

thing as the forty-hour week in Italy; or even a half-holiday Saturday; the peasants work from sunrise to sunset, and there is no slacking, either. Rather lucky for us, really, that the day only lasted for about twelve hours. Why, we might have been there in mid-summer, with its sixteen hours of daylight.

But, taken all round, grape-picking is not a bad game at all. There are no thorns or prickles to worry you, and you do not have to pick away for about ten minutes to produce anything worthwhile. And there is a spice of danger to it, too: you never know when you are going to upset a colony of wasps that have chosen a certain bunch as their private larder for the week, and are grimly determined to defend their rations. And, of course, there are compensations, like those for the boy who has been left to mind the sweet-shop for the day.

In actual fact, I must confess, the compensations were about everything to me. Snip! would go the scissors,



and a nice, heavy, well-formed bunch would settle comfortably into my hand. Carefully, critically, lovingly, I would examine it, turning it from side to side.

There would be the smaller grapes at the bottom of the bunch, and the greener ones at the top. But half-way down was the place. Just there would protrude the best of them all, two or three large, rotund, perfectly ripe, bulging with nectar. Then comes the glorious moment. A quick, practised bite—they are gone, and the luscious fruits go pop! in my mouth, and flood it with sweetness, while with a quick toss I lob the newly ravished bunch into the basket. The flavour lies full and satisfying on my tongue, the juice slips easily down my throat, and is followed a moment later by the seeds and skin.

All this is the accepted thing while picking grapes. Everywhere are to be seen harvesters following the same routine. Snip, inspect, bite, swallow, and toss the bunch in the basket. Not even the children spit out the pips and skins—that is what the amateurs and townspeople do.

But, of course, it is not always as pleasant as that. With types like the Barese Sultanas, there is little but snipping and tossing. Such kinds have little appeal to the palate of the expert. They are grown primarily for making the common, everyday wines; not for them the honour of being eaten at table or being made into the prize Vermouth for the rich man's cellar.

The people of Italy drink wine almost as we drink tea, and this huge supply is prepared by peasants in countless little farms all over the country, and by broadly the same methods. First off, the grapes are collected and dumped into huge wooden vats about the size of an average water-tank. When this is full the bottom is carefully plugged, and the crushing commences. Two men, with trousers rolled up above the knees, jump on top of the pile and commence to tread out the juice with their bare feet. Mention of this last fact invariably provokes the query, "Do they