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POSTWAR DISAPPOINTMENTS

A BRIEF EUPHORIA

By the end of the war, late in 1945, the winemakers of the United States were like nervous racehorses at the starting gate, eagerly waiting for the signal to go. The end of wartime regulations and the easing of restrictions on materials and supplies did not happen at a single stroke, but conditions were sufficiently changed by the beginning of 1946 to make that a year of unbounded expansion. The official view was euphoric. "Consumption is expected to exceed all past records," *Wines and Vines* declared, no doubt expressing a general belief.¹ Or as Herman Wentz, president of the Wine Institute, put it more elaborately,

Wine sales in America are picking up speed. Like a passenger train on a siding, waiting for the war express to go by, the wine industry found time in the war years to get rid of the clinkers clogging its fire grate, to get everything oiled and in running order, and to build up such a head of steam that it was ready to set new records when the switch was thrown. Now it's on the main track again and all that is needed is cooperation by the men who make the wine train go.²

This is clear testimony to the excited optimism of the day. More important, perhaps, it shows a remarkable self-deception. It is all very well to talk about getting rid of clinkers and building up a head of steam, but what, after all, had really changed in American wine-growing? The big distillers had entered the scene, with their money and their distribution systems. But they had done nothing to change the basis of the industry. The same