

# Uprising of the Wine Growers of the Midi and the Causes Thereof

**P**ERPIGNAN, June 28.—The remarkable economic demonstration, unique in the variegated history of France, which the wine growers of the Midi have conducted now for the best part of two months with a view to bettering their material condition will end before these lines can be read in America, but the real causes of that demonstration and the conditions in the country affected have been told only fragmentarily in the cable dispatches and they form a most interesting, almost astonishing chapter in the long story of economic progress.

The people of the four departments bordering on the Mediterranean from the south of the Rhone to the Pyrenees are not Frenchmen as the world understands and thinks of Frenchmen. In speech, in manner, in type, they resemble somewhat the Spaniards, but they are less Spanish than they are French. For want of a better term they are often called by those who study them Pyreneans.

Their country in many respects a wonderful one and full of historical as well as contemporaneous interest, is yet comparatively little visited by the supposedly ubiquitous tourist. Daudet has made them best known to the reading world, but the Meridionaux are not all as Daudet painted his delightful characters.

There is the Midi of Daudet and there is the Midi of a different character, less brilliant, not less pronounced in independence. The Midi of Daudet has been seen in aggregates of hundreds of thousands in these last weeks of early summer and has been heard where the telegraph ticks around the world. It is the other Midi that the French government and Parliament have got to settle with in the last analysis.

For there is distress in the Midi, or more accurately in parts of the Midi—the distress that comes of a severe falling off in business. Of personal distress in the sense of suffering for want of food there is comparatively little, and what there is in the department of Aude.

To say the truth, not a person visible in the Aude wears the aspect of a hungry person, but citizens of Narbonne, in this department, declare that many of the working people are obliged to restrict themselves to one meal a day through inability to find employment enough to pay for more. It is in this department that the winegrowers' demonstrations originated.

Argeliers, the center of the agitation, is little more than an hour's drive from Narbonne. There is a reason, a very simple one, for the greater distress manifesting itself in Aude. In this department the people cultivate practically nothing but the vine.

They grow small quantities of food for their own consumption, but their gardens are all small, designed for family supply only. The only labor wanted for hire is vineyard labor.

The vineyardists pay laborers, and some distress is the inevitable result. The towns suffer accordingly from the inability of anybody to buy much.

## Land of the Vine.

For miles after miles one may traverse the country in the Aude and see naught growing but vines. Even wild flowers by the roadside are few. The traveler drives or walks with vines within arm's length of the valleys and over the hillsides, vines extending as far as the eye can reach, relieved here and there by scattered olive trees perhaps. There are other sorts except on wooded hills few, and the blazing sun which fires the warm temperature is reflected from this same waving greenery as from the sea.

In the strong winds that sweep across the broad lands of the Aude, strong and steady as the trades, there is further suggestion of the ocean, but of a tropical ocean where the citizen of the north feels that he would parch and suffocate if he did not blow and bring him new life in the dry furnace of the midday atmosphere. Many a native wears a protecting handkerchief over the back of his neck, and country women do not disdain to screen themselves with parasols.

The people of Aude have sat quietly down and waited for the sun and the sunshine of their vale of fortune to bring them competence. When, through a multiplicity of causes this failed to materialize they began to bestir themselves, not to see what was rotten in this southern Denmark, but to demand that their Parliamen governors should assure them an easy living of the

sort to which they had accustomed themselves.

In this period of agitation not half of them paused to think for themselves. Much after the fashion of thousands of Americans who credit an administration with good times and charge against an administration all bad times occurring under its tenure of office, these people were keen to blame the government for the consequences of their own want of perspicacity, coupled with an alteration of the social and economic conditions in France. And, finding a nucleus about which to accumulate themselves and their grievances, they set out to demand fallacious treatment for a misunderstood disease.

## The Political Aspect.

To the great heart of humanity an appeal on the keynote of distress is never made in vain. If personal interest heightens susceptibility to this call the response is likely to be correspondingly accentuated. This was the case in the Midi, with the additional factor of the spontaneous gen-

erosity characteristic of the warm-blooded Meridionaux.

The departments of Hérault and Gard, on the northeast, and of the Pyrenees Orientales, on the south, whose wine industry languished even as did that of Aude, were keen to spring to the aid of distressed brothers. The people of these three departments were not seated on the edge of suffering, as were those of Aude, for they were not so exclusively viticultural, but their prosperity through the cultivation of the grape was at a low ebb. Succor for the Aude's wine industry would discernate its soothing beneficence among them.

The call to come over into Aude and help met an instantaneous response. Meetings were organized. Leaders were selected. The politicians, who in France are quite as indefatigable as, and less stable than those of Tammany hall or any other well organized American political machine, saw their opportunity and joined forces with the industrial population.

Clemenceau had held power too long. Socialists, monarchists, clericals, each had grievances enabling a rapprochement with a common destructive end, however different might be their several methods of reconstruction. That political machinery of the Midi is indispensible. That the enthusiastic hordes of excitable Meridionaux did not know that they were being exploited is equally beyond cavil.

The remarkable demonstrations by hundreds of thousands in the principal towns of the four departments of which the world knows were the result. Word was sent broadcast that the people were starving, yet to the astonishment of the world these people instead of improving weapons and attacking the broadshops compassed orderly pilgrimages in astounding numbers and cried "please" where their power might have wrought ruin, destruction, revolution.

**Dream Ended in Bloodshed.**  
Amazed at their own success, misled by the specious exhortations of deluded leaders and the more reprehensible instigations of political charlatans, the people worked themselves into the belief that by a sort of laying on of hands the government could be instantaneously a deep rooted disease. If not they would have none of the government, albeit they failed to recognize that refusal to carry on relations with the central authority at Paris was tantamount to secession.

They wanted to show their resentment to live their own lives and to force the government to enable them to live as they had always lived, but they imagined that this could be accomplished without seceding from the republic, which they hadn't any real intention or desire to do. The bloodshed at Narbonne probably caused through mistaken severity on the part of mounted troops, riddled their dream and left them dazed upon awakening.

Deplorable as it was, this blood-letting marked the beginning of the end of serious difficulties. It gave people time to think of the ignominious flight of him whom they dubbed "Apostle," "Redeemer," a small wine grower and cafe proprietor of the village of Argeliers, a hamlet of 1,400 people.

He had been acclaimed as a leader of men. He proved to be more facile in flight than glib in oratory. The people soon dropped him from his pedestal, although grudgingly relinquishing their idea that one whom they had taken so warmly to their hearts must be worthy of a higher place.

From the day that Aude and Narbonne woke up the other departments lessened their interest. None had suffered so much or gone so far, and to subsidize gradually into habitual calm was easy.

In the most northerly department, Gard, the nearest to Paris, where the people read more newspapers and think more, there was never at any time real trouble. In Hérault, the most important of the departments, with the largest city, Montpellier, such trouble as there was was caused chiefly by hoodlums, although the troops exaggerated many by heedless and needless disregard for the citizens' rights.

After traversing these departments, to enter into the departments of the Pyrenees Orientales is to behold the realm where nature itself, the arch coquette, invites to all the sweet enjoyments of Andalusia, of Granada, with a flip which south of the Pyrenees is wanting; thus men say when analyzing their sensations on a return from

Spain. With the Gard, where there is no trouble beyond a business depression, and where, knowing that the people are prepared, as in America, to look out for themselves, one has passed a territory where common sense reigns. In the Hérault one has seen struggling common sense triumphant. In the Aude one has seen all the misery that the Midi can display, and it must be said that most of that misery is to be found in verbiage put at the disposition of unscrupulous politicians.

**No Revolt, Says the Wine Coachman.**  
Even in Hérault the people are more interested in pointing out the beauties of their country than in expatiating upon their misery. Coachmen are about as soon as any to detect a falling off in local prosperity. The coachmen were as busy as they ever want to be—and there has been no influx of strangers into the Midi, either; quite the contrary—and the coachmen were more interested in indulging themselves continuously, as from habit, in the enjoyment of their countryside than in enlarging upon the distress of the wine growers.

One of these, most delightful, who summed up in himself a whole section of the Midi, drove about with delicious nonchalance. Had there been anything unpleasant during the previous night, the night of greatest rioting; had there been any real disturbance of the city's accustomed calm? Oh, no; except for those who sought excitement.

To be sure, there was always a chance for them anywhere. As for Mister Coachman, he went home about dinner time in the evening and remained there till next day, comme d'habitude, and found his neighbors living also as usual. Couldn't he hurry his excellent horse a little so as to permit a more complete view of the environs of his delightful town, the largest in the Midi of Montpellier? His horse was a veritable good one, far ahead of any drawing a carriage plying for hire even in the guise of a private carriage in Paris. Most certainly he could, but then monsieur or madame would be unable to see, or if to see then unable to appreciate, the beauties of Montpellier and its surrounding valleys of verdure, of forest and of vines.

An excellent coacher this, tied up in the restricted precincts of Montpellier, not like the coach drivers of other times, an exponent only of his class, experienced in giving travelers just what they wanted to hear, but thoroughly one of the people of this community who had been misrepresented as ready to go to any extremity of revolt. He would like to have business better, but in no way intended to have the peaceful routine of his daily life interfered with by the perfectly natural processes of unequal seasons or unequal distribution of business.

"Surely I will willingly hasten, monsieur, madame, but remember you will see loss of the beauties of the countryside of our excellent city."

embrace the glories and the charms of a world meant for happiness and plenty. The whole landscape smiles. The people are happy as the lily on the day. Eat? They never eat as Sir Toby could drink—aye, and drink so, too, while there is a passage in their throats and wine in Illyria, which is to say the Pyrenees. For there is food in plenty, and wine to accompany it—yes, and plenty to buy it at the cafes; beer and amaretto to give by contrast a relish to the vinous beverages of the neighboring fields which is commoner to the inhabitants than water to a Yankee farmer.

And they are proud of their abundance, are these people of Perpiignan. The town is full of Tartarins. Will Tartarin acknowledge that his department is suffering? Never. Look about and you cannot doubt even Tartarin.

But he is lovely in the freshness of his braggadocio. Time nor age can stale the inventiveness, the pride, the confident view of the ever living Tartarins—and he lives as well under the towering shadow of the blue, snowcapped Pyrenees as he does on the eastern side of the Rhone's mouth.

Tartarin, the most modern and progressive Tartarin of them all—did he not have rubber tires on his carriage, the only carriage in all Perpiignan which boasted of these novelties of a twentieth century civilization? Tartarin from a tentative beginning developed himself quickly till he was able to boast that under the Pyrenean wings which folded and expanded themselves in sheltering care over the people of his department were grown all the fruits and vegetables of Africa and of France, all indeed that the world held good. Were the kindly fruits and vegetables of the earth that northern neighbors prayed their God to preserve to them till the harvest time also grown under the Perpiignan sun?

Why, there is no land but Tartarin's! Who knows, who cares, who dreams of aught that the misguided outlanders may

think is good just because it springs up in their stay?

Are the people of the Pyrenees Orientales poor or suffering? Has building ceased among them? Are they hungry? Never! They have not set their fields with vines to the exclusion of other products of nature.

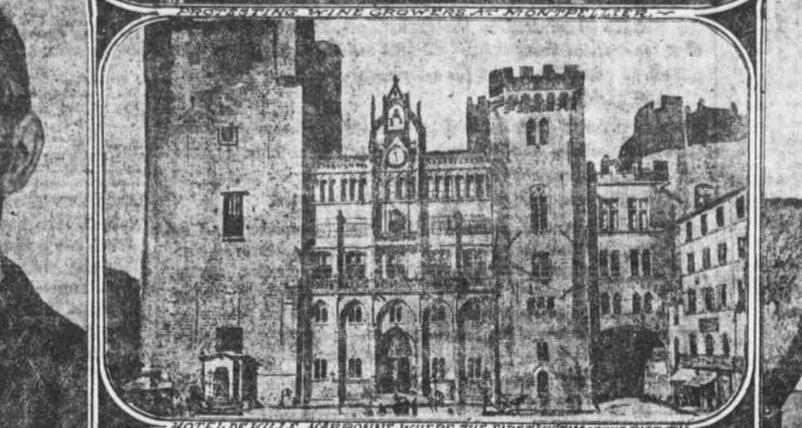
They are gardeners largely. They live well and gayly. New buildings are going up rapidly here in Perpiignan, the chief city of this region.

Why have these Pyreneans turned in their lot with the people of the more northern and less wine Midi? "Tout simplement, monsieur, they are our brothers; we go to sympathize with them. Why not? But indeed we do not suffer. We have to eat and to drink. It is only the vulgarians who despise the law who have attempted to burn the prefecture—and their efforts have been elaborated in the description by the excellent journalist, Behold! here is the prefecture, which was set afire four times in four places on the same night. Where is the mark of all this damage? Veritably you need be wise to find the amouge of the incendiary's smoke."

And so it was. Not so much as a mark remained on the prefecture building of the awful attempts of the aroused inhabitants of this section of the Midi.

And was there likelihood, was there desire upon the part of the inhabitants, of an uprising against the central government at Paris? All around market women and men, who were said to be the worst of the manufacturers, were selling artichokes, fat and juicy to a degree that ought to make Montaigne buy better qualities. And the people said in smiling self-indulgence "Ah, we Catalans, we talk much, but we do little."

And, terrible as may be the Catalans when aroused, and as their history shows, they are not aroused as a people now; they merely went to the aid of their less foresighted brothers.



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rages consumed in the Midi are enormous. With government aid the Midi again prospered in its wine growing, but it did not return to its former habits of wine drinking. In the meantime a change was coming over the habits of the people of France.

The bourgeoisie, who formerly took care to put down a lot of wine for home consumption, began to take to the custom of buying its wine as needed. Later still the fashion changed from wine drinking to water drinking, and it is today fashionable in France to drink water and not wine.

It is mainly the foreigners in France and the inhabitants of foreign countries and the poorer people of France who drink wine. Here was the explanation of a large falling off in the demand for wine, which for ages had been grown and bought of the Meridionaux.

Again, the Bordeaux people had standardized their wines and could sell a more or less staple and stable product throughout the world, so that a man buying one of the well known brands—which is in no

culture, already large, were greatly enhanced and the Midi swam in luxury. The sugar eaters of the north saw their opportunity and made it easy for the Midi to obtain sugar for its treatment of the wine, not to say for the wine's adulteration.

Being business men, they were not slow to enable merchants to see that they, too, might increase their profits by utilizing sugar for the strengthening of wines of inferior grade. Adulteration became a wholesale trade and the Midi was one of the largest practitioners.

Not only was the first cru strengthened and fortified by sugar additions, but succeeding crus were rendered possible and profitable by similar means. The market was flooded with spurious wines at the same time that the consumption and demand for genuine wines was for reasons already seen rapidly falling off.

Result, a Midi full of wine and emotion and face to face with the necessity of hard work of changing its habits, of changing its business principles. The Midi wouldn't think of doing this. Not even would a man think of looking elsewhere to sell his wine than the place where his fathers had sold it before him.

The Midi sat under its olive trees and said: Things are wrong; the times are out of joint. Let Parliament—the loom (tenors of the king might not things might be Nature and the king made this a wine-growing country. The world has always bought our wine; let the world buy it now. What if we did help out our profits by using sugar—in a proper way, oh, of course, in a proper way—what right did that give to anybody else to fabricate wine of dregs and chemicals and flood the markets so that we should not be able to sell our wine? Supposing we do like to drink beer and abstinence, it is still the world's business to drink the wine the Midi grows. Let the government help us.

These same Meridionaux would not even recognize a further cause for the falling off in the demand for their wine. Their wine, especially in its second cru, was the wine of the poor people of Paris and of the stock of the small dealers. The patrons of these dealers, the poorer people through many degrees, came to prefer the inebriation due to a glass of abstinence to that of a poor glass of wine. And they, too, like the Midi growers, took to abstinence and helped to leave the wine market slow and slack.

**The Remedy.**  
The Midi is truly in hard luck, but the fraud practised in the fabrication of wine, in which the Midi is itself a participant, is not the whole story of its distress, nor will a bill against fraud restore the Midi's prosperity, especially if the bill is only directed against the northern sugar growers and leaves the merchants free to adulterate the wine.

So much for the economic cause of the Midi's distress, and not all of them are told here. As for the complications due to the political causes of the uprising, to trace these causes would involve more or less intimate understanding of French politics and would involve too long a story for one newspaper article.

Suffice it to say that reactionary, monarchial and clerical influences were at one in aiding, encouraging and in public prints exaggerating the movement and to these must be added that other element of disorder in the republic, the General Confederation of Labor. All these together brought France to the edge of revolution—four departments had therefore ceased to conduct their political and civil functions in this way the country's laws prescribed—and the crisis developed the latent spirit of indiscipline in the army.

The whole was due to economic dyspepsia, hysteria, exaggeration, want of patriotism political cleanliness. The disturbing elements in the latter categories have been seen and heard. The sufferers from the first malady are the ones who must be satisfied in the end, and so to that end they and the government must meet on the common ground of common sense. And a rare meeting that will be!

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