

The Great European Drinking Contest.

SOME STRIKING FACTS AND COMPARISONS.

BY W. GREENWOOD.



FOR EVERY GLASS OF WINE DRUNK IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, FRANCE DRINKS NO LESS THAN FIFTY-SIX!

ALTHOUGH it is commonly stated and believed that John Bull is the "champion drinker" of the world, it is only just to him to make clear that he has no title whatever to such an unenviable reputation; and that, in spite of his stupendous drink-bill, which now far exceeds £3,000,000 a week, he is beaten in every phase of the drinking contest by one or more of his European rivals.

There is, in fact, only one competition in which he takes as high as the second place, and even here the winning nation has a substantial lead of more than 40 per cent.

The champion beer-drinker of Europe (if we treat the German Empire as a single nation) is unquestionably the Belgian, who consumes no less than 44·6 gallons, or 710 glasses, a year. Compared with this quantity the average Briton's annual allowance of 31·3 gallons has almost the appearance of moderation; and the Frenchman's 5·1 gallons nearly approaches total abstinence.

After Belgium and the United Kingdom, Germany ranks third, with an average consumption of 25½ gallons of beer a year; then come Denmark with 20·1 gallons, Switzerland with 14, and Austria with 11·8.

But France amply compensates for her

abstinence from beer by drinking wine in truly alarming quantities. For every glass of wine drunk in the United Kingdom, France drinks no less than 56, her average individual allowance being 21·8 gallons a year. Italy and Spain run her fairly closely in the bibulous race with an average of 18·5 gallons a year; while Austria is content with 1·34 gallons; Belgium (to atone for her partiality for beer) with 0·86 gallons; Norway with 0·58; and the United Kingdom, whose preference is for beer and spirits, with 0·39 gallons.

As a lover of spirits the Dane has no rival in Europe; for he claims no less than 3·3 gallons (50 per cent of which is *absolute alcohol*) a year. Hungary takes second place with 2·4 gallons; and is followed by Belgium, 2 gallons; Holland, 1·9; France and Germany, 1·89; and Sweden, 1·6.

Portugal is clearly no lover of spirits, for she only drinks 0·09 gallons, or a tumbler and a half yearly; the Norwegian is satisfied with 0·48 gallons; and the Briton with 1·04 gallons.

Thus we find that among the nations of Europe, the United Kingdom ranks second as a beer-drinker, eighth as a consumer of wine, and tenth as a spirit-drinker.



THE DANE IN FIFTY YEARS POURS DOWN HIS THROAT THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOTTLE.

If we consider not the quantity of liquid, but the amount of absolute alcohol drunk (which is the fairest comparative test), France leads the nations of Europe in the love of intoxicants, with a yearly average consumption of 3.72 gallons of pure spirit. Then come, in order:—Belgium, 2.8 gallons; Switzerland, 2.64; Denmark, 2.51; Spain, 2.62; Italy, 2.40; Germany, 2.09; and the United Kingdom, 2.05 gallons.

So that, as a drunkard, the Briton is surpassed by seven of the nations of the Continent; whilst Norway, with an average allowance of 0.54 gallons, or 8.6 tumblers of spirits per annum, is by far the soberest nation in Europe.

Taking the drinking feats of these various "champions" of beer, wine, and spirits, and allowing each of them half-a-century of indulgence, we reach some interesting and startling conclusions.

Thus in fifty years the average Frenchman disposes of 6,540 bottles of wine, a number sufficient, if placed in a line, to stretch a distance of a mile and a quarter. These thousands of bottles contain seventy-three times his own weight in wine; and a bottle large enough to contain this life-allowance would be 4 feet in diameter, and 18 feet high.

In the same period the Belgian drinks 2,220 gallons, or 61 $\frac{2}{3}$ barrels of beer, the

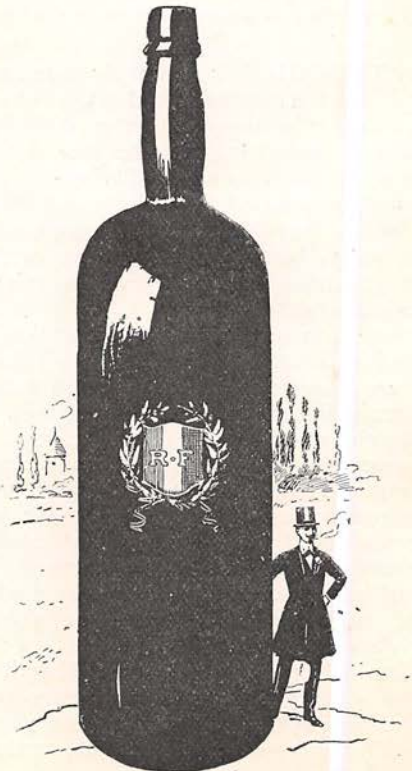
equivalent of 148 times his own weight. Thus, before he dies, he disposes of the contents of a beer-barrel 22 feet in circumference at its widest part, and 13 feet high.

The Danish spirit-champion in half a century pours 165 gallons of alcohol down his throat; a quantity large enough to fill a bottle 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet in diameter, and 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet high; a bottle so heavy that fifteen strong men could barely carry it.

If the average Belgian were capable of drinking his yearly allowance of beer at a single draught, he would require a glass 20 inches wide and 4 feet high.

It should be remembered that in arriving at these averages, all children and total abstainers are included; and that, if the quantities drunk by each nation were distributed only among drinkers (many of them temperate), the figures would be increased by about 50 per cent.

In drinking, John Bull is eclipsed by only one of his colonies—Western Australia. In beer he has a deplorable pre-eminence, the record standing thus:—United Kingdom, 31.3 gallons; Victoria, 12.7; Queensland,

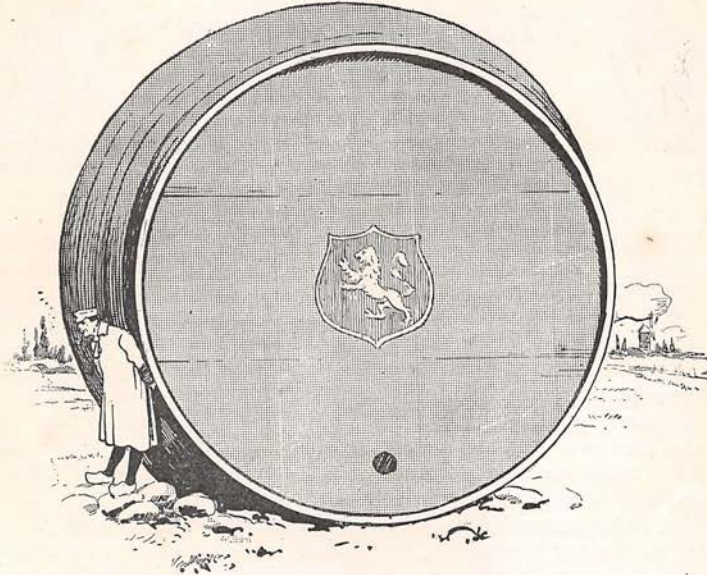


IN FIFTY YEARS THE AVERAGE FRENCHMAN DISPOSES OF A BOTTLE OF WINE CONTAINING 73 TIMES HIS OWN WEIGHT.

11.5, and New South Wales, 9.5; while Newfoundland drinks only 0.11 gallons per head, and the Cape, 1.7.

The wine-tripos is much more in his favour; for while the Cape consumes 2 gallons per head a year, New South Wales

drinkers with an allowance of 2.27 gallons per head yearly, and is followed by the Mother Country with 2.05 gallons, South Australia (northern portion), 1.37 gallons, Victoria, 1.16, Queensland, 1.04, and the Cape, 0.95.



THIS IS THE SIZE OF THE BARREL OF BEER THAT A BELGIAN CONSUMES IN HALF A CENTURY.

0.72 gallons, Queensland, 0.52, and South Australia, 0.41, the United Kingdom accounts only for 0.39 gallons.

Again, taking the consumption of absolute alcohol as the basis of comparison, Western Australia ranks first among the Empire

Tasmania is happily content with only 0.55, and Canada, with 0.54 gallons, thus ranking with Norway when compared with the countries of Europe, and qualifying for the proud position of the soberest part of the British Empire.



THIS DIAGRAM SHOWS AT A GLANCE THE AMOUNT OF ALCOHOLIC LIQUOR DRUNK BY THE PEOPLE OF THE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, FRANCE LEADING.