

CHAMPAGNE RAMP.

BIG PROFITS FROM INFERIOR WINE.

AN EXCHANGE ROBBERY.

WATCH THE BOTTLE.

For a long time past there have been complaints from many quarters of the quality of some of the champagne now being sold in England.

People who are accustomed to drink this wine because of its many merits—some of them undoubtedly medicinal—have been surprised to discover that champagne ordered at hotels and restaurants of repute—or from West End stores the names of which should be a guarantee—has given them no satisfaction, has been unpleasantly sweet to drink, and has resulted in headache and an evil taste in the mouth next morning.

The reason is that they have been drinking wine prepared for the French and not the English market, or, in other words, that the restaurants, hotels, and stores in question have been selling them goods under false pretences. This despicable fraud is, unfortunately, largely due to the depreciation of the value of the franc.

Commercial firms here new to the wine trade have been visiting French restaurants and French wine merchants, and have been buying large stocks of this liquored wine at prices with which no honest English wine merchant can compete.

LOOK AT THE BOTTLE.

Unfortunately many who have learned to drink champagne since the war have no real knowledge of that queen of wines. If they had and would look at the bottle before allowing the waiter in a restaurant to open it they would easily discover the cheat. All French wine prepared for the British market is marked on the bottle, and can at once be identified by the expert.

Thus if you buy Pommery, Orking, or Cliquot or Mumm you will find either that it bears the words "Great Britain" on the neck or has a distinguishing label. Mumm's Cordon Rouge, for instance, has the royal coat-of-arms on the bottles for England, and in the cork there is a little nail with the number 31 on it for quarts or 32 for pints. Wine not so distinguished is liquored wine prepared for the French market.

Some of the great French houses, unfortunately, have sent wine to the south of France bearing labels which are at the best a colourable imitation of those used in England. These are to deceive the English and the Americans who think they are experts and demand the dry wine. What they get is the cheaper French wine sold fraudulently.

SUBSTANTIAL PROFITS.

Obviously the profits of this nefarious trade are considerable. Deplorable as we may think it for restaurants and hotels of repute thus to take advantage of their ignorant clients, their rewards undoubtedly are substantial. It is estimated by one of the greatest experts in London that French wine sold in a West End hotel brings 40s. a dozen bottles more than could be obtained from the champagne prepared for the English market.

Champagne, as most people know, is liquored by a mixture of fine sugar and cheap brandy. In some wines, such as Pommery, there is no liquor. For England there is rarely more than 5 per cent. of this adulteration; for France there is 25 per cent., while in the old days Russia took wine liquored to 40 per cent.

When, therefore, we buy a highly liquored wine we are getting less good champagne and more sugar and cheap brandy. That is why champagne prepared for the French market is so much cheaper than wine prepared for this country.

Some few days ago a West End wine merchant of repute saw a certain famous brand of champagne offered by a West End shop at 20s. a dozen less than he could sell it. He asked over the telephone if it were the genuine

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