printed letterheads used by the San Gabriel Wine Co. in the 1880s. These usually had a beautiful grape motif trade mark behind the firm name. Letterheads are more interesting if they have been used as some form of correspondence, relate to something of local interest, or are signed by a well known figure of the time.

A certificate of stock for the Pasadena Lake Vineyard Land & Water Co., incorporated in 1884, is a nice piece of ephemera. These were decorative examples of 19th century typography, with elaborate borders and fancy lettering.

A "bird's-eye" view of the city in 1871, reproduced in *Winemaking in California* by Ruth Teiser and Catherine Harroun, shows "...a city of vines..." and emphasizes the authors' appellation for their chapter "Los Angeles, the City of Vineyards."

City views were a popular way of promoting a growing and prosperous community in the nineteenth century. These decorative views of Los Angeles, showing broad belts of agricultural land where modern downtown Los Angeles now stands, are very interesting, but they were not always local imprints; a few have been reproduced.

Finally, the Baldwin's Rancho at Santa Anita provided a fragile booklet which combined promotion, history and sales for its customers in the 1890s.

While opportunities and advantages for the visitor and settler to early Los Angeles were emphasized by many interpreters (the railroads and

land developers all had their approaches), vineyards and their products were obviously an important established part of the city - but much of the ephemeral record "hasn't been seen since."



## BOOKS & BOTTLES

by  
Fred McMillin

### COOL CLIMATE VINICULTURE

THE BOOK - *The Production of Grapes and Wine in Cool Climates* by David Jackson and Danny Schuster. 1994 Revision of 1987 First Edition, Christchurch, N.Z.: Gypsum Press, 191 pp, Index. \$15.

Heat Summation is a numerical indication of the total amount of warmth a region receives during the seven-month growing season (April through October in the Northern Hemisphere). Cool areas with heat-totals less than 2500 are classified as Zone I, the warmest areas with heat-totals above 4000 are Zone V.

Latitude-Temperature Index (LTI) recognizes the effect on the growing season as one moves farther from the equator. There are few quality vineyards above the 50th parallel. The LTI calculation:  $LTI = (60 - \text{latitude}) \times (\text{mean temperature of the warmest month})$ . Thus, the farther from the equator and the cooler the warmest month, the lower the LTI. Jackson and Schuster say that when compared to Heat Summation values, the LTI provides "a much more accurate correlation between the grapes grown and climate."

Following are both values for a few well-known European districts:

	<u>LTI</u>	<u>Ht.Sum.</u>
Rheingau, Germany	188	2020
Côte d'Or, Burgundy	263	2120
Medoc, Bordeaux	300	2300
Chateauf-neuf-du-Pape	385	2700
Willamette Valley, OR	305	2020

The Willamette values are included to illustrate how the two concepts can vary: Heat Summation values for the Rheingau and Willamette being the same, while the LTIs are far apart.

One hundred and fifty years ago pioneering California vintners came to realize that cooler Sonoma

and Napa could produce better table wines than warmer Los Angeles. Since then, our knowledge of this cool-climate phenomenon has steadily grown. New Zealand authors Jackson and Schuster make the latest contribution. They found the Heat Summation approach inadequate for their analysis, so they subdivided its cool Zone I into the following three categories: IA - very cold, e.g. the Rheingau; IB - cold, e.g. the Côte d'Or; IC - moderate, e.g. Bordeaux.

What grapes are recommended for each of these categories? Here's a partial list: IA - Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer; IB - Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes from IB make fuller-bodied wines; IC - Sauvignon blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot (these varieties are also grown in IB, but seldom do as well).

With that, I'll leave the other 140 pages on vineyard details and cool-climate winemaking for the reader to enjoy.

**THE BOTTLES:** We've mentioned six cool-climate varieties. If you wish to sip a good example while contemplating all of this, here are the current releases that charmed my tasting panel:

- Riesling - Gainey, \$8.50
- Chardonnay - Byron Reserve, \$22.
- Pinot Noir - David Bruce Reserve, \$30.
- Gewürztraminer - Fetzer, \$7.
- Sauvignon blanc - St. Clement, \$11.
- Cabernet sauvignon - Cinnabar, \$20.
- Merlot - Rodney Strong, \$14.



#### 450-year old GOOD ADVICE...

*Water is not holsome, sole by it selfe for an Englishman. Good wyne moderately dronken doth acuate and doth quycken a mans wyttes, it doth comfort his hert; it doth scowre the lyver; it doth ingender good blode; it doth comferte and nouryshe the brayne. Wherefore I do leve all water and do take my selfe to good Ale and otherwyle for ale I do take good Gascon wyne but I wyl not drynke stronge wynes. All swet wynes and grose wynes doth make a man fatte. -- So wrote Andrew Boorde in his Dyetary of Helth, 1542.*



#### WAYWARD TENDRILS OF THE VINE

"The ways of the tendril are tortuous and indeterminate; it clings to any chance object that takes its fancy, but only to help it to reach a further and higher one: eventually it finds itself twisting and turning in the air with nothing more to cling to, alone, weary and neglected, having accomplished its task as guide and fore-runner of the main stock from which it sprang and which it was born to serve." -- Ian Maxwell Campbell, *Wayward Tendrils of the Vine*, 1947.

[The following piece by André Simon was extracted from the Summer 1954 issue of the *Wine & Food Quarterly*: "In Memoriam: Colonel Ian Maxwell Campbell of Airds, 1870-1954."]

Ian Campbell was born on 3 October 1870, the second son of the late Colonel Frederick Campbell of Airds, a kinsman of the Dukes of Argyll. In 1882, Ian went to Dulwich College, which he left at the end of the 1888 Summer Term. The few months that followed were far from happy ones: Ian spent them at Beasley's establishment for the cure of stammering, where he learned that there was no cure, or at any rate no complete cure for him. His stammering was never the distressing affliction that it can be: his was a very mild form which, happily, never affected him when he stood up to deliver an after-dinner speech or to address a crowded meeting: this he could always do, and he often did without any notes and without any trace of nervousness or hesitation in his delivery. He really was an excellent public speaker.

It is quite possible that Ian would have made the Army his career had it not been for his stammering, but he had no regrets: he had a life of far more varied interests and he certainly had a great deal of soldiering as well. He served in the London Scottish Rifle Volunteers from 1894 to 1899; he transferred to the 8th Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders with the rank of Captain, in 1914, and went with them to France in 1915. In 1920 he was promoted major and in 1922 lieutenant-colonel. He retired in 1929, remaining honorary colonel of the

battalion from 1929 to 1935.

Ian was eighteen years of age when, in February 1889, he came to No.25 Mark Lane, his father's office and his also from that day to 10 May 1941, when the whole building was wrecked by blast and fire in the City's worst air raid. Like all good vintners, Ian served his apprenticeship "below", that is in the cellar; and more fortunate than most young men in the wine trade, he was sent to Spain, France and Portugal, not as a casual visitor but as a trainee who lived and worked long enough with his hosts - nearly six years in all - to acquire a sound knowledge of wine.

He was at Jerez de la Frontera in time for the 1889 vintage. From Jerez Ian went to Bordeaux where he spent two years. During his long stay in the Gironde Ian perfected his vinous education and he made also many lifelong friends. In 1893 he went to Reims, and in 1897, at Oporto, the then partners of W. and J. Graham gave him every facility to visit the quintas of the Upper Douro and to study in their Lodges the fascinating technique of blending, matching and maturing Port.

It has not been given to many, even in the wine trade, to have such opportunities as Ian had, before he was thirty years of age, of acquiring a sound and catholic knowledge of wine; he seized them eagerly and he became one of the very best judges of wine of his generation. A thorough knowledge of wine is, of course, a very great asset for a wine merchant, but Ian's keen palate and remarkable wine memory were not of value to his firm alone; they were at all times at the service of all who, whether friends or strangers, came to him for advice and guidance: the younger they were and the less they knew, the greater would Ian's welcome be.

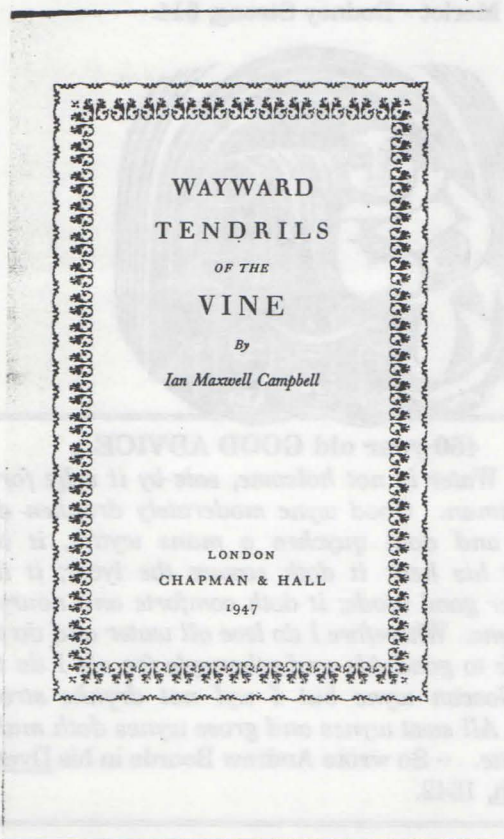
To Ian, wine was a joy, not only to drink but to talk about! He did love wine, one of God's great gifts to man, as he called it, but he loved sport and he loved a garden quite as much as wine; he loved books also, and fine pictures and sweet music. He was blessed with a wonderful sense of appreciation, intense, catholic and articulate.

"I serve" was his motto all his life. So he came forward and served as Chairman of the Wine & Spirit Trades Association, from 1941 until 1945, at a time when the importation and sale of wines and spirits in the British Isles was virtually a State monopoly in the hands - inexpert hands - of the Ministry of Food. During those very difficult years Ian was the chief spokesman of the Wine Trade and the chief adviser to the Ministry of Food. Ian had also served as President of the Wine Trade Club in 1912-13, and for ten years as Vice-President of the *Ligue des Adversaires de la Prohibition*: the French Government gave him the *Légion d'honneur* as a

mark of their appreciation of his services to the cause of wine. He was also a Member of the Committee of the Saintsbury Club from its inception to the day of his death.

When at long last the war was over and younger men had returned to relieve Ian, his well-earned leisure made it possible for him to pen the very charmingly informal autobiography published in 1947 as *Wayward Tendrils of the Vine*. It was an instant success and Ian's friends begged him to dip a little deeper into his wonderful memory and give them a second helping. He set to work and his second book *Reminiscences of a Vintner* was published in 1950. Ian wrote with ease and clarity as readers of *Wine and Food* have good reasons to know, for besides being one of the very first members of the Society, Ian was a contributor to the first number of its *Quarterly* and to later ones. As a matter of fact, his encouragement and advice were of decisive importance at the time of the formation of the Society.

In 1950, at the age of 80, he retired from the City and decided to live in Scotland altogether. A year later, however, he came down south again and took a house, with a nice garden, at Amersham where his son has his home. He died on 6 March and was laid to rest in the Chesham Cemetery, halfway up a gently sloping hill, facing south, crowned with trees, the ideal site for a vineyard. 🍷



## IN THE WINE LIBRARY by Bob Foster

*A Village in the Vineyards* by Thomas Matthews (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993). 261 pp. \$23.

There's been a whole crop of books with the theme: I lived in a village in France for a year. But this is one of the best. Unlike some of the books that have attempted to make the diary into a small sociological study of the history and economics of the town, Matthews' book concentrates on the people and on the day to day activities of living in a village. He does so in a warm, charming style. We are regaled with details as small as the difficulties of heating the rooms in the rented house during the winter or of playing *quines* (French bingo) with the town folk. With this focus, even small items become fascinating chapters in the book. For example, the description of the discovery of a farmer's market a few miles away as a source for food takes on major proportions. Matthews and his wife settled in the small village of Ruch in the Entre-Deux-Mers portion of Bordeaux. Most of the wine in that village goes to the local co-operative and Matthews crafts a fascinating picture of the advent of technology and its effect on quality. Even though the wines were designed to be table wines in France, the prices set by the first growth producers have major impact on each of the village growers. Moreover, intertwined with this story is the impact of quality versus quantity that invariably confronts each of the growers.

While Matthews includes general tasting notes on many of the wines he sampled during the year (the vast majority of which are not available in this country), there are so few details that the book does not wedge itself into a wine lovers only category. There's warmth, a gentleness, a real fascination for village life that shines through in the text.

Matthews' wife, Sara, provides photographs of most of the village and its inhabitants. Modestly, the one major omission is a photograph of Matthews and Sara. After having images of all of the other major figures in the book, I still wonder about the author and the photographer. In any event, this book is a lovely journey into a small village with all of its joys and foibles. Highly recommended.

*Slow Food Guide to the Wines of the World*, Slow Food Editore, 1993. (Distributed by the Wine Appreciation Guild, San Francisco). 1,246 pp. \$39.95.

When the first McDonald's fast food restaurant opened in Rome, Italian Carlo Petrini was appalled. In protest, he founded Slow Food. Its basic premise is that one does not snatch at life's pleasures, one savors them.

This massive tome is the first English language work of the Slow Food undertaking. The editors assembled an army of native contributors from five continents, established rating standards, and then proceeded to evaluate wines from around each region. The result is pages and pages of detailed tasting notes covering 5,000 wines.

The wines are not ranked on a point system but are classified into one of three categories: an exemplary wine of its type with outstanding local character; an international premium quality wine; and a top wine, one of the top 150 wines of the world. The scope is breath-taking. Areas as obscure as Slovenia, Mexico, Uruguay, Cyprus and Russia are included. For each winery discussed there is a listing of the address, the telephone number and then a short paragraph describing the history of the producer. This is followed by a section on each of the wines.

Using locals, well familiar with the nation's production often turns up many gems overlooked by other non-native critics. On the other hand it is interesting, particularly in the American section, to notice one or two big name producers who were not included, presumably because of dropping quality in recent years.

The book was first published in Italian over a year ago. It will soon be available in French, German and Spanish. And therein lies the problem. For any wine book that has extensive tasting notes, there is an inherent, inevitable time gap. Regardless of the pace of publication, there are scores of wines that will be released between the time the author finishes writing and the time the book arrives in the stores. It is simply a fact of publishing life. But here, the authors finished their evaluations well over a year ago. The translation into English took so long that most of the wines are long gone from retailers' shelves. The gap is just too long. While slow may be good in savoring food and wine, it can be disastrous for the wine purchaser striving to buy a wine before it is discovered and then sold out.

In spite of this huge time gap, there is a wealth of detailed tasting notes in the book, and evaluations on wines found no where else. Recommended.




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# **RETURN TO CALIFORNIA: TWO VINTAGE NOVELS REVIEWED by Maynard A. Amerine**

[Maynard Amerine, the distinguished Professor Emeritus, former head of the Department of Enology & Viticulture at the University of California at Davis, did not always have so scientific a bent to his writings. He contributed several lovely lighter pieces to *Wine & Food*, the quarterly journal of the Wine & Food Society. During his service in World War II, Lieutenant Amerine sent in correspondence detailing his observations of the grape and wine industry in North Africa. What follows are reviews of two California wine novels by young Prof. Amerine, showing what happens when his scholarly eye is focused on the passions and drama of wine, not simply its degree-days and volatile acidity. The reviews originally appeared in the Winter 1942 and Spring 1943 issues of *Wine & Food*, and are reprinted with the kind permission of Prof. Amerine and Hugo Dunn-Meynell, Director of the Wine & Food Society. -- Bo Simons]

*The Cup and the Sword*, by Alice Tisdale Hobart. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co, 1942. 400 pp. \$2.75.

A number of modern American novelists have made California the locale of their story. But Alice Tisdale Hobart is the first major novelist to utilize the Californian grape and wine industry as a background. The major part of the action of *The Cup and the Sword* takes place in the San Joaquin Valley [Central California] and is concerned with the rambling Rambeau family and the effect of the economic changes during Prohibition on it. The Napa Valley wine district shares in the picture to a lesser extent.

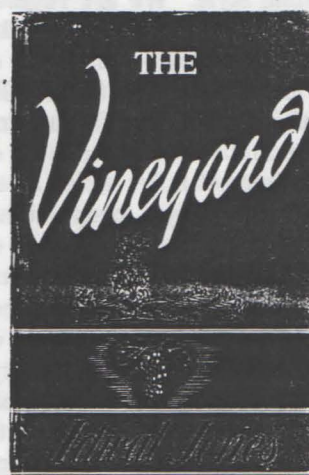
Mrs. Hobart has spent a great deal of time in research. There are many remarkably accurate observations on the growing of grapes and the making and ageing of wine. In the more delicate matters concerned with the consumption of wine, one does not feel that the author is quite at home. Philippe Rambeau, the *grandpère* of the family, seems to have looked on wine as a communion with God, but Mrs. Hobart apparently has not known the tremendous sensual and aesthetic pleasures associated with the cup. The book is well written: the plot is plausible and well knit and the characterization keen. However, possibly too many persons figure in the story.

One visualizes several lost opportunities. In a family as French and wealthy as the Rambeaus there is scarcely a word about fine cuisine. The author's interpretation of French and Californian wines is rather thin, though Mathilde in a brief

episode catches the correct idea. The violent economic changes in the grape industry during Prohibition are sketched in, but not in such detail as to be very historical. Whether or not the author lived in California during the period I do not know. The moral precepts are too obvious in places.

Nevertheless, one can delight in a book about the Californian grape and wine industry by a novelist of the stature of Mrs. Hobart. One can hope that other writers discover this fertile field.

*The Vineyard*, by Idwal Jones. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1942. 279 pp. \$2.50.



There are few Californians who are as well equipped to write a novel on the vineyards of California as Idwal Jones. It is with considerable attention then that we look into his recent novel. Endless hours of careful research on the history of the vineyards of northern California must have gone into the preparation for the book.

The product is a simple story of a vineyard and of the people who gain their livelihood from it in the period at the end of the last century. It is a leisurely told tale, as befits the period, with innumerable views of the working of a vineyard and its winery. Altogether it is a very pretty picture of life at the Villa Montana.

Mr. Jones builds a considerable part of his story on the attempts of Alda to "breed" a new variety of grape. The plant geneticists will probably prefer that the author used "selection," or that Mr. Jones spent more time discussing Alda's methods, but this is a minor point. His obviously keen interest in better varieties of grapes and his stressing of their importance in the production fine wines is a well-taken point, and present-day producers could profit thereby.

[Ed. Note: *The Vineyard* was reprinted in 1973 and is available in a paperback edition. "Scarce" is the word to describe the first editions of these vintage novels, but they are worth the search.]



## THE THRILL OF THE CHASE

by Clive Coates, M.W.

[Clive Coates -- Master of Wine, editor/publisher of *The Vine*, wine consultant, journalist and author -- is also an avid wine book collector. We have extracted his article from *Food and Wine: An Annual Review* (I.W. & F.S., Vol.17, 1992).]



Books do furnish a room. If you come from a "bookish" family - my father was a writer - any house seems empty without a replete bookshelf running the length of one wall. I like books; I like the feel of books; I like the ownership of books. I have always bought books rather than borrowed them. (I can never remember who lent me a particular book, and having lost many myself in a similar way I no longer lend books. Dammit, why can't people buy their own?) But I buy books for their content more than for their beautiful bindings or their rarity as first editions.

Wine, as André Simon preached, is essential to the Art of Good Living. What old wine books illustrate is how this art has changed over the years. And how fashion has changed too. They also shed light on the social and economic fortunes and morés of the time.

Curiously, most of the early tomes on wine were written by medics. Sir Edward Barry (*Observations...on the Wines of the Ancients...and Modern Wines*, 1775), Robert Shannon (*Practical Treatise on Brewing, Distilling and Rectifying...Preparation of Foreign Wines*, 1805) and Alexander Henderson (*The History of Ancient and Modern Wines*, 1824) were all doctors. If their knowledge of "modern" wines was skimpy by current standards -- as far as we know, none of the three ever made any extensive visits to the vineyards of France and elsewhere -- what is surprising is how informed they were, even in Henderson's case going as far as to list individual Bordeaux châteaux in order of merit. The contemporary wine trade was obviously doing its job.

The nineteenth century was the era of the investigative journalist, full of "insatiable curiosity" and only by accident falling into the world of wine. But these gentlemen, Redding, Vizetelly, et al, and their merchant counterparts such as Tovey and Shaw really did "go out and find out," and their comments still read refreshingly down-to-earth today. As T.G. Shaw said in 1864: "[My] conviction remains today [as it did forty years ago] that in wine-tasting and in wine-talk there is an enormous amount of humbug." Ho, hum. Yes!

Running all these to earth and picking up the other more arcane volumes which I need for my

research into the histories of Bordeaux châteaux is hard work, but a labour of love. Like many readers, I suspect, I am incapable of passing a second-hand bookshop. This is how, over thirty years or so, at little expense, I have built up a collection. An old *Cocks & Feret*, much dilapidated, was discovered in a flea market in Amsterdam; my treasured copy of Barry, in its original binding, was hiding amongst some children's books on a barrow in Farringdon Street; off Lisson Grove, in the 1960s, was a dingy shop, redolent of cats, which invariably yielded an addition to the library; another, in Flask Walk in Hampstead, provided the latest new books, ex-review copies, I imagine, at half price. The secret is to buy everything even remotely connected with the subject. You never know what treasures you will unearth, what fascinating little bit of detail you will learn. (Did you know, for instance, that up to phylloxera times, Sancerre was principally a red wine district?)

But of course occasionally you slip up. I must have at least a dozen novels and other non-wine books with titles such as *Nathan's Vineyard* or somesuch which I bought by mistake. But then if I was a humble bookseller I'd probably file *A Pike in the Basement* (by Simon Loftus of Adnams) as a whodunit.

More recently, I have insinuated myself on to the mailing lists of the specialist booksellers in Britain, in the USA and in France. Those volumes that I lack and that I know I need are now expensive, but the thrill of the chase still persists, rewarded for instance only a few months ago when I located the 1909 edition of *Cocks & Feret*, thus completing the series. With a mixture of hope and resignation, you telephone the instant the catalogue arrives. "You don't by any chance still have... You do!" It makes your day. It makes your week. And as you sit with a glass of wine at the end of the day, eyes riding casually over your bookshelves, you still remember the occasion of each purchase, the tingle of excitement that each volume provided. And it still goes on. There must be others apart from Smollet and Arthur Young, Somerville and Ross, Locke and Jefferson, who visited the French vineyards and wrote revealingly about them.

And would anyone like to part with a Robert Shannon...? 🍷

[Ed.-- A free sample of C. C.'s excellent periodical, *The Vine*, can be secured by writing him at 76 Woodstock Road, London W4 1EQ. FAX: 081-995-8943. Cost is \$87 per year. He is pleased to inform us that his new book, *Grands Vins, the Finest Châteaux of Bordeaux and their Wines* (with 100 châteaux profiles and 40 vintage assessments), will be published the end of January 1995. Tendrils may obtain a signed copy from him at the pre-publication price of \$50.]

# SOLILOQUY OF A BIBULOUS BIBLIOPHILE

by André L. Simon

[Extracted from the Winter 1966 issue of the Wine and Food Society Quarterly]

... And how grateful I am to have still with me, on my shelves, so many old friends, the books which I have been collecting all my life. There are, I know many bibliophiles who have a far greater number of books than I have, some of them rarer and more valuable than any I have, but I cannot imagine anybody having assembled a more representative collection of books of wine interest, not only books dealing exclusively with viticulture and winemaking, but others in which wine is considered from the moral, social, economic, and medical angles. Thus, although the Bible cannot be called a "wine book," I did not hesitate to buy, when I had the chance to do so, a beautiful folio of Gutenberg's Bible, printed at Mainz between 1450 and 1455, with Isaiah's description of the planting of a vineyard.

The two oldest friends on my shelves have been with me for over sixty years, through two world wars and many vicissitudes: I only paid a guinea for each of them and each is worth at least £50 today. One is a little book of eight leaves in full calf binding; but there were only seven leaves in a blue paper dust cover when I bought it from Pickering and Chatto in 1904: I had the missing first leaf added in facsimile from the British Museum copy. It is the earliest of all books ever printed that deals exclusively with wine: its title is *De vino et eius proprietate*; its author is unknown, but I am as sure as one can be without documentary evidence that it was written by Jerome Emser. It was first published in 1478, in German, before being translated in Latin. My other old friend is a perfect copy of Andreas Bacci's *De naturali vinorum historia*, printed in Rome in 1596, a full hundred years later than his little brother. I bought it from Smith, an odd antiquarian bookseller of Brighton, one of those rare bargains that gladden the heart of a bibliophile.

One of the earlier post-War I books which I treasure, as I do the memory of Hugh Cecil Lea who gave it to me in 1920 as a Christmas present, is William Turner's *A new Boke of the nature and properties of all Wines that are commonly used here in England*. My copy is a perfect copy; it came from the Huth library and is one of five known copies.

There were comparatively few books written and published before the 17th century that dealt exclusively with wine, but there were many books on agriculture in general in which an important place was given to viticulture and wine-making, and many of them are on my shelves. The finest and oldest of

them is the first edition of Peter Crescenzi's *Opus ruralium commodorum*, printed at Augsburg in 1471, which I bought from Maggs Brothers forty years ago, for £280; a beautiful copy in its original pigskin binding, with seven embossed brass pieces at seven of the corners, and one in the centre of the front cover.

Vineyards and wines are also mentioned and given more or less space in the encyclopaedias, of which I have quite a few. The one which I am particularly fond of was compiled by a holy and studious man who called himself Bartholomeus Anglicus, Bartholomew the Englishman -- he may even have been wearing a bowler hat! The oldest edition of his great work which I have is the *De Proprietatibus rerum*, printed at Basle c.1480.

Arnaldus de Villanova's *Tractatus de vinis*, and similar books written by the doctors of the School of Salernes, deal with wine in a pseudo-scientific fashion, and are interesting as such: one German doctor, for instance, in his *Regimen Sanitatis* printed at Strasbourg in 1513, recommends a draught of wine when having a bath, adding that the Queen of England, Elizabeth (Henry VII), always had one, and there is a woodcut on the title page showing the queen, with her crown on her head, sitting in a great wooden tub and her doctor handing a draught of wine to her!

Fathers of the Church and moralists of old have also written a great deal about the use, more especially the abuse, of wine, and I have many of their writings, none more consoling than the assurance given in one those books that you may happen to be drunk and be perfectly blameless, that is if you have been given bad wine: you were drugged, not drunk!



[Bookplate of André L. Simon]