

*Paradise Lost*

THE WINES OF FRANCE, by H. Warner Allen.  
New York: *Brentano's*.  
A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO FRENCH WINES, by  
William Bird. Paris: *Three Mountains Press*.

A CONSIDERABLE difference in purpose separates these two books. Mr. Allen's, a volume of 261 pages, is addressed to the cultivated wine-guzzler and deals with the various marks of French wines, and even with specific years, in a minute, lingering and voluptuous manner. Mr. Bird's, a small pamphlet, is dedicated to a less enlightened customer, to wit, to the Americano in Paris. Prohibition now drives tens of thousands of Americans to Paris every year, and all of them put in two-thirds of their time swilling the juice of the grape. Last Summer the American Bar Association made the trip in a body, and on its heels went the national organization of advertising clubs. Before long, no doubt, the Rotarians, Kiwanians and all other such friends of Service and Law Enforcement will meet in Paris every year, almost as a matter of course, just as the Shriners used to meet in St. Louis. Unluckily, few such pilgrims can read the French language, or understand it when spoken. Thus they need a reliable guide, in the vernacular, to the chief agricultural and manufactured product of the French nation. This Mr. Bird has supplied. His book is elementary, but sound. He wastes but little space on the delicate and often transcendental problems which harass the virtuoso, but he is full of simple and excellent advice to the rough, up-and-coming he-drinker. He makes it plain why champagne should not be drunk with the morning coffee, why Burgundy should not be cooled by putting lumps of ice into it, and how Burgundy differs from Bordeaux. At the end he cautions the amateur to avoid the old flat *coupe*, now relegated to public stews, in drinking champagne, and has some sagacious words on the selection of a wine cellar for those who desire to settle down for a month or two and do their drinking at the wholesale rate. An intelligent and

valuable book, modest in format, but full of wisdom.

Mr. Allen's volume is far more elaborate, and, as I have said, voluptuous. The author, an Englishman, is free from the American feeling that there is something wicked about drinking wine, and describes with great eloquence and an entire lack of shame his journeys into the French hinterland in search of extraordinary delicacies. Even during the war he managed to escape from the trenches long enough to make several such explorations, and the instant the armistice was signed he was off on another. He is at his best, perhaps, in his discussion of Burgundy. This noble wine enchants him in all its protean forms, and he has traversed every inch of the Côte d'Or, from Dijon to the end. Claret presents relatively easy problems to the neophyte, for most of the Bordeaux wines are bottled at the château, and so the label, if the wine merchant has a conscience, offers some guidance. But in Burgundy the holdings are so small that their products often have to be mixed, and in consequence there are difficulties, and not infrequently deceptions. The total annual supply of first-rate Burgundy is always far under the demand; it is almost as hard to come by as impeccable Moselle. The best of all Burgundies, perhaps, come from the Côte de Nuits—and the total area of the really good vineyards there runs to but 321 acres. This means a product of about 250,000 bottles a year, or scarcely enough to supply the bar of the S.S. *Majestic*. Many of the most celebrated vineyards along the Côte d'Or are but little larger than suburban lots. For example, all of the genuine Romanée-Conti in the world is grown on four and a half acres. What this miniature paradise is worth it would be hard to estimate; so long ago as 1869 it sold for nearly \$50,000. If it ever falls into the hands of Los Angeles realtors it will no doubt go by the square foot, and at Broadway prices. It is visited constantly by the widows of wine connoisseurs who have left orders that their ashes be scattered upon its holy soil. Chamber-

tin, a wine universally respected, is grown on thirty-two acres. Even Clos de Vougeot comes from a hundred and twenty-five. It thus becomes apparent that there must have been a great deal of false labeling in the old days, when Chambertin and Clos de Vougeot were on every American wine list. Such historic and distinguished marks, in truth, became almost as meaningless in the Republic as Deidesheimer, Johannisberger or Moselle Blümchen.

Before long, I suppose, good wines will be unobtainable among us. Prohibition has surely not stopped drinking in the United States, but it has at least put difficulties in the way of *good* drinking. The few rye whiskeys that were potable are all gone; in place of them there are only mixtures of industrial alcohol and caramel. The bootleggers bring in no genuinely old Scotch because they can get just as much for new Scotch. For much the same reason they abandon the importance of all wines save champagnes. A case of good Burgundy or Moselle costs a great deal more on the other side than a case of Scotch, and it is hard to get as much for it here: Americans in general are so ignorant of wine that they believe that only champagnes should be expensive. The result is that New York is flooded with sparkling wines that are fit only for washing dogs, and that a decent bottle of Chateau Margaux or Brauneberger or Clos Morgeot, or even one of second rate Beaune or Pommard is hard to come by. Thus the taste for decent drinking will be lost, and all Americans, even in the large cities, will be reduced to the level of the Arkansans. The growth of the cocktail pestilence shows the way things are going. As Mr. Allen points out, it is quite impossible to enjoy a wine of any delicacy after even one cocktail: one must either drink a very heavy Burgundy or stick to hard liquor. What is impossible after one cocktail becomes unimaginable after six. Six will be the standard American ration in another year. New York jumped from four to five last Spring; on Long Island, during the visit of H. R. H., the

more advanced Oklahoma millionaires began serving a round dozen. I am still fit for military duty, and yet I remember the day when *one* cocktail was served at all private dinners, with maybe a dividend for the bachelors and valetudinarians. No more that Golden Age! The Methodists have forced upon us the drinking habits of the Elks.

### *Barbary in Europe*

THE MAN LENIN, by Isaac Don Levine. New York: Thomas Seltzer.

THE MEMOIRS OF ALEXANDER HERZEN, translated by Constance Garnett. Two volumes. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

HERE are pictures of Russia that, in time, are almost a full century apart, and yet there is little more difference between them than between life in Iowa and life in Nebraska. Herzen was a revolutionary of the early Nineteenth Century; he was a son of the old aristocracy and spent all of his life, from adolescence to his death at 58, trying to overthrow the barbarism of Russia. Lenin was a revolutionary of the early Twentieth Century; he was a son of the new aristocracy and spent all of his life, from adolescence to his death at 53, trying to overthrow the barbarism of Russia. Both failed. Herzen died in exile and Lenin died on the throne of the czars, but neither accomplished anything. The Russia that Lenin left, in all fundamentals, was substantially like the Russia that Herzen first saw in 1812—a sprawling, chaotic, Asiatic despotism, civilized on the surface but almost as barbaric underneath as the Italian city states of the time of the Renaissance—a country in which educated men, solemnly garbed in frock coats, spent their evenings over tea and economic theory, and their days melodramatically condemning one another to the knout and the scaffold—a medieval survival into modern times, dark, savage, inordinate and incomprehensible. Who will ever understand it—that is, what Westerner? Perhaps Joseph Conrad got close to the mystery in “Under Western