

Then, should the wine be badly de-
 anted, mine host says, "Take this stuff
 way and bring in a bottle of cham-
 pagne," because here at least he feels on
 safe ground, as given one of the fashion-
 able brands, his guests know the pecu-
 liary market value of what he is giving
 them, relieving them of the necessity of
 tasting the wine or of troubling them-
 selves as to its quality.

Thus for want of a little knowledge,
 but more for want of a little trouble,
 the fashion of drinking some of the very
 best and purest of wines has gone out.
 How very different a claret or Burgundy
 tastes if brought up from the cellar and
 allowed to stay in the room in which it
 is to be consumed for at least twelve
 hours, but better still twenty-four hours
 previously!!

Naturally, no amount of careful hand-
 ling will make a good wine out of a cheap
 -called wine; but, on the other hand, a
 fine wine is improved beyond all know-
 ledge by proper and careful treatment,
 whereas it may be entirely spoilt for want
 of a little trouble and attention. Men
 nowadays will often discuss the peculiar
 merits of certain brands and vintages of
 champagne and cigars, but an intelligent
 palate in wines and the cultivation of
 palate appears to be a lost art.

THE VINTAGE OF 1905.

The "Wine Trade Review" states that
 reports received from the various wine-
 growing centres appear to indicate that
 as a whole the European vintage will be
 somewhat short in quantity, but gener-
 ally of satisfactory quality. From Bor-
 deaux the vineyards are reported to be
 in splendid condition, having suffered in
 only a slight degree from cryptogamic
 and other diseases. It is anticipated
 that the gathering will be commenced at
 an early date, and in a general way this
 is regarded as being favourable to qual-
 ity.

In the champagne country considerable
 damage has been done during the past
 months by storms and hail, but more
 recently the conditions have improved,
 and it is anticipated that there will be a
 good average yield. A correspondent at
 Reims states that the vintage in Bur-
 gundy is likely to be more satisfactory
 than was expected a month ago, the vines
 having escaped serious damage from the
 great heat that was experienced a little
 time back.

From Cognac it is reported that oidium

and mildew have made their appearance
 in certain places, but for the most part
 the vines are in excellent condition, and
 a good crop is anticipated, although it
 will not approach the great quantity ob-
 tained last year.

The Oporto correspondent states that
 heavy thunderstorms have caused serious
 damage locally, while excessive heat, fol-
 lowed by rains and comparatively cold
 nights, has told against the proper and
 regular progress of the grapes, with the
 result that cryptogamic diseases are at-
 tacking the vines, especially in the higher
 altitudes. The vintage will be late, and,
 while it is estimated that the Douro will
 produce only half as much as last year,
 it is more than probable that, owing to
 the irregular season, the quality will not
 be high.

A much better report comes from
 Spain. A correspondent at Jerez-de-la-
 Frontera states that there is a very
 good show of grapes, that the vines are
 singularly free from disease, and that if
 everything goes on favourably for the
 next few weeks an abundant vintage may
 be expected. In Germany the quantity
 will be short—according to some reports
 very short indeed—but there is hope in
 regard to the quality.

HOME NOTES.

(London "L.V. Gazette," August 18,
 1905).

Are corporations responsible for the
 payment of costs incurred by the bor-
 ough licensing justices in fighting man-
 damus cases in the King's Bench Divi-
 sion and the Court of Appeal? This is
 a question that has been engaging the
 attention of the Birkenhead Town Coun-
 cil in connection with the Birkenhead
 cases, and after a discussion lasting over
 three hours the Council, with the view
 of putting an end to the deadlock which
 has arisen between the Finance Commit-
 tee and the justices, passed a resolution
 by 21 votes to 12 ordering the commit-
 tee to pay the costs in dispute, amount-
 ing altogether to about £700, forthwith.

What the ratepayers will say to this,
 especially after the opinion expressed by
 a well-known King's Bench counsel whose
 advice had been sought by the Finance
 Committee remains to be seen. His
 communication, which was read at the
 meeting, was to the following effect:

"The borough fund is a statutory
 fund, and can only be applied towards
 the payment of such things as are ex-

pressly authorised by statute. I am not
 aware of any statutory provision which
 authorises the costs in question to be de-
 frayed out of the borough fund. I am
 of opinion that the Corporation may be
 restrained from making any such pay-
 ment."

Whatever may be said to the contrary,
 there can be little doubt that the Fi-
 nance Committee practically made ac-
 knowledgment of its liabilities in advanc-
 ing £300 to the justices on account in
 connection with these cases. The chair-
 man of the committee, however, insisted
 that this money was advanced not out of
 the borough fund, but out of money in
 the hands of the borough treasurer. Fur-
 ther, he contended that the passing of
 the resolution would not relieve the
 deadlock since all orders for payments
 by the Finance Committee must be
 passed by three of the members, and in
 the event of payment being challenged,
 those signatories were liable to sur-
 charge. Surely, however, the Town
 Council would never have instructed the
 committee "to pay the costs forthwith"
 if they had not the power to enforce
 their order being carried into effect.
 This, however, does not get over the diffi-
 culty with the ratepayers.

We have heard a good deal lately about
 the trader's right to bottles. There was
 the case at Southampton a short time
 ago when the judge laid it down that if
 the bottles were embossed with the name
 of the firm the purchaser had no right
 or title to them, no matter what he might
 have given for them. Several cases have
 since cropped up in Scotland, and in each
 an interim injunction has been granted
 restraining their use by the purchasers
 while damages have also been claimed.
 The surprising thing is that well-known
 brewery firms and aerated water manu-
 facturers should have posed as innocent
 people in connection with this matter. A
 trader's right to the exclusive use of his
 own bottles is recognised throughout the
 country. Evidently none of the firms
 proceeded against could have studied the
 provisions of the Merchandise Marks Act
 or the litigation would never have taken
 place. In one case it was sought to
 make out that the use of the bottles must
 have been accidental, not intentional,
 and it was urged that if interdict were
 granted it might injure the firm. In
 any event if it were granted it ought to
 be "granted on caution." The sheriff,
 in granting the interim interdict, very
 properly refused to entertain any such

suggestion. There would be no neces-
 sity to go to the expense of embossed
 bottles if they were no protection to the
 Trade.

In the face of the unsatisfactory, not
 to say disastrous, reports presented by
 some of the English brewery companies,
 the shareholders of Mitchell and Butler's,
 Limited, may well congratulate them-
 selves on the result of the year's trading
 which permits of the payment of a divi-
 dend on the ordinary shares of 20 per
 cent. At the same time they must not
 lull themselves into a sense of false se-
 curity. In order to meet the demands
 for compensation under the new Licens-
 ing Act, this company will be called
 upon to pay something like £10,000 per
 annum, and the chairman—Mr. Henry
 Mitchell—frankly told the shareholders
 at the meeting on Monday that they must
 regard this amount as a permanent and
 fixed charge upon the earnings. And
 yet there are people who will persist in
 calling this Act a "brewers' endowment
 scheme!" This contribution practically
 means 2 per cent. of the dividend on the
 ordinary shares, and the amount will
 have to be provided out of next year's
 and future profits. To-day the £5
 shares which are quoted on the Birming-
 ham Exchange at 15½ give a return of
 about £6 7s 6d per cent. The conver-
 sion of these shares will be proceeded
 with at an early date.

"British growers can supply the brew-
 ers this year, and the foreigner can keep
 his hops at home." This is the remark
 made by a correspondent in connection
 with the hop crop, which, judging from
 the various reports published, is likely
 to prove an excellent one, alike from the
 point of view of quantity and of quality.
 It is quite possible that growers and mer-
 chants will be willing to accept lower
 prices, but this does not mean—as some
 people seem to think—that beer will be
 cheaper. Beer, in fact, is quite cheap
 enough, and neither the public or the
 Trade would be benefited by any altera-
 tion in the present retail price. What is
 greatly desired by the Trade is a relief
 from the heavy taxation which they have
 borne ever since the outbreak of the
 South African war, and it is hoped that
 the Chancellor of the Exchequer will see
 his way clear next year to take off the
 extra duty.

A good deal is heard on this side about
 colonial preference, but it should be dis-

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