A MADEIRA PARTY

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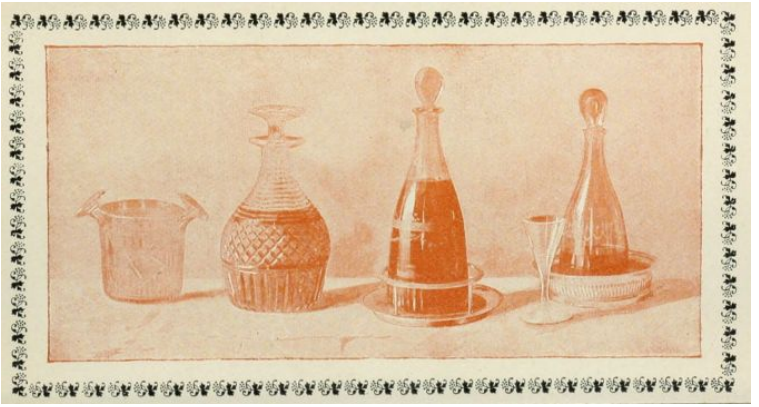

A Madeira Party

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Etc., Etc.

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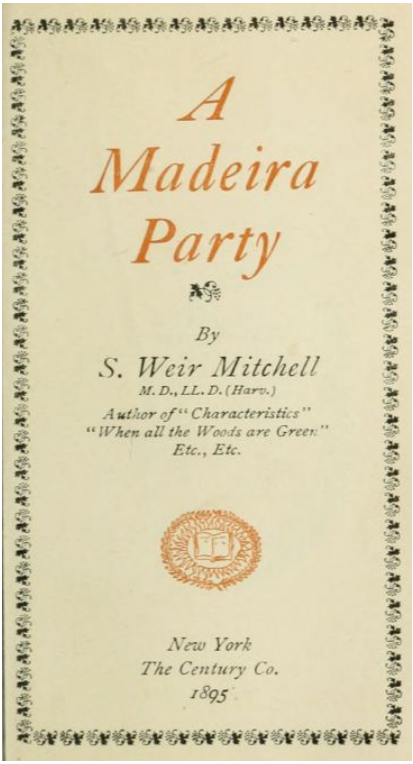

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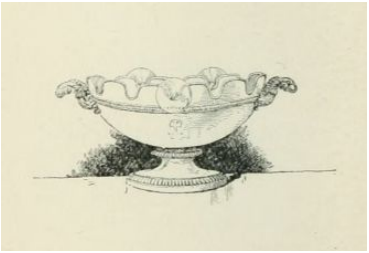

Bowl

Sometime early in the second quarter of the century, in the City of Penn, and in what was then known as Delaware-Fourth street, soon after dusk in the evening, occurred the unimportant events of which I shall speak.

The room was paneled in white three feet up from the floor, and above this a fox-hunt was repeated in lively colors on every square of the paper which covered the walls. Great hickory logs, ablaze on the deep hearth, cast rosy light on a mantelpiece, in the style of the Directory, pretty with Cupids in relief dragging chariots through a tangle of roses. A similar pattern on the ceiling resembled what a visitor to the Zoölogical Gardens may see to-day in the small yellow house called "Solitude," where Mr. Penn is said to have been agreeably naughty and by no means solitary.

Silver candlesticks lighted a table laid for four, and their light fell on buff and gold Nankin china, glass, and glistening plate. A negro servant, well on in years, dark as the mahogany he loved to polish, with fine contrast of very white hair, moved to and fro in the room. His task was clearly grateful. To adjust a fork, snuff a wick, flick the dust off a carved Cupid, evidently gave him a certain grave pleasure. At last, retreating a little with head on one side, artist-like, he considered for a moment the table and the setting. This final survey appeared to be entirely to his liking, for with a smile of satisfaction he turned to inspect a row of decanters on the mantel. One by one he lifted them gently, saw that the glass was clean, and for a moment looked through each decanter in turn as he held it before the light of a candelabrum on the side-table. The necessity to present a wine absolutely free from sediment he very well knew. But it is probable that he also found distinct pleasure in the brilliant garnets and varied amber tints of the several wines before him; for he possessed, like most of his race, an appreciative joy in color, and had, too, more or less artistic pleasure in the perfection of the gleaming table and its perfect appointments. At last he turned to consider the question of the temperature of the precious wines in his

charge. Once or twice, when to his touch a decanter seemed too cool, he lifted it with care, moved it to the hearth, and after turning it about before the fire set it back on the mantel. Finally he looked up at the tall Wagstaffe clock in the corner, compared with it a huge silver watch which he took from his fob, and throwing open a pair of mahogany doors, stood aside as four gentlemen entered the room. Each, as he went by, spoke a kindly word to the old servant. I can fancy the party made a quaint and pleasant picture in the old-fashioned chamber, with their close-fitting nankeen pantaloons, ample shirt-ruffles, voluminous neckties, and brass-buttoned blue coats.

"Pray be seated," said Hamilton. "Sit on my right, Chestnut. I wish to see that my good wine is not wasted. Your first Madeira-drinking will seem strange to you. Thirty years away in Europe! Why, you were but a boy when you left us! Well, we are glad to have you back again."

"And I as pleased to be at home," said Chestnut. As he spoke he noted with the readiness of a close observer of social life the gentlemen about him as they settled themselves at table with an obvious air of contentment. One, a strangely slight and very ruddy old man, after adjusting his napkin with care over his waistcoat, said, as he looked up, "Well, well, you have lost a good deal of time."

"That is sadly true," said the stranger guest. "I have tasted no Madeira these twenty years."

"Then I fear, my friend, from what Hamilton tells me, that you will hardly appreciate the charm of one of these little occasions."

"But how could I? And still, let me assure you, my dear Mr. Wilmington, that the importance of the opportunity will not be lost on me, nor the good wine either, sir."

"I trust not," said the elder man. "To consider with care some new Madeiras is—well, for that a man should have perfect health and entire tranquillity of mind. Sir, the drinking of these great wines is something more than a social ceremony or the indulgence of an appetite. It is, sir,—but I see Francis smiling—you may imagine the rest. I had an old friend who, when dying, declined to have his wine whey made out of a famous old Madeira, saying that it was a waste of a good thing on a palate which was past knowing sherry from port. That was, in my opinion, a well-bred and judicious use of conscience."

"There was a certain refinement of unselfishness about it," said Chestnut. "I was on the point of asking you if, in your opinion, these finer wines are apt to tempt men into coarser indulgence? I have heard it so said."

"I do not think it," returned Wilmington. "I am well aware, sir, that there are brutes who may make worse pigs of themselves with Madeira, or with anything; but as far as my memory serves me, I recall no occasion, sir, on which I have seen

men who truly appreciate this wine, the worse for it."

"A pretty strong statement," laughed Francis.

"I hope, sir, you do not mean to doubt—"

"Oh, by no means," cried the other, interrupting the irascible old man. "Not I. Pardon me—a thousand pardons!"

"Enough, sir! Thank you," and he bowed formally. "I was saying, or I was about to say, when—but, no matter"— And he turned to their host:

"I hope, Hamilton, you have not arranged for a heavy supper."

"How could you suspect me of that? A trifle of terrapin, without wine in the dressing, as a friend gave them to me last week in Baltimore. Then I shall offer you the breast of a canvasback. That is all. For an honest and refined study of Madeiras which are new to the palate, one should have supped wisely and not too well."

"It seems so odd," said Chestnut, "to come back to terrapin and canvasbacks. I was unwise enough to send my French servant yesterday to buy some terrapin, never dreaming he could have any difficulty with a written order, as also he speaks English fairly. He returned with the statement that the old dealer you commended to me would not serve Mr. Hamilton's friend *parce qu'il n'avait pas des comtes*."

"Is that a true tale, Chestnut?" asked Francis, amid the amusement of the others.

"Yes, it is true. It was explained to me later that the dealer said the terrapin were not *counts*. I believe my man came back with an obscure idea that terrapin belong to the nobility. He did fetch me some very fine ducks, however."

"Talking of ducks, my dear Wilmington," said Francis, "tell Chestnut what Wharton said of them at dinner here last week."

The gentleman addressed looked up. His face, on which were many furrows of laughter, grew slowly merry at the remembrance of the jest he was called on to repeat.

"Oh, some of us were rather heavily discussing the duck-shooting on the Chesapeake. Wharton does not shoot, and, getting tired of the talk, said quietly, 'Did it ever happen to any of you to go out after Russia duck and get nothing but canvas back?"

"For a moment we were all caught by the verbal likelihood of it; but when the laugh came it broke up the duck talk, to Wharton's delight."

"Ah, he said charming things; and now they are mostly forgotten," said the host.

"Well, well," cried Wilmington, "so are the dinner and the wine of last year; but one would have been worse off without them. What was it he said of Colonel M——? Oh, yes. How the merry ghost of a jest haunts one, and at last recalls

the substance! The colonel had been in the army, and later settled on a sugar-plantation. Wharton said of him, quoting Burns, "'His 'prentice han' he tried on man, and then he made the lasses O!'""

"Delightful!" cried Chestnut.

"Here is the terrapin," said Hamilton; and the supper went on with luxurious simplicity. Next came the ducks, which the host adroitly carved. Then the cloth was removed, the shining candelabra replaced on the polished mahogany table, and a crust of bread on a plate set by each guest. Meantime the talk continued, while Chestnut looked on, much amused at the gravity which of a sudden fell upon the party.

"Olives?"

"No," said Wilmington, declining. "Nothing cleans the palate like bread. For red wines, a peach helps one's taste. Your table is perfect, Hamilton;" and, turning to the servant, "It does you credit, Uncle John. How many a fellow must have rolled under it when it was young! Ah, your old decanters and those coasters could tell some queer tales."

"A pretty word, 'coaster,'" remarked Chestnut. "Coasters delivering wine at the human harbors around the table."

"It is not in the dictionaries," said Francis.

"Odd, that," returned Hamilton. "You may like to know, Chestnut, that at this table Washington, Lafayette, and Franklin have dined."

"All Madeira men, I doubt not," said Wilmington; "that accounts for a good deal."

"Perhaps," said the host, smiling. "Ah, I see you glancing at the cigars, Chestnut. But, alas! they are forbidden until the Madeira has been tasted."

"Cigars!" exclaimed Wilmington. "The mere odor in a room destroys the palate."

"I have never held to this belief," said Francis, addressing Chestnut. "But it is common among the lovers of wine. I would like to put Wilmington on oath as to this strange opinion. At least he will permit me to ask him if he believes that smoking affects the taste of all wines?"

"There is but one wine," returned Wilmington.

"And his name is Madeira, of course," laughed Francis. "But there are other juices of the grape which cannot be quite set aside as bastards."

"I might give a little corner of esteem to the highest grades of Burgundy," said the old gentleman. "No other, not even the finest claret, but is underbred compared to this aristocrat."

"I can't go quite so far as that," said Francis. "Ah, me! Do you remember, Hamilton, that gay day at Dijon, long years ago, in the Hôtel Jura, and the way that old innkeeper fell in love with you, and lavished on us a varied harem of

wines ever better and better, until at last you admitted, as to a famous Beaune, that it was equal to any Madeira—"

"What—what—I, sir? No, sir! My judgment must have been disturbed."

"Oh, it is true."

"Well, maybe; but—it is not so to-day," said Wilmington. "There is but one wine. I loved it when I was young; no new mistress can disturb my affections. I never touch it now without a thought of the friends at whom I have smiled a health across it in days long past. For the fool, a wine is wine and nothing more."

"True, true," said Francis. "For me too, it is a magician. I never lift to my lips a glass of this noble wine without seeing faces that are gone, and hearing the voices and the laughter and the jests that are no more."

"Wine makes poets of us all!" exclaimed Hamilton. "Once I asked Wilmington what he saw, for he was staring down into his glass, and he said he saw memories. By George! we were all as still as mice for a moment. But he is right; there is but one wine, and that, like tobacco, is an American discovery."

"I can talk tobacco with you all day," said Chestnut. "Wine is another matter. We should have a monument to that unknown Indian brave who evolved the pipe. How did he do it? There is the simplicity of genius about it. I can understand the discovery of America, and the invention of printing; but what human want, what instinct, led up to tobacco? Imagine intuitive genius capturing this noble idea from the odors of a prairie fire! Surely, Lamb's roast pig was nothing to the discovery of the gentle joy of a wholesome pipe."

"What a droll fancy!" said Francis. "I envy that fellow his first smoke—the first pipe of man."

"My envy," said Chestnut, "is reserved for that medieval priest who by happy chance invented champagne. His first night in the convent wine-cellar with the delicious results of his genius must have been—I wonder no poet has dwelt on this theme."

"We were talking about Madeira," remarked Wilmington, impatiently. "You were about to say, Hamilton,—"

"Only that I am not quite so clear as to our credit for discovering Madeira," said their host.

"No? It is all in Smith's 'Wealth of Nations.' Great Britain allowed no trade with France or Spain; but as to what were called non-enumerated articles we were permitted to trade with the Canary and Madeiras. We took staves and salt fish thither, and fetched back wines. It so happened that the decisive changes of weather our winter and summer afford did more to ripen this wine than its native climate. The English officers during the French war found our Madeiras so good that they took the taste to England."

"And yet," said Chestnut, "Madeira is never good in England. Is it climate,

or that they do not know how to keep it?"

"Both—both," returned Wilmington. "They bottle all wines, and that is simply fatal. Madeira was never meant to be retailed. It improves in its own society, as greatness is apt to do."

"I myself fancy," said the host, "that despite English usage, even port is better for the larger liberty of a five-gallon demijohn. I tried this once with excellent result. The wine became pale and delicate like an old Madeira."

"How all this lost lore comes back to me as I used to hear it at my father's table!" said Chestnut. "I recall the prejudice against wine in bottle."

"Prejudice, sir?" retorted Wilmington, testily. "Your demijohn has one cork; your five gallons in bottles, a dozen or two of corks, and the corks give an acrid taste. Some wise old Quaker found this out, sir. That is why there is so little good wine in Charleston and Boston. They bottle their wine. Incredible as it may seem, sir, they bottle their wine."

"That is sad," returned Chestnut, gravely.

"Keep it in demijohns in moderate darkness under the roof," returned Francis. "Then it accumulates virtue like a hermit. I once had a challenge from the Madeira Club in Charleston to test our local theory. They sent me two dozen bottles of their finest Madeira. When we came to make a trial of them, we were puzzled at finding the corks entire, but not a drop of wine in any of the bottles. At last I discovered that some appreciative colored person had emptied them by the clever device of driving a nail through the hollow at the base of the bottles. I found, on experiment, that it could easily be done. A letter from my friends forced me to tell the story. I fancy that ingenious servant may have suffered for his too refined taste."

"But he had the Madeira," said Wilmington grimly, glancing at the old servant. "I have no doubt Uncle John here has a good notion of Madeira."

The old black grinned responsively, and said, with the familiarity of an ancient retainer, "It's de smell ob it, sar. Ye gets to know 'em by de smell, sar."

"That is it, no doubt," laughed Francis. "By and by we shall all have to be content with the smell. It is becoming dearer every year."

"I found yesterday," said Hamilton, "an invoice of fifty-eight pipes of Madeira, of the date of 1760. The wine is set down as costing one dollar and four cents a gallon. I should have thought it might have been less, but then it is spoken of as very fine."

"My father," returned Wilmington, "used to say that the newer wines in his day were not much dearer than good old cider. They drank them by the mugful."

"I remember," said Francis, "that Graydon speaks of it in his 'Memoirs.'"

"Who? What?" cried Wilmington, who was a little deaf. "Oh! Graydon—yes, I know the man and the book, of course, but I do not recall the passage."

"He says: 'Our company'—this was in 1774—'our company was called "The Silk-Stocking Company." The place of rendezvous was the house of our captain,[#] where capacious demijohns of Madeira were constantly set out in the yard, where we formed for regular refreshment before marching out to exercise.' He was most amusing, too, as to why the captain was so liberal of his wine: but I can't quite recall it, and I hate to spoil a quotation. You would find the book entertaining, Chestnut."

[#] Afterward General John Cadwalader.

"How delightful!" exclaimed Chestnut. "Capacious demijohns in the yard, and the descendants of Penn's Quakers—anti-vinous, anti-pugnacious Quakers—drilling for the coming war! By George! one can see it. One guesses that it was not out of such fairy glasses as these they drank the captain's Madeira."

"I am reminded," cried Hamilton, "that I have a letter of the captain's brother, Colonel Lambert Cadwalader, to Jasper Yeates, at Lancaster, in 1776. It is interesting. Wait a moment; I will get it." And so saying, he left the table, and presently returning said, "I will read only the bit about the wine. It shows how much store they set by their good wine even in those perilous days."

"Take particular care of the red chest clampt with iron herewith sent, which contains some bonds and mortgages which I could not take out, the key being lost; and also that you would be kind enough to let the two quarter-casks of Madeira, painted green, be deposited in some safe place under lock and key in your cellar, if possible where you keep your own liquors in a safe place, as I value them more than silver and gold in these times of misfortune and distress."

"Then he goes on to tell the news of Washington's victory at Trenton."

"What a glimpse at the life of those days!" said Chestnut.

During the chat the servant had placed before the host a half-dozen quart decanters filled with wine of various hues and depths of color.

"And now for the wine! We have been losing time," exclaimed their host.

As he spoke, the servant set on either side of the fire a brass-bound, painted bucket in which were a number of decanters—the reserve reinforcements to be used if the main army gave out. Meanwhile the desultory chat went on as the servant distributed the glasses. These were arranged in rather an odd fashion. In the center of the table was set a silver bowl of water. The notches in the rim received each the stem of an inverted glass. Before every guest a glass bowl, much like a modern finger-bowl, held also two wine-glasses. Thus there was to be a glass for each wine, or at need the means for rinsing a glass.

The talk had been more entertaining to the younger men and their host than to Wilmington. He had come for the purpose of tasting wines, and was

somewhat annoyed at the delay.

"Dined with Starling last week," he said. "Never was more insulted in my life, sir. Had his after-dinner wine—all of it, sir—in pint decanters!"

"Not, really?" said Francis, with a seriousness by no means assumed. "In pints! You are quite sure you are correct?"

"Fact, sir."

"I—!" exclaimed Chestnut. "Pardon me; but I fail to see the insult."

"What! You, sir! Your father's son! Gentlemen do not serve wine in pints after dinner. They don't do it; and the wine was bad—sick, thick!"

"Ah, I see. I have been long enough away to have forgotten many things. As to these wines you all discuss so critically, I have tasted some of them of late, and they seemed to me much alike."

"Alike, sir! You surprise me," said Wilmington. "I pity you. What a waste of opportunities! But it is not too late to reform—to learn. I know one man who made a quite correct palate at the age of forty—not a gentleman, either; and that 's rather remarkable."

"And is that so rare?" cried Chestnut, much delighted.

"Oh, very," said Francis.

"I knew the man," returned Hamilton. "He died somewhat early. However, I have noticed that the acquisition of a taste for Madeira in middle life is quite fatal to common people."

"Is that so?" said Chestnut, greatly enjoying it all. "Upon my word, I still have a dim memory of all this stuff about wine, as I used to hear it when a lad. I thought it had gone with other superstitions. To be frank, I have so little trust in the tales I hear every day after dinner, about wine and wine-tasting, that—"

"Pardon me," interrupted Wilmington. "Of course you can hear much that is foolish; but to my mind the real facts are very often interesting."

"Such as—?" asked Chestnut. "Pray tell me."

"Hamilton will indorse this as an illustration. He was one of eight gentlemen—of whom three are nowhere—who were asked to give judgment on certain wines. Each man wrote his opinion as to the value, age, and quality of each specimen, and folding over the paper passed it with the wine. Finally, Hamilton read aloud each statement. The estimated price, or value, of a demijohn—that is of five gallons—of each was given; the age, the character, the defects, and so on. The prices assigned to the grape-juices varied much, because most of us cared for them but little. As to the Madeiras pure and simple, the conclusions as to value, age, and quality were so very much alike as even to surprise some of us."

"It is, I suppose," said Chestnut, who began to take a more serious interest, "a matter of habit—acquired habit—and attention."

"No," said Hamilton. "Far more is it a gift. Some women have it wonderfully."

"But, after all," said Francis, "why should appreciative delicacy of palate amaze us more than sharpness of vision or delicacy of touch?"

"Only because a fine taste is, of all forms of sensory acuteness, the rarest," returned Hamilton. "It is still more uncommon to have a perfect memory of taste, while odors are so easily remembered.

"I have known certain persons in whom refined delicacy of palate was accompanied with an almost incredible remembrance of past impressions as to the taste of things. Our old friend Mr. C——, as we all know, could recall a particular coffee or tea he had tasted years ago; could say what wines had been by accident mixed in the Madeira he drank; and was able to declare, as a test of his singular skill, in which of two clean wine-glasses a boiled egg had been placed a day or two before."

"It is interesting," said Chestnut; "but to me, if not incredible, it is at least made almost so by my own deficiencies."

"Well, now, to reëducate you," said Hamilton, "let us exchange theory for practice." So saying, he put on his spectacles, and began to scan the silver labels on his decanters, and to rearrange the order of the row of wines, so as to present them somewhat as opinions are given in a council of war—the least esteemed first. Meanwhile he said: "Wilmington likes his wine cool. It is a grave question. I prefer it a trifle above the temperature of the room. It insures a more perfect presentation both of taste and smell. A little chill may cloud wine, or repress its bouquet. We are all agreed that the wine should be at rest in a warm room some days, or longer, before it is drunk. Nothing mellows a wine like that. And then one must be careful not to have wine shaken; that bruises it. But this is commonplace, Chestnut; I am merely giving you a preliminary education. I think you will find these Madeiras in good condition, carefully drawn and bright. I ought to add that they are all drawn with the siphon, so as not to disturb the salts which crystallize on the sides of the demijohn, or the deposit every wine lets fall, as a good man drops his faults as he goes on in life."

"Just a word before we take our wine," said Francis. "I saw Chestnut smile at the idea of a wine being bruised. I can tell him a story about that. We were dining at the Quoit Club, in Germantown, and were at table when Wilmington, who was in the habit of riding out to the club, arrived somewhat late. We came by and by to the Madeiras. I saw the general taste a wine, as if in doubt. At last he looked up, and said: 'Wilmington, this wine is bruised; you brought the bottle out in your coat-tail pocket—the left pocket.' We were soon convinced as to the wine having been thus shaken out of health; but his inference as to the left pocket puzzled us all, until the general asked some one to stand up, and to put a bottle

in his own coat-tail pocket. Then the reason of my friend's conclusion became clear enough—however, I delay the wine."

"Well, here it is," said Hamilton, filling his glass. Then he passed the decanter to Wilmington, on his left, saying, "With the sun, gentlemen."

"A fair grape-juice," said the latter; "but a trifle too warm."

"And what," said Chestnut, "is a grape-juice? All wines are merely that."

"Oh, usually it is the product of the south side of the island, sometimes of one vineyard, but untreated by the addition of older wines; sweet, of course; apt to be pale. When a Madeira-drinker speaks of a grape-juice, that is what he means. But a Madeira—what we call simply a Madeira—is apt to be dry, and usually is the result of careful blending of wines and some maturing by natural heat."

"But in time," said Chestnut, "your grape-juice becomes a Madeira. Certainly this is delicious! How refined, how delicate it is!"

"Ah, you will learn," cried Wilmington. "But wait a little. A grape-juice never becomes what we denominate a Madeira."

"I don't agree with you," said the host.

"We are in very deep water now," laughed Francis. "I, myself, think the finest of the old dry Madeiras were once sugary maidens."

"Nonsense," said Hamilton, passing the next wine. "With the sun."

"Why with the sun?" said Chestnut, infinitely delighted by these little social superstitions and the odd phrases.

"Because it sours a wine to send it to the right," said Wilmington, dryly. "That is a fact, sir,—a well-known fact."

"Droll, that," returned Chestnut. "I wonder whence came that notion."

"It is a pretty old one; possibly Roman. The Greeks passed their drink to the right. Wine is a strange fluid. It has its good and its bad days."

"I am willing to say its moods," added Hamilton.

"I suppose," continued the older man, "that you will be entirely skeptical if I assure you that for women to go into a wine-room is pretty surely to injure the wine."

"Indeed, is that so?" returned Chestnut. "I am not surprised. In France women are not allowed to enter the great cheese-caves."

"Wine is very sensitive," said Francis. "I give you this story for what it is worth:

"A planter in the South told me that once two blacks were arranging bottles in his wine-room, and quarreled. One stabbed the other. The fellow died, and his blood ran over the floor; and from that day the wines in that room were bitter. You know that bitterness is one form of the sicknesses to which Madeira is liable."

This amazing tale was received with entire tranquillity by all save Chestnut,

whose education was progressing. Meanwhile another decanter went round.

"I congratulate you," cried Wilmington, as he set down his glass. "A perfect grape-juice—new to me too. High up, sir; very high up"; and refilling his glass, he sent on the coaster. "Observe, Chestnut, the refinement of it; neither the sweet nor the bouquet is too obvious. It is like a well-bred lady. Observe what a gamut of delicate flavors; none are excessive. And then at last there remains in the mouth a sort of fugitive memory of its delightfulness."

"As one remembers the lady when she is gone," said Francis.

"Thanks," said the old gentleman, bowing.

"Am I wrong," said Chestnut, "in fancying that there is here a faint flavor of orange-water?"

"Well, well!" said Wilmington. "And this man says he has no palate! That is the charm of these lovely wines: they are many things to many lovers—have for each a separate enchantment. I thought it was a rose-water taste; but no matter, you may be correct. But Hamilton can give you a better wine. No grape-juice can compete with the best Madeiras. In wine and man the noblest social flavors come with years. It is pure waste to ask to dinner any man under forty."

"And now fill your glasses," said Hamilton. "Are you all charged? Your health, gentlemen! I waited for this wine;" and he bent his head to each in turn.

"That good old formula, 'Are you all charged?' is going out," said Chestnut. "I used to hear it when I came in to dessert at my father's table."

"One rarely hears it nowadays," remarked Francis. "But at the Green Tree Insurance Company's dinners it is still in habitual use. When the cloth is off, the President says, 'Are you all charged, gentlemen?' and then, 'Success to the Mutual Assurance Company.' You know, Chestnut, its insurance sign—still to be seen on our older houses—is a green tree. The Hand in Hand Insurance Company refused to insure houses in front of which were trees, because in the last century the fire-engines were unable to throw a stream over or through them. The Mutual accepted such risks, and hence has been always known popularly in Philadelphia as the Green Tree. After a pause, the Vice-President rises and repeats the formal query, 'Are you all charged?' The directors then stand up, and he says, 'The memory of Washington.' We have a tradition that the news of the great general's death in 1799 came while the Board of Directors was dining. From that time until now they have continued to drink that toast."

"I like that," said Chestnut. "These ancient customs seem to survive better here than elsewhere in America."

"That is true," returned Hamilton. "And what you say reminds me of some odd rules in the Philadelphia Library, which Franklin founded in 1731. We have—at our own cost, of course—a supper of oysters roasted in the shell at a wood fire in the room where we meet. A modest bowl of rum punch completes the fare.

Old Ben was afraid that this repast would degenerate into a drinking-bout such as was too common in his time. He therefore ingeniously arranged a table so high that it was impossible to sit at it, and this shrewd device seems to have answered."

"When I became a director of the library," said Francis, "my predecessor had been ill for two years. As a consequence, he was fined a shilling for non-attendance at each meeting. This, with the charges for suppers, and for the use of the library as a stockholder, had accumulated a debt of some fifty dollars. Now, as Franklin found it difficult to collect such debts from estates, he made it a rule that the new director, while pleased with the freshness of his novel honor, should pay the bill of the man he succeeded; and accordingly I paid my predecessor's debts."

"How like Poor Richard!" said Wilmington.

"I was consoled," added Francis, "by the reflection that I always had the sad privilege of leaving my successor a similar obligation."

"Agreeable, that," murmured Wilmington. "But we are trifling, my dear Francis. What is next, Hamilton? Ah, a new wine. That is a wine indeed! A Madeira. Stay! I have drunk it before. A Butler wine, is n't it?"

"Yes. I misplaced the decanters; this should have come later."

"I see now," said Chestnut. "What is that curious aftertaste? Prunes? Is n't it prunes?"

"Certainly," cried Hamilton. "You are doing well, Chestnut. These noble old wines have a variety of dominant flavors, with what I might call a changeful halo of less decisive qualities. We call the more or less positive tastes apple, peach, prune, quince; but in fact these are mere names. The characterizing taste is too delicate for competent nomenclature. It is a thing transitory, evanescent, indefinable, like the quality of the best manners. No two are alike."

"Yes," said Hamilton; "and this same wine, in bottles, after a few years would quite lose character. Even two demijohns of the same wine kept in one room constantly differ, like two of a family."

"As you talk of these wines," said Chestnut, "I dimly recall the names of some I used to hear. 'Constitution,' a Boston wine, was one—"

"And a good vintage, too," said Hamilton. "It was the class wine of 1802."

"The class wine?" queried Chestnut.

"Yes. At Harvard each class used to import a tun of wine, which, after it was bottled, was distributed among the graduates. I still have two of the bottles with '1802,' surrounded by 'Constitution,' molded in the glass."

"A good wine it was," added Francis. "I know of no other which has been so little hurt by being bottled."

"There were others I used also to hear about. One, I think, was called 'Resurrection'—a wine buried for protection in the war; but some of the names

of these wines puzzle me."

"The Butlers," returned Francis, "of course represent in their numbering the successive annual importations of Major Pierce Butler for his own use. Some wines were called from the special grape which produced them, as Bual, Sercial, Vidogna. As to others, it was a quality, as in the case of the famous apple-wine; or the name of the ship in which the wine came to us, as the Harriets (pale and dark), the Padre; others again were wines long held by families, as the Francis, Willing, Butler, and Burd Madeiras."

"Might I ask how long may a Madeira live, and continuously gain in value for the palate?"

"Ah, that depends on the wine," said Hamilton. "I never drank a wine over seventy years old which had not something to regret—like ourselves, eh, Wilmington?"

"I have nothing to regret," returned the elder man, smiling, "except that I cannot live my life over precisely as it was. I have neglected no opportunity for innocent amusement, nor—" and he paused.

"For some others," added Francis, amid a burst of laughter.

"I fancy," said Chestnut, "that Mr. Wilmington is of the opinion of Howell. You will find it in those letters of his which Walpole loved."

"And what was that?"

"It is long since I read it. I am not quite sure I can repeat it accurately. He contends in a humorous vein for the moral value of wine—I think he is speaking of Canary. 'Of this,' he says, 'may be verified that merry induction—that good wine makes good blood; good blood causeth good thoughts; good thoughts bring forth good works; good works carry a man to heaven: *ergo*, good wine carrieth a man to heaven.'"

"It sounds like one of Shakspere's fools," said Hamilton.

"I should like to read that book," added Wilmington.

"It is at your service," replied Chestnut; "and what else he says of wine is worth reading."

"Then let us get nearer to good works," laughed their host. "Here is a pleasant preacher. Try this."

"Ah," said Wilmington; "a new friend! Curious, that. Observe, Chestnut, the just perceptible smoke-flavor—a fine, clean-tasting, middle-aged wine—a gentleman, sir, a gentleman! Will never remind you to-morrow of the favor he did you last night."

"Needs time," said Francis, "and a careful fining—a little egg-shell and the white of one egg."

"One might risk it," said Wilmington. "But I would rather use a milk fining. It is more delicate, and the wine recovers sooner, unless the dose of milk be too

large. But above all, Hamilton, be careful about the moon. A summer fining might be better, but touch it lightly."

"What on earth has the moon to do with it?" said Chestnut.

"If you want to spoil a Madeira," answered Wilmington, "fine it at the change of the moon. I spoiled my dark Harriet that way. Always fine a wine during the decline of the moon."

"I shall call this wine 'Smoke,'" said Hamilton. "Its name is really Palido. Certainly it has a great future. No better wine ever coasted along the shores of this table, and it has seen many vinous voyages. And now for a very interesting vintage. A little more bread, John. 'With the sun.'"

Wilmington ate a morsel of bread, rinsed a glass in the bowl before him, filled it to the brim, and slowly emptied it. Then he set it down deliberately.

"That is not Madeira, Hamilton; that is sherry. Some mistake."

"What!" cried Francis. "Wrong for once! It is Madeira, and old,—too old, I should say."

"I thought I should puzzle you. I have but little of it left, and it is new to all of you. Two generations have disputed its parentage."

"I might be mistaken," said Wilmington. "There are Madeiras so like some rare sherries as to puzzle any palate."

"I myself," said Hamilton, "have an inherited belief that it is Madeira. It is difficult to tell, at times, a very old Madeira from a very aged sherry. The Burd wine was remarkable because no one could decide this question. I have heard an old friend remark that the age of all great wines brought them together as to taste. Thus a certain Charles March grape-juice and Blue Seal Johannisberger were scarcely to be told apart."

"I leave you to settle it," said Chestnut, rising, well aware how long the talk would last. "The knowledge I have acquired has, of a verity, gone to my head,—I suppose because, as Miss M—— says, nature abhors a vacuum. Thank you for a delightful evening."

"But sit down for five minutes," said Hamilton, who had risen with his guest. "There is a beautiful story about this wine. I must tell it, even if it be familiar to Wilmington as his own best joke."

"Delighted," said Chestnut, resuming his place.

"Well," said Hamilton, "I will not keep you long. This wine came ashore on Absecom Beach from a Spanish wreck, about 1770. Then it was brought to Trenton, and my great-uncle bought it. All but a demijohn was buried in his garden at the old house, not far from Princeton, to keep it out of British stomachs. The one demijohn kept for use made the mischief I shall tell you of.

"Try that grape-juice, Wilmington. No? Then let Francis have his cigar. My Cuban friend shocks me with the late rise of prices. Eighteen dollars a thousand

makes one hesitate."

"It does, indeed," said Francis. And soon the room was hazy with delicate smoke, as Hamilton continued:

"It was during the war, you know. My great-uncle Edward, who was with Washington, heard that his wife was ill. He got leave, managed to cross the Delaware, and in citizen's clothes made his way to his own country-house near Princeton. There he learned that she was not seriously ill, and as the country was full of British scouts, he resolved to go back next day to his duties in Washington's camp. The friend who had aided his adventure and was to set him across the Delaware again, came in about nine of the evening; and to aid them with the wisdom which is in wine, the demijohn of this disputed wine was brought out. Also a noble bowl of rum punch was brewed, and divers bottles were allowed their say, so that when Mr. Trent departed, Uncle Ned retired in some haste lest he should not be able to retire at all. It is probable that he left the candles to burn, and the hall door to close itself. About three in the morning, having snored off his rum and some wine, and hearing a noise, he put on his boots and a wrapper, and taking his pistols, went down-stairs. As he entered the dining-room there were candles burning, fresh logs on the fire, and facing him sat an English captain, with his dirty boots on my aunt's best Chippendale arm-chair, and in act to swallow a glass of wine. Uncle Ned stepped through the open door and covered the unexpected guest with his pistol, at the same time remarking (and he was really the most imperturbable of men), 'Perhaps you are not aware that you are making free with my best Madeira, and really—'

"'Don't shoot, I beg you, until I finish my glass,' said the captain, calmly. 'Did I understand you to say Madeira? Madeira! It's sherry—unmistakably sherry! Of course, I don't dispute the ownership.'

"'Very kind of you,' remarked Uncle Ned. 'There seems to have been a considerable transfer of ownership.'

"'That is so,' replied the captain. 'I am like Mary after she ate her lamb. "Every where that Mary went that lamb was sure to go." Permit me to apologize. The sherry—'

"'I have had the honor to assure you that it is Madeira.'

"'Madeira! Great George!'

"Now Uncle Ned hated the king, and loved his wife, and greatly honored his own taste in wine. Both his prejudices and his affection had been lightly dealt with, so he said tartly: 'There is only one Great George, and he is across the Delaware, and the wine is Madeira, and you have soiled my wife's chair; and I wait, sir, to learn your errand.'

"'I grieve, sir, to say that you will quite too soon know my errand, when I call up the troopers who are back of the house; or if you are in haste a shot

from you will do as well. Meanwhile permit me most humbly to apologize to Mrs. Hamilton. I regret to continue to differ concerning the wine. As to your George, he is a very small rebel George. And now I am obliged most reluctantly to finish my unfortunate business; perhaps, however, we had better see the last of the wine; you may not have another opportunity.'

"These remarks somewhat sobered Uncle Ned, and he became of a sudden aware of the trap he was in. So he sat down, with his pistols convenient, and saying, 'With all my heart,' began to push the bottle. The Britisher was good company, and his temper was already so mellowed by wine that he was fast nearing the stage of abrupt mental decay which mellowness naturally precedes. He graciously accepted a tumbler of punch, which my uncle contrived to make pretty strong, and then numberless glasses of wine, enlivened by very gay stories, at which my uncle was clever. At last the captain rose and said with some gravity, 'The glasses appear to be all t-twins. We have made a night of it. When you make a n-night of it you improve the s-shining hours. And now my painful duty—'

"'One glass more,' said my uncle; 'and about that story. Pray pardon me, I interrupted you.'

"'Oh, yes,' said the captain, emptying a very stiff glass of rum punch, which by no means put its own quality into the lessening vigor of his legs. 'As I was saying, I knew a man once—very clever man; loved a girl—very clever girl. Man consumedly fond of liquor. Girl did n't know which he liked best, the wine or the woman. One day that girl—he told her a very foolish story about not askin' for wine if she would put a k-kiss in the glass. And that day, instead of a k-kiss she put a little note inside the decanter; and when he had drunk up the wine, and the men were laughing at this f-fashion of billet-doux, he broke the decanter with the poker and r-read the note. Give you my word, he never drank a drop after that; and the note, it was a very c-clever note, and it just said—' But at this moment the captain made a queer noise in his throat, and slipped down, overcome with rebel rum and much Madeira. Uncle Ned humanely loosened his cravat and sword-belt, and lost no time in creeping through the dark to his friend's house, where he found clothes and a good horse. He was back in camp next day."

"And so this was the wine," said Chestnut; "and the man and the maid are gone, and the wine is still here. But the end of the story?—what the girl said in her note?"

"Ask the wine," laughed Hamilton, "or ask some good woman. No man knows. We shall find Mrs. Hamilton and my daughters in the drawing-room. They must be at home by this time. You can ask them."

"With all my heart," said Chestnut.

"That is, if you have had enough tobacco," added the host.

"Just one more glass from the disputed bottle," said Wilmington, rising with the rest, and holding his glass between his face and the lights. "As our old table-customs seem to interest you, Chestnut, I give you a toast which I have drunk now these fifty years. Once it was a present joy; it is now but a sad remembrance. Quite often I say it to myself when I take my last glass in company; and always when I dine alone I say it aloud, or it seems to say itself of long habit."

With these words, the spare little, ruddy old gentleman bowed in turn to each of his fellow-guests, and last to his host, and then said, with a certain sad serenity of manner: "Here is to each other,"—and with a slight quaver in his voice,—"and to one other."

With this they turned from the table to follow Hamilton.

John gravely divided the mahogany doors opening into the drawing-room, and as Mr. Wilmington passed, murmured under his breath, "Dat wine 's a sherry, sar, sure 's ye 're born."

"Uncle John," replied Wilmington, "you are a great man. Here is a dollar," and slowly followed his host, humming under his breath the old drinking-song:

"The bottle 's the mistress I mean, I mean."

"A LITTLE MORE BURGUNDY"

The month of January, 1853, had been as dreary as only a midwinter bit of Paris weather can be. The Christmas season came and went, and left me and my friend Pierce, two friendless students, rather more homesick than usual, and a little indisposed to confess the malady, or to talk of those we loved, three thousand miles away.

This special night of the 21st of January I sat with William Pierce in the second story of an ancient hotel, which for democratic convenience had been labeled 47 Rue St. Andre des Arts. The name of the street—like others in the pleasant, wicked old Latin quarter—has some relation to the scholastic history of the Sorbonne; but who were the great folks to whom, long ago, this gray house belonged, I never knew. It was, in my time, a hive of students, and, standing *entre cour et jardin*, had a fine air of protesting against the meager trades around it, and the base uses to which it had come at last.

I never before, or since, lived in so vast a room as this in which I spent

the most of 1853. The lofty, half-domed ceiling over us was still festive with the tangled dance of nymphs and shepherds who began their revel when the naughty regent was in power. I used to wonder what strange and wicked things they must have seen; what quarrels, what loves, what partings.

Tall windows, with balconies set in lovely traceries of stone, looked out on the street; on the other side of the room a deep alcove held my bed. Successive economies had narrowed the broad chimney throat to limits penuriously proportioned to the price of fuel; but two pensive caryatides still upheld the carved mantel-shelf, over which drooped pendent rose-wreaths of marble, pipe-stained, wine-tinted, and chipped.

It was never warm in this great chamber; but on the night in question it was colder than was comfortable even for the warm blood of youth. Over the meager nest of a grate we two sat, striving to conjure up a blaze from reluctant wood and coal. And this was rather with the hope that the fire might put a soul of heat into our *boiullotte* and so give us material for a consolatory punch, than with any vain belief that we could ever be warmed again by what the French nation has agreed to consider a fire.

"Dismal, is n't it?" said Pierce.

"No," I returned, cheerfully, because now the *bouillotte* began, uneasily, to hop a little on the coals, as if nervous, and to puff and breathe out steam at intervals. Seeing this, Pierce, who was by nature a silent son of New England, got up, with no more words, and went over to the far corner, and presently said:

"*Dame!*"

Now *dame* is French, and has no harm in it, but is nearly as satisfactory as if it did not lack that final n, which makes the difference between mere Celtic impatience and English verbal iniquity.

"Well?" I said.

"The cognac is out."

"Is it?" I said. It was not a great calamity, but it did seem to add something to the sum of our discomforts.

"Have a little hot water?" said my friend.

"Don't," I returned.

"But what shall we do? You are pretty poor company to-night. There is the Closerie des Lilas, and Mabille, and the Café des Drôles."

I would none of them. I sat with my head in my hands, staring into the embers of the fading fire. I was crying a man's tears, thinking of the home fireside at evening, three thousand miles away. And if you think a man cannot cry without the shedding of material tears, life has taught you little of physiology; for this is the chief difference between man and woman.

At last Pierce rose up and said French and English profanities, and thought

it no colder out of doors than within; therefore I put on my overcoat and a fez cap—such as we wore in those days—and followed him down-stairs, across the courtyard, and under its gray escutcheon and armorial bearings, and so into the outer air. A band of noisy students was passing out of the narrow Rue des Grands Augustins, singing. How often I have heard it, and how it rings in my head after these many long years!

Par derrier' chez ma tante
I'ya-t-un bois joli;
Le rossignol y chante
Et le jour et la nuit.
Gai lon la, gai le rosier
Du joli mois de mai.

Across the way two little maids in caps were filling their tins from the steaming heap of fried potatoes in the tiny shop of my old acquaintance Madame Beaumain.

We left the gayer streets and soon were walking through the maze of narrow avenues and lanes long since destroyed to make way for the wide boulevards of the Second Empire. We went along aimlessly, as it seemed to me, until presently Pierce stopped, exclaiming, "Yes, it is here," and turned from the Rue de l'Université into the short *impasse* at its further end. Here he paused.

"Well," I said, "where next?"

"My dear M——," he said, "I can't stand you alone any longer. I 'm going to take you to call on M. Des Illes."

Now, M. Des Illes was an acquaintance of a minute (to be accurate, of five minutes), and was nothing to me on earth but a quaint remembrance. I said I would go anywhere, call on devil or angel, do as he liked. As I made clear to him the amiability of my indifferent mood, he paused at the doorway of No. 37.

"Is this the place?"

"Yes, 37 *bis*." Upon this he rang, and the door opening in the usual mysterious Paris fashion, a concierge put out her head at the side of the passage, which seemed long and narrow.

"Is M. Des Illes at home?"

"Oui; tout en face, tout au fond; Porte à gauche."

"That 's droll," I said as we walked on. The passage was dimly lighted by a lantern hung on the wall. We went on quite three hundred feet, and came out into a courtyard some thirty feet by twice that length. The walls were high around it, but before us was a small hotel with a rather elaborate front, not easily made out

by the feeble glimmer of a lantern over the door and another on the wall. The main entrance was a little to the left of the middle of the house, which seemed to be but one story high, and over this a Mansard roof.

"Interesting, is n't it?" said Pierce.

"Very," said I, as I rang. The door was opened at once, and we were in a hall some twenty feet square, beautifully lit with wax candles in the most charming of silver sconces. There were a few arms on the walls, and a portrait of a girl in a red gown and hoops. The servant who admitted us was in black from head to foot—a very tall man with an immense—an unusual nose, very red cheeks, and enormous ears.

I said, "M. Des Illes is at home?" and he, "Monsieur would oblige with the names, and this way, please." We gave him our cards and went after him. He warned us of a step, and of another, and we came into a little antechamber, where we were pleasantly bid to be seated. He came back at once, followed by the strangest little old gentleman imaginable. I said, "M. Des Illes, I believe?"

"Ah," he cried. "It cannot be that I am deceived. It is Monsieur, my preserver. What a happiness to see you here!" and upon this, to my great embarrassment, he kissed me upon both cheeks, while Pierce grinned at me maliciously over his shoulders.

"It was a small matter," I said.

"To you, no doubt; but not to me. Life is never a small possession to him that owns it. I have friends with me to-night who will feel it to be more than an honor to welcome you. M. Michel and M. Pierce, you said, I think. This is a most fortunate hour."

I said all the effusively pleasant things I could think of, while his servant relieved me of my overcoat. As Pierce was being aided in like manner I had a good look at my host, and made up my mind that he was probably dressed for a fancy ball. He was clearly a quite old man, curiously slight in person, and having almost the delicacy of features of a woman. Also he was clean shaven, wore his hair in a cue tied with black ribbon, and was clad in black silk or satin, with jet buttons, a long waistcoat, a full lace jabot, knee-breeches, black silk stockings, court shoes, and black jet buckles. With some puzzle of mind I concluded it to be a mourning suit of the last century, queer to see at this time and in this place.

As we crossed the antechamber M. Des Illes fluttered about us, gesticulating and talking with vehemence of his great debt to me, who thought it small and embarrassingly made too much of. I have laid away somewhere among my mental negatives a picture of the room into which we went, following our host. There were many candles in sconces, tables and chairs of Louis XV.'s time, and one cabinet of wonderful inlaid work filled with silver.

Two persons rose as we entered. To my surprise, I saw that they also were

dressed in black of the same fashion as that worn by my host. All had cues, and, like M. Des Illes, wore swords with black sheaths. One of these gentlemen might have been forty years old, but the other, like my host, was a man far on in life and certainly not much under seventy years. As I stood a moment in the doorway, the two, who were playing piquet, rose, and M. Des Illes, going in before us, turned and said as we entered:

"I have great pleasure to present to you M. Michel, my preserver, of whom I have already told. It is he who has with heroism dragged me from before a swift-coming horse. He with modesty refused me his address. His name I shall forever cherish. Permit me, Duke, to present M. Michel."

I named my friend, who was introduced. Then we were let to know that the older man, who was stout and well built, and who seemed of M. Des Illes's years, was the Duke de St. Maur. He in turn presented to us the youngest of these quaintly clad people, his son, M. de St. Maur. When these gentlemen bowed, for neither did more, they took up much of the room, and in the space left to us—such courtesy being contagious—Pierce and I achieved quite as remarkable salutes.

This ceremony over, we were seated, and the tale of M. Des Illes's rescue having been told once more at too great length, the Duke rose, and, taking my hand, desired me to understand that I had conferred upon him a favor which I must have known M. Des Illes as long as he to understand. When his son had stated that none could better what his father had said, he added, "May it please God, Monsieur, that you never need a friend; and may his providence never leave you without one as good as you yourself have proved to be." I replied in fluent but unequal French, and began to have the keenest desire to know what the mischief all this masquerade might mean.

I soon observed that the politics of the day were out of the talk. When, indeed, we were speaking of pictures, and Pierce mentioned a portrait of the Prince President in the Salon, a manner of chill seemed to fall upon the party, while the Duke said with a certain gentle decisiveness, "You, who are our guests this evening, and will share it with us—may I say for my friend and myself that the person mentioned should never get so far into good society as to be talked of by gentlemen—at least not to-night—not to-night?"

"No," said St. Maur; "not to-night."

Pierce spoke quickly, "You will pardon us, Duke."

The Duke lifted a remonstrating hand. "It is not needed," he said. "And have you seen the great landscape by Diaz? I have the pendant; but now his prices have gone up, and we poor gentlefolk, alas!" Here he took snuff, and M. de St. Maur remarked with a smile, "My good father is never so near extravagance as when he talks of his poverty."

"He is shrewd, the young man, and of distressing economy—a quite modern

economy. I bought it to-day." Our laughter set the chat on a less formal footing, and we fell to talking of theaters, actresses, the latest play, and the like, until at last M. Des Illes said. "Pardon, my dear Duke, but the hour is near when we must go down to the cellar."

Meanwhile no one had explained the costumes which appeared to have power to recall into active life the forms of manners with which they seemed to consist so well, the grave courtesies of an hour more patient than that in which we live. "We are at your service," said the Duke, rising. "Our friends must feel by this time as if they were calling on actors behind the scenes at the Odeon. Is it not so?" he added.

"Perhaps," I returned. "But the wise who are well entertained do not ask the name of the inn; at least so they say in Spain."

"Monsieur has found for us a delightful apology," said M. de St. Maur. "Let us leave him to guess our sad riddle; and now, the lanterns."

As he spoke, M. Des Illes came from a closet with lanterns and straw wine-baskets, of which he gave one to each of us. Then the candles in the lanterns were lighted, while Pierce and I, profoundly curious, said nothing.

"A pity," exclaimed the younger St. Maur, "that our friends' modern dress should interpolate a note of to-day."

"We can only regret," said I.

"It is but a wicked little remark, that," returned the Duke. "My son is of to-day, Monsieur. For him this is a masquerade, interesting, droll. But for us, *mon Dieu*! It is——"

"Yes, it is," returned Des Illes gravely.

"Pardon, Duke," said the son, smiling. "Once all these things lived for you and for our friend; but as to me—I have only the memory of another's memory."

"Neatly put!" cried Des Illes. "Almost a *mot*; as near as men get to it in these degenerate days. Well, well, if wit be dead, wine is not. Let us go now among the old memories of which your son speaks. Come, gentlemen."

With these words we went with him through a back room, and thence by a window into a garden. In the uncertain moonlight I saw that it was large, with great walls about it, and the appearance beyond these of tall, leafless trees. We passed a frozen basin and the figure of a dryad, and went after our host into a house for plants, now to appearance disused. At a far corner he lifted a trap-door and went before us down a stone stair to a wine-cellar such as is common in good French houses. Here were bottles and barrels of *vin ordinaire* for common use. I began to feel an increase of interest when, near the far end of this cellar, M. Des Illes set down his lantern, unlocked a padlock, and, aided by St. Maur, lifted a larger trap-door. With a word of care as to the steps, he showed us the way down a broad stone stairway, and in a minute we were all standing on the rock

floor of a great room underground.

As we saw the Duke and his companions hang their lanterns on hooks set in the wall, we did as they had done, and, placing our wine-baskets on casks, began to get used to the cross lights of the lanterns and to look around us. The space seemed to be some thirty feet long and perhaps as much as fifteen feet wide. It was cut out of the soft lime-rock which underlies Paris. Perhaps a dozen casks of wine, on racks, were set along one side of the cave, and over them, on stone shelves excavated in the walls, were hundreds of bottles.

"Be careful of the cobwebs," said Des Illes, and there was need to be. They hung from above in black curtains and in coarse openwork of tangled ropes. They lay over the bottles and across the casks, wonderful for amount and for their dark hue. The spinners of this funereal broidery I could nowhere see. It was the work of generations of arachnidean artists long dead; or else those who lived were hiding, scared, amidst these great pendent festoons. I wondered how the net-makers had lived, for flies there were none, and no other insect life so far as I could see. After this brief survey I observed that the air was cool, and so dry that it was hardly felt to be uncomfortable. The three gentlemen were moving to and fro, exchanging phrases apparently about the wine, and as I joined their little group it became clear that a selection was being made.

"There will be one bottle of the year," said the Duke.

"Yes, of the year," repeated our host.

"Might I ask of what year?" said Pierce.

"Of 1793," replied St. Maur; "the fatal year. Permit me"; and he held the basket wine-cradle while the Duke put on his glasses, and, turning the lantern-light on to a shelf, said: "There are but twelve left."

"Enough for us, friend," said Des Illes, lifting a bottle. "It has the black ribbon on the neck, but the spiders have so covered everything as with a pall, that it was hard to be sure." With this, he turned to me. "It has a black ribbon, you perceive."

"It has," I said, rather puzzled.

"And now, my friends, choose as you will, you cannot go far wrong. The sun of many summers is locked up in these bottles."

"I wall take Chambertin," said the Duke.

"And I, Pomard," said his son.

"And I," said Des Illes, "Romanée Conti. But all here are in the peerage of wines."

Then, when each of this curious company had made his choice, our host said to us:

"It will be best that I choose for you. There is already enough of Burgundy to trouble some toes to-morrow. Shall we say Bordeaux? Here are two of long

descent, and one is a comet-wine—of a name long lost—and one is Laffitte, and both are in good order; neither is less than thirty years old. In this changeless atmosphere our great wines are long-lived. Have a care not to disturb the wines as we go up the stairs."

"We shall carry them with care," I replied, laughing, "until we have swallowed them."

"And then without care, I trust," cried the younger St. Maur. "Let us go; it is chilly here."

"A moment," said the Duke. "M. Michel will desire to know why all this costuming, and the bottles in mourning, and this ancient cellar."

"True," I returned. "I was about to ask."

"Well, well," said Des Illes. "A few words here, where they will have the more interest, and then let us mount, and end the tale with such memories as these good wines may suggest."

"This way," said the Duke to me. "Let me show you something." I followed him to the end of the cellar, where, to my surprise, I saw by the light of his lantern a door heavily built and guarded by a bar of wood. This he lifted, and as he opened the door, and we gazed into the deep darkness beyond, he said: "I show you a passageway into the catacombs of Paris, of which this cave must have been a part until built off to be made a cellar somewhere in the reign of Louis XV. And stay. Look at this"; and, turning aside, he showed me, as it lay on a cask, a cobwebbed bit of something.

"What is it?" I said.

"A woman's glove—and it has been here since 1794."

"The rest were better told in a less somber place," said St. Maur. "Let us go." Upon this we went up the stairs and out into the air. As we crossed through the barren shrubbery, each with his lantern and a little basket of wine, I thought that probably Paris could show no stranger sight than this sunken garden-space dark with box, the gentlemen in their dress of another time, and we two Yankees wondering what it all meant.

When at length we reentered M. Des Illes's drawing-room a brighter fire was on the hearth than is common in France. About it M. Des Illes set with care, in their cradles, the half-dozen bottles we had fetched from the cellar. I ventured to say that it would be long before they were warm enough to drink; but the Duke said that was quite a modern notion, and that he liked to warm his wine on the tongue. It seemed to me odd; but I am told it was once thought the thing to have red wines of the temperature of the cellar. When the wine was set at a correct distance from the fire, and the blaze heartened a little with added fuel, M. Des Illes excused himself, and, returning after some twenty minutes, explained that he had been arranging a dressing for the salad, but that it would be an hour

before supper could be made ready.

"That," I said, "will give us full leisure to ask some questions."

"*Pardie!*" said St. Maur. "Had I been you, by this time I should have asked fifty."

"No doubt," laughed his father; and then, turning to us, "Usually when we dress as you see, we are alone—Des Illes and I at least—men of a forgotten past. But to-night friendly chance has sent you here, and it were but courteous that we explain what may seem absurd. M. Des Illes will tell you the story."

"It is many years since I heard it," said St. Maur. "I shall be well pleased to hear it once more."

"But it is long."

"*Fi donc*, my friend. The wine will be the better for waiting," said the Duke; "and, after all, some one must tell these gentlemen. As for me, I should spoil a good story."

Then Pierce and I said how delighted we should be to listen, but indeed we little knew how strange a tale we were to hear.

"It shall be as the Duke likes," said M. Des Illes. "Let us move nearer to the fireside. It is chilly, I think." Upon this we drew to the fire. Our host added a small fagot of tender twigs, so that a brief blaze went up and lit the dark velvets and jet buttons of the company.

"You will all have heard it," said Des Illes; "but it is as you desire. It will be new to our friends."

"And surely strange," said the Duke's son.

"My memory may prove short, Duke. If I fail, you will kindly aid me."

"Ah, my friend, neither your wine nor your memory has failed. But make haste, or your supper will be spoiled while we await a tale which is slow in coming."

"The things I shall speak of took place in the month of July, 1794. Alas! this being now 1853, I was in those days close to eleven years of age. My good Duke, here, was himself some two years younger. My father had been purveyor of wines to the Court, as his father had been, and I may say, too, that we were broken-down nobles who liked better this way of earning a meal than by clinging to the skirts of more lucky men of no better blood than we.

"There had been in the far past some kindly relation between my Duke's people and my own, and how it came about I know not, but my grandmother, when the old Duchess died, would have it she must nurse the little Duke, and hence between him, as he grew up, and my father was the resemblance often seen between brothers of one milk. We were all of us, my mother and father and I, living in this house when my story begins, and although in secret we were good servants of the King, we were quietly protected by certain Jacobins who loved

good wine. In fact, we did very well and kept our heads from Madame Guillotine, and from suspicion of being enemies of the country, until the sad thing chanced of which I am made to tell the history.

"In the spring of 1793 the Duke, my father's foster-brother, came one day from the country in disguise, and with him this same Duke Henri you see here to-day. I do not now know precisely what had taken place, but I believe the Duke was deep in some vain plots to save the Queen, and wished to be free for a time from the care of his boy. At all events, Duke Henri, a very little fellow, was left with us and became our cousin from Provence. He had a great opinion of his dignity, this dear Duke, in those days, and was like enough to get us all into trouble.

"Early in July 1794 my father was much disturbed in mind. I often saw him at night carrying things into the plant-house, where my mother nursed a few pots of flowers. There was cause, indeed, to trouble any one, what with the merciless guillotine and the massacres. As for us, too, we knew pretty well that at last we were becoming "suspects."

"One evening—it was the 19th of July—my father was away nearly all day, a thing for him quite out of the common. About dusk he came home, and after a few words in haste to my mother called us to help him. On this we were set to work carrying bottles of milk, cheese, bread, and cold meats in baskets to the plant-house, where my father took them from us. Then we went back and forth with blankets, pillows, and more things than I can now recall. After this, it being night, we were told to wait in the house, but no explanation was given us as to what these unusual preparations meant."

"It was this house, this same house," said Duke Henri; "when we had done all that was required of us we sat within doors, wondering what it was for."

"The next day, being July 20th about noon, we boys were playing in the garden when I saw my mother come through the window, and heard her cry out: 'It is ruin, it is ruin; my God, it is ruin!' A moment after came my father with the Duke de St. Maur—Duke Philip, of course. The Duke was speaking vehemently as we boys ran to hear. 'I came to say that I am going to England. I have not a moment. I fear I may have been followed. I grieve to have fetched this trouble upon you.'

"My mother was vexed indeed, and spoke angrily; but my father said, 'No; trouble has been close for days, and the house is watched. For me, there need be no real fear. I have friends, and should be set free quickly, but the Duke!—'

"In the end they would not let Duke Philip go, and urged that now it would bring about a greater peril for all of us if he were caught going out or were seen to come forth.

"'There is a better way,' cried my father. 'Quick! Let us all go down to the

lower cave.' The Duke remonstrated, but was cut short, for my father said, 'If you have compromised us, I must judge now what is best.' And so the Duke gave in, and we were all hurried into the plant-house and down the stairs to the first cellar, where were many of the things so long made ready. My father opened the larger trap, and began with great haste to carry down, with our help, all he had left in the cellar above. Every one aided, and it was no sooner done than we heard a noise in the house, or beyond it. 'The officers!' said my father. 'Now you are all safe, and I shall soon come for you.'

"He stood a moment, seeming to hesitate, while my mother and the Duke prayed him to come down and close the trap; but at last he said, 'No; it were better my way,' and shut down the door.

"I heard a great clatter of barrel-staves falling on the trap. I think he had seen the need to take this precaution, and it was this made him run for us and for his friend a perilous risk; his fear, I mean, that unless hidden, the trap would easily be seen by any one who chanced to enter the upper cellar. I should have said that my father lifted the trap a little and cried, 'The good God help thee, Claire!' Then we were at once in darkness, and again the staves were replaced, as one could easily hear. I heard my mother sob, but the one-year-old baby she carried screamed loudly, and this, I think, took up her attention for a time. I was on the stone staircase when my father went by me saying, 'Be good to thy mother.' I sat still awhile, and, the baby ceasing to cry, we remained thus for a time silent in this appalling darkness, like hunted things, with the terror of the time upon us.

"It is a sad story, dear Duke. I wonder how you can wish to hear it again. And will my young friend draw the corks of these bottles, and be careful not to shake the wine?"

St. Maur, saying, "With pleasure, yes," went on to draw the corks.

"What a bouquet has that Chambertin!" said the Duke. "But go on, my friend."

"In a moment or so my mother exclaimed: 'There is something wrong. I must go and see. My husband was to come with us. It has long been so arranged.'

"With great difficulty the Duke persuaded her to run no farther risk. 'If,' he said, 'your husband has been arrested, you can do no good. If he has not, we shall soon hear, and I, myself, will seek to learn where he is.'

"This quieted her for a little while, and we sat still in the darkness, which seemed to grow deeper. I think it must have been an hour before any one spoke, but at times I could hear my mother sob. At last the baby woke up again and made doleful cries, so that the Duke said—and his was the first voice to break the long silence: 'Is there a way to make a light? It may quiet him.'

"My mother said, 'Yes'; and after groping about we found flint and steel, and

presently, with a little care, there was a bit of flame and a candle lit. I declare to you, it made things look the more dismal. Later it caused us all to feel a strange and causeless elation. My mother, who was a resolute woman, began to walk about, and the baby, having been given milk, grew quiet. We boys were set to work arranging the mattresses and blankets and all the material my father had by degrees made ready for this hour of need. There was food enough for a stay of many days, and as to wine, there was of that an abundance, and also a barrel of good water.

"After our brief task was over we two little fellows sat most of that long first day beside each other, rarely opening our lips. My mother lay on a mattress, trying to keep the babe quiet, for he used his lungs dangerously well. The Duke walked to and fro restlessly, and by and by carefully put his pistols in order and laid them on a cask. After some hours he became more tranquil and even gay, and kept us all sustained by his gentle goodness and sweet temper, laughing at our fears, recalling to my mother what hopeful words my father had used, and at last almost making her sure that no one would hurt so good a man.

"When the Duke looked at his jeweled watch, which had been used to number more pleasant hours, he told us it was night, and nine o'clock. My mother said prayers, and the candle having been put out, we all lay down and slept as we could. I must have slept well, for it was nine in the morning when I awakened, and I, for one, had to think a little to recover my orientation.

"In this dismal fashion we passed two days. Then, on the third, about noon, as we had heard no noise above us, the Duke and my mother thought we might look out to see if any one were about. This, as I shall tell you, proved a sad business, and had like to have caused our ruin. But of this later.

"The Duke went up the stair, and with difficulty lifted the trapdoor so as to see a little. As no one was in sight, he heaved off the staves my father had cast down, and at last got himself out into the upper cellar. Then he went thence into the plant-house and garden, and at last boldly entered the house, in which was no one, as it had been closed, and, as we learned long after, the seal of the Republic put on the door. In a half hour the Duke returned and took me back into the house, whence we carried a number of things much needed in our cave, such as more candles, and a blanket or two, although this was chiefly for precaution, since the cellar was never cold, nor, as I think of it, damp. We hurried back, and as we did so I asked the Duke about my father. But neither he nor my mother could tell why he had been arrested, as he had managed to keep in good relations with some of the Jacobins. It was quite common to hear of the head of a house being arrested, and then, within a day or two, of the women being likewise hurried to the common fate which awaited all suspects. The Duke seemed to think my father might have had some such fear for us, and desired to put us all in safety,

although how in the end this could be of use did not seem very clear.

"When we all got back to the cave and had shut the trap, I sat a long while much oppressed in my small mind; but so, too, were our elders, I fear. As to this my Duke here, he cried a little, but not so that any one knew but myself.

"In this way four miserable days and nights went by, and, thus imprisoned, we knew not what to do. We had waited long, hopeful of my father's return, and, *mon Dieu!* he came not at all. The Duke was for going forth again at night and some way escaping alone, fearing that to be caught in our company might more surely bring us into trouble when at last we should be forced, soon or late, to come out to the light. Meanwhile, this blackness, for it was not mere darkness, became more terrible than I can make any one comprehend. As I remember, there were long talks of what to do, with vain endings, and, in between, great, awful silences."

"I used to get frightened then," said the Duke, looking up from the fire. "One seemed so absolutely alone. I used to resist for a time, and at last put out a hand to take hold of your mother's skirt for company. Once or twice the poor baby screamed so loud that he had to be kept quiet by a little *eau de vie*, lest some one coming overhead should hear; for, indeed, in this vault his cries seemed like shouts, and one heard better because one could not see. Do you remember that, Des Illes? But I used to wish that baby would cry all day."

"Do I remember? Yes, indeed. Those were not days or things to be easily forgotten. But to go on. The fifth day, when we were all of us becoming distracted, a thing took place which settled some of our doubts. It may have been about six o'clock in the evening when we heard faint noises in the upper cellar. The Duke was first, I think, to notice them; then a footfall passed over the trap, and this was only too plain. The Duke caught my arm and said quietly, 'Come here,' and so saying, drew me to the foot of the stone stairs. This was about, as you know, ten feet high. I could see nothing, but I heard his step as he went up. Then he said, 'Here is a pistol. Be ready to hand it to me—so—so; do not let the powder fall from the pan. I have one pistol. If there are two men and you are quick, these will suffice. If there are three men, we are lost.' It was dark as I stood, for we never used candles save when we ate, and to quiet the baby. I reflected quickly that, as the Duke could not have put back the staves, they who were searching must easily find the trap; and so it was, for just as he said softly, 'Keep still every one,' the trap was lifted a little and a ray of blinding candle-light shot through the narrow space. For a moment I could see nothing because of the glare. Then the trap was carefully raised still higher, and we saw the figure of a kneeling man sustaining the door with his left hand. In the other he held a lantern and a canvas bag. Luckily for us all, the Duke was a person of calm courage. He had seen that the stranger was not an agent of police. 'If you move,

you are dead,' he cried, and the muzzle of a pistol on the man's breast made him for the time motionless, and perhaps quickened his wits, for he exclaimed: 'Great heavens! I am not a municipal. God forbid. I am only a thief. Be merciful, sir. I entered the house by a window, and now the officers have come in by a door and I shall be guillotined as an aristocrat.'

"'A pretty tale; I have half a mind to kill you,' said the Duke.

"'Pray the Lord keep the other half!' cried the thief.

"Upon this I heard my mother exclaim: 'No, no; let him come down.'

"'If you fire, I shall be dead, but your pistol will call these scoundrels. I have stolen only this bag of gold. Take it, sir. So saying, he let it fall on the head of this our Duke Henri, who, having crept near to listen, set up a dismal howl, because of the weight of a hundred gold louis.

"I heard the Duke, his father, call out, 'Idiot, hold your tongue! The animal is right. Come down, you rascal. I would not deny the foul fiend a refuge from these villains.'

"'Sir, you will never regret this good deed,' said the thief, and instantly two long legs were through the opening, as I stepped down to make way for our new lodger. The Duke was about to close the trap when the thief said, 'Permit me, sir,' and set about cleverly arranging the staves on the half-closed trap-door, in order that, as he let it fall, they might cover it at least in part.

"After this he descended, and, bowing in an awkward way, said, 'I am your humble servant, Madam'; and to the Duke, 'You have saved my life. It is a cheap article nowadays, but still—'

"'Enough, master thief; here am I, the Duke de St. Maur, and Madame, my friend's wife, and the baby, and these boys. Put out your lantern. God knows when we shall get out, or how this adventure will end; but, until it is over, you are a stranger within our gates, and we will feed you while our food lasts.' It seemed to me queer to be so near to a thief, but I heard my mother say something, and some one muttered an 'Ave'; it might have been the thief.

"After a little, the Duke asked him a question as to how he entered our house, and then my mother inquired if he had seen my father. He seemed a merry fellow, our thief, and so well pleased to be cared for and let live that by and by he laughed outright until the Duke bade him have a care. Nor was this at all a needless caution, because the next day, quite early on the sixth morning, we could too easily hear feet above us on the floor of the wine-vault. I heard the Duke's 'Hist!' and we were all as still as mice, except that the Duke, as before, gave me a pistol and went up the ladder to be ready. I, following him, waited a little further down. It must have been that they were making free with the wine, because some of it was spilled and ran through the trap and down my neck. It quite scared me, but in peril and in darkness a little thing will do that. One man

fell over the staves, but, as the Duke told us later, he swore as if hurt, and so, I fancy, did not chance to see our trap-door. All day long we prayed and listened and watched. When, at nightfall, all sounds were over, we resolved that the Duke should take a look outside, not knowing what to do or how otherwheres to find an exit we might think to use."

"And then," said the Duke to Des Illes, as he paused in his story.

"Ah me! and then,—you remember."

"Remember? I shall never forget it,—the trap could not be moved! When this dreadful thing was discovered, both our thief and the Duke got up high on the ladder, and, with heads on one side and heaving with their shoulders, failed to open it. It was quite in vain. The thief, as usual, took a gay view of the situation. They have, said he, rolled a cask of wine on to the trap. They will drink it up, or steal it by the gallon, and when the cask is lighter we can heave it off, or—'

"'Thou art a merry sinner,' said the Duke, and even my mother laughed, and we boys. The gay noise came back dismally, thus bottled up in the narrow vault. But when we began to reflect, we knew that we were buried alive. Our thief had no end of schemes. We would bore through the door with an auger, and then bore into the barrel and let the wine run out. 'But we have no auger,' said the Duke, 'and the door is covered with sheet-iron.' 'No matter, he would think; if he walked, he could think better,' and so he moved to and fro awhile in search of wisdom.

"By this time, because our young stomachs began to cry out, we lit a candle, and my mother gave us all our portions, while I sat on the ladder top so as to hear if any one came. For a little while we were strangely cheerful, and this I saw happen whenever we lit up our vault. The baby smiled, and we moved about and made believe it was a small matter, after all. As for our thief, he was a treasure of queer stories, and you could not help but laugh, even if you were desolate the minute after.

"Our thief had made ready his lantern, and, as I said, began to prowl about into corners, and at last stumbled over our Duke's legs.

"'*Diable!*' cried the Duke. 'Put out your light; we have few enough candles; and keep quiet, too. You are as uneasy as a cat of the streets.'

"'And I am but a street cat, Monsieur, and have wisdom enough to know that the lazy eat no mice.'

"'I don't see how your stumbling about this cellar will help us or you.'

"'Who knows, Monsieur? When you are in a scrape it is never well to keep quiet. I have been in many, and worse than this—perils by sea and land, and rope—I always get out, but—Ah me, to forget them is not easy.'

"'Rope!' said the Duke. 'Indeed—'

"'Yes; they hang a fellow for so little, nowadays. You will permit, Duke,

that I change the conversation; I avoid it usually. Indeed, I am careful not to tie my cravat too tight; it gives one a turn sometimes—a sort of prophetic hint.'

"'You are a droll devil,' laughed the Duke, 'and not bad company—where you can't run away with a purse. Do as you like.'

"'Thanks, Monsieur,' said the thief, and with no more words resumed a careful search, as it seemed to me, after nothing. Indeed, we young fellows laughed as he looked under and back of the casks. 'It is good to laugh,' he said, as we followed him about; 'but in my business, when there is no profit to be had, it is well to cultivate one's powers of observation.' After a while we tired of following him, and sat down; but he continued his search among the cobwebs—of which, trust me, there were enough even in those days.

"At last I saw him mount on top of some empty barrels at the far end of the cave. Unable to see behind them, he lowered his lantern between the casks and the wall of the cellar, and looked. Of a sudden he scrambled down and cried, waving his lantern: 'A thief for luck! A thief for luck!'

"'What! what!' exclaimed the Duke, rising. As to the thief, he knelt down at my mother's feet and said, looking in her face: 'Madame, God has sent you this thief to show you a way out of this grave.' My mother caught his arm and cried, 'Let this jesting cease.' He answered, 'I do not jest,' and we all leaped up and came to where he knelt.

"'What is this?' said the Duke; on which our thief turned to the end of the vault and quite easily spun aside two of the casks.

"'Look!' he said. To our surprise, there were several boards set against the wall, and between their joinings came a current of air which flared a candle-flame. 'There is a space beyond,' said the Duke. 'Is it the catacombs? And was this vault a part? See the masonry here, and over it these boards nailed fast into the cracks.' 'Horrible!' cried my poor mother. I had heard that all of the contents of the Cemetery of the Innocents had been tumbled into some of the openings of these catacombs. '*Mon Dieu*,' I cried; 'they are full of the dead!'

"'It is the live rascals I care not to meet,' laughed the thief; 'as for the dead, they are dead. All their wants are supplied. They neither steal nor kill—and there are ways out—ways out—I am sure.'

"'Pray God, my good thief, that it may be as you say,' said my mother; 'but *mon Dieu!* one may wander far, they say, in these old quarries.' 'Let us see,' said the thief, and with a strong hand he tore away board after board, the rusted nails breaking and the rotten wood falling at his feet. There, before him and us, was a great, dark gap in the wall. Our thief held his lantern within it.

"'I see little; there is a descent. I must go and find out.'

"'Oh, be careful! You may fall—may die,' said my mother.

"'You have said that, Madame, which would send me smiling on a worse

errand. Since I was of this lad's bigness, no one has so much as cared if I lived or died. I was a mere dog of the streets whom all men kicked.'

"'Poor fellow,' said my mother. 'We are alike of the company of misfortune, and perhaps from this day you may forever turn from evil.'

"'Let us waste no more time,' said the Duke; 'but have a care, or we shall lose you.'

"'If he had a long string which he might unroll,' said I. 'I saw that in a book.'

"'Good,' said the Duke, 'if we had it; but we have not.'

"'But we have,' said the thief. 'Here is Madame's knitting-ball. The lad shall hold the end, and I shall be the fish at the other end, and unroll it as I go.'

"Upon this, I, very proud, was given the end to hold, and our thief took his lantern and went on, we watching him until the light was lost because of his turning a corner. He might have been gone half an hour when he came back. My mother said to him: 'We feared for you. And now, what is your name? For if out of jest we have called you Mr. Thief, that is not to be done any more.'

"Upon this he said his name was François, and that in the catacombs he had gotten into a labyrinth of wet passages and seen no light anywhere. 'Indeed,' he said, 'if we venture in and lose power to come back whither we started, we may never get out alive. What with the bewilderment of many crossings, underground ways, and the armies of rats, it is a mad resort.' This notion of the rats, I confess, made me quail. So the end of it was that our new hope became but a new despair. *Mon Dieu*! 'T is a long tale."

Both Pierce and I declared our interest, which was in truth real, and he went on.

"The coming of the seventh day still found us reasonably well provisioned, and our elders discussing ways of escape, but finding none available. About noon of this day occurred an event which put an end to these discussions. All the morning there had been noises overhead, and we were kept in continual alarm. At last they were heard just over the trap, and we began to hope they were moving the cask. This, indeed, was the case. They made a great racket. To us underneath, the sounds above were such as to make us wonder what they could be doing. I suppose it was all caused by rolling the full barrels about to get at the bungs. After a while it ceased; but in an hour or so the Duke cried: 'On guard! Be ready! Quick, my other pistol!' As he stood he had now one in each hand. Instantly the trap was pulled up without hesitation or caution. There were several lighted candles standing on the barrels, and thus I saw, stooping over the opening, lantern in hand, a big municipal guard. Instantly there was the flash and roar of the Duke's pistol, and the huge brute, with a cry, pitched head down into the open trap. He rolled off the Duke's shoulder, and as he tumbled over on to me, I half fell, half leaped, and he came down with an awful crash, his head striking the floor

of stone. As he fell the thief threw himself upon him. My mother cried, '*Mon Dieu!*' There was a pause—when the thief called out, 'He is dead.' As he spoke I ran up the stone stair, too curious to be afraid, and peeped under the Duke's left arm. The smoke was thick, and I saw nothing for a moment. Then a second officer ran down the stone steps of the upper cellar and drew a pistol. He had a large lantern, and as he turned it on us the Duke fired. I saw the man's right arm sink and the pistol drop; and now a strange thing happened. For a moment the man stood leaning back against a great cask. The hand in which he clutched the lantern shook violently as with a spasm. '*Diable*! That is strange,' cried the Duke. As I stood beside him in fear and wonder, the wounded officer swayed to the left, and I heard a gurgling noise and saw rush out under the man's arm a great gush of red fluid—as it seemed to me blood. Then of a sudden the man doubled up and came down in a heap on the floor. I heard him groan piteously.

"Cried the Duke, 'Stay there.' This was to me. 'Be still, all of you.' Indeed, I had no mind to move; one dead man above and one below were guards enough. The Duke went by the municipal without more than a look, saying, as he set foot on the upper stair, 'I have shot that man and the wine-barrel too. *Sacré bleu*, what a waste!' So it was good Bordeaux, and not blood. This reassured me. In a minute more I heard the Duke say cheerfully: 'All goes well. A lantern, quick! There is no one else.'

"Our thief was ready in a moment, and the two, with my small person in the rear, turned to consider the Jacobin. 'Dead, I think,' said the Duke. 'And if not, it were wise to attend to his case,' said our thief. 'No, no,' I heard my mother cry from the top of the staircase; 'we will have no more bloodshed.'

"Neither Duke nor thief said anything in reply, but laid the man in as easy a posture as could be found for one with an ounce of lead clean through him. After this they went down to look at the other officer. He was past doubt, and dead enough. 'And now,' said the Duke, 'even if we bury these two, which Madame makes impossible, other devils will infest the house, and in a few hours we shall be one and all lost to hope.'

"'There are the catacombs,' said the thief, 'and nothing else. The sooner we leave, the better our chances. No one will follow us, Monsieur.'

"'But shall we ever get out of these caves?' said my mother.

"'To stay is certain death,' returned Duke Philip.

"'And to fly by that great opening uncertain death,' said the thief. 'I like better the uncertain.'

"'We will go,' said my mother.

"Upon this the Duke bade us carry the utmost loads of wine and eatables we could support. The thief packed baskets, and strung bottles of wine and milk on cords so as to let them hang from our shoulders. Each had also a blanket, and

we were thus pretty heavily loaded, but the thief carried nearly as much as all the rest together. The Duke sat down a little while to reload his own arms and those taken from the dead guard, and soon we followed one another through the great black hole in mournful procession. With one dim lantern flashing cones of light here and there on the dripping, moldy walls, we went down a slope and along a tunnel not broad enough for two to walk abreast. At the first halt I saw my mother whisper to Duke Philip, and soon after he gave to our thief the sword and pistol of the dead guard. Before and behind us was darkness. We may have gone two hundred yards, the Duke urging haste, when we came to a sharp turn in the tunnel, and stopped as if of one accord.

"The Duke cried, 'Forward! March, boys! A fine adventure, is n't it?' His cheerfulness put spirit into us all, and even the baby gave a little laugh, as if pleased; but why babies laugh no man knows, nor woman either. As for the Duke, he nor we had the least idea of where we were going. As we started down the long stone corridor, the thief cried out, 'Wait a little. I am a fool! A thief of my experience not to know better! Ye saints! An empty bottle is not more stupid!'

"'Hold!' cried the Duke, as the thief darted back up the tunnel.

"'Yes, Monsieur.' But our thief made no pause, and was heard running madly along the stone passage out of which we had just turned. '*Peste!*' said the Duke. You will never see that rascal again. He will buy his own neck with ours. We shall do well to push on and leave no traces behind us.'

"'No,' said my mother, as we stood staring after the man. 'I know not why he went, but he will come again.' And so we waited, and some fifteen minutes went by. At last said Duke Philip, impatient, 'Did any one ever trust a thief, Madame? Pray remember at least that I am free from blame.' He was vexed.

"'A thief has been trusted before,' said my mother, in her quiet way.

"'That was for the next world, not this one. We shall regret.'

"'No,' laughed the dear lady; 'for here he is, Duke.'

"He came in quick, almost breathless haste, and hardly able to say, 'Oh, it was worth while, Madame. I have the bag of gold we left, and that brigand's clothes. That I should have left a bag of gold! I of all men!'

"'*Diantre!*' cried the Duke. 'What do you want with the clothes? Are we about to start a rag-shop? Come, we have lost time!'

"I heard our thief mutter as he fell in at the rear of the line, back of us boys: 'He has no imagination, that Duke. He would make no figure as a thief. *Mon ami!*' (that was to me), 'do you know the toughest job in the world?'

"'No,' I said, laughing.

"'To undress a gentleman who has departed this life. He does n't give you the least assistance.'

"I stumbled on, and was thinking over this queer statement when the Duke halted us in a broader place whence three stone passages led off at various angles.

"'A *carrefour*, and which to follow?' said the thief.

"'It cannot matter much,' returned the Duke. I thought he did not like the thief's assuming to take part in our counsels. Just then a tremendous noise like thunder broke over us, and rumbled away in strange echoes down the stone alleys before us.

"'Ye saints!' cried my mother, as a yet louder thunder resounded. 'What is that?'

"'We are under a street,' said our thief. 'It is the noise of wagons.'

"'That might be a guide,' said my mother.

"'Of a truth, yes, Madame,' exclaimed our thief. But the Duke, taking no notice, said, 'Let us take this road to the left.' The thief said nothing, but shouldered his load, and we went on as before. It was no time to argue; nor, indeed, did it seem to matter which way of the many we chose, so we followed after our Duke, little conscious, we boys, of the greatness of our peril. I suppose we must have gone for ten minutes along a narrowing tunnel, when my mother called back to us to stop, and the Duke said, 'We are in a wet place. But,' he added, presently, 'it is not deep; let us go on,' and we started afresh.

"As we moved ankle-deep in water, a strange sound, like the fall of something, broke out behind us, and a great rush of damp wind went by us like a live thing.

"'Halloa!' cried our thief. 'Keep still!' and so saying, hid the lantern under the skirt of his coat. I was dreadfully scared, for these dark caverns were full of mysterious noises. As yet we had heard none like this which now we heard. In the dark I seized the thief's coat-tail for company. At intervals there were lesser noises, and when at last they ceased, the Duke cried out, 'Heavens! What was that?'

"'I will see, Monsieur,' said the thief. 'I shall not go far.' This time the Duke made no remonstrance. The thief was away not more than five minutes. He left the lantern beside my mother.

"'Well?' said she, as he reappeared.

"'Madame,' he answered, the tunnel from the wine-cellar has fallen in: a great tumble of stone fills up all the way.'

"'And to go back is impossible,' said the Duke.

"'Heaven has willed for us that we go on, and at least now no one can pursue us,' said my mother.

"'That is so,' said the Duke; and we moved along, perceiving that the way grew broader until we were standing in a space so great that no walls could be seen.

"'And now where are we?' said the Duke. 'Light us another candle.' When this was done, we saw that the great chamber, quarried out in past centuries, was too vast to give us sight of all of it, or to enable us to get a notion of its height. Close by us a mighty pyramid of bones of men stood in the mid space, as if these had been cast down through some opening overhead, but long since closed. These were the dead of hundreds of years. There was no odor of decay, but only a dull, musty smell, like that of decayed cheese. Here and there on this great pile were faint tufts of bluish light, seen only where the lantern-light did not chance to fall. I was just getting a little used to this horrible sight when, as our steps disturbed the base of the pyramid, a good fourth of it came rattling down with crash and clatter, and dozens of tumbled skulls rolled by us and were lost to view in the darkness. This noise and movement alarmed not us alone; for scarce was it half over when myriads of rats ran out from among the bones and fled away. This pretty nearly made an end of my courage; and, indeed, these beasts were so big and so many that had they been brave we should, I think, have fallen an easy prey.

"My mother was trembling all over, as I could feel; but she laughed a queer little laugh when François said it was a mercy they were not mice, because ladies were afraid of these, but not, he had heard, of rats. As we had been kept in motion, by this time we were across this woeful space, and groping along the wall for a way out. Finding none, we went back whence we came, and started afresh, taking the extreme righthand passage, which seemed to lead, as we guessed, toward the Luxembourg. Every few yards were ways to left or right, some hard to crawl through, but most of such size that the Duke, a tall man, could walk in them erect. We saw no more bones, but rats in legions. How they lived, who can say? They may have come from the cellars of houses overhead. When we crossed beneath streets, the immense noise of the vehicles told us this much, but hours went by with no sound but the scamper of rats, or the dull dripping of water from the roof. In some places it was a foul-smelling rain, and in one place a small rill fell down the wall and ran off along the passage we were in.

"I do not know, Monsieur,"—and here the old gentleman, being next to me, leaned over and laid a hand on my knee,—"I do not know how I can ever make you or any one feel the increasing horror of day after day of darkness. When we walked, it was often with no light until the thief, who kept touching the wall, would tell us there was a passage to the right or left. Then we would light the candle and decide which way to go.

"This had been a sad day and full of more danger than we lads knew of, and of many fears; but if the day was bad, the night I shall never forget. The Duke said it was seven o'clock, and time to eat. We took our rations eagerly enough, and then the thief wrapped up Henri and me in blankets, and we two poor little

dogs fell to discussing where we were, and when we should get out. At last we slept, and were awakened only by the Duke's shaking us. We got up from our damp bed, pretty well tired of our adventure. But the Duke declared we should soon be out in the air; and so, on this our seventh morning, we set forth again. As the thief had some positive notion of direction, and the Duke had none, our good thief took the lead, and would have it that we boys should come beside or after him. Except for his rattle of jokes and thieves' slang and queer stories well worth remembering, I think we boys would have given out early on that weary day.

"My mother moved along, saying nothing, but the Duke now and then flung a skeptical comment at our thief, who nevertheless kept on, insisting that we must soon come into daylight.

"At last the Duke called a halt about five in the evening, and, disheartened, in total silence we ate our meal. We decided to go no further until morning. I drew Henri close up to me, and tucked in the blankets and tried to sleep. Unluckily, the water-drops fell thick, and the rats were so bold and fierce that I was afraid. Assuredly, they lacked no courage, for during my brief lapses into slumber they stole out of my coat pocket a bit of cheese, a biscuit, and a roll of twine. Once the baby set up such a yell that the thief, who stayed on guard, lit a candle, and then we saw that a rat had bitten the little fellow's finger.

"About six o'clock our thief called, 'Breakfast is served,' and we tumbled out of our covers, dazed. 'The sun is up,' said the thief, as he lit the candle; and this was our eighth day since my father left us shut in the cave. The candles were giving out, despite our most economical care, and this day we ate in darkness. I suppose this may have upset me, since I began to have for the first time strange fears. I wanted to keep touch of some one. I thought I felt things go by me. I was afraid, and yet neither as a child nor as a man have I been called timid. Indeed, I was not altogether sorry when the baby cried; and, as the thief said, he cried very solid. Somehow I also felt that my mother was growing weak, and was feeling the long strain of doubt and danger and deep darkness. Even the Duke grew downcast, or at least ceased from his efforts to encourage my mother and to cheer up his son and me. Our thief alone never gave up. He insisted on taking the child from my mother, and crooned to it amazing lullabies. And to us he sang queer ballads, and once, when we rested for two hours, he told us some astonishing tales such as I shall some day delight to relate to you. They were very queer stories, I assure you.

"When our sorry meal was over, and the wine was circulating hope with our blood, our thief proposed to try to take those ways which seemed to lead along under streets. I do not see now why this should have seemed desirable, but it did, and we were busy all that day following this clue, if such it were, by

waiting until we heard the sound of wagons. It was time we got somewhere; for although we still had a fair allowance of food, it was no more than would serve with economy for two days longer. Still more alarming was it that our candles were giving out.

"About five that afternoon of July 28th we came to a full stop where a long tunnel ended in a *cul-de-sac*. It was a weary way back, and as for us boys, we held on to one another and choked down our tears. The thief seemed to understand, for when we again got to the turn we had last taken, he gave us in the dark a good dose of wine, and saying, as he lit the lantern candle, 'Rest, Madame; I must see where now to go,' he ran down the next alley of stone, and we heard the sound of his feet until they were lost. Overhead the rumble and roar of wagons were no longer heard, and the stillness was as the darkness, complete.

"On the morning of the day before, these noises now and then shook down small fragments of stone, to our great alarm. Once the thief said, 'If only a nice little house would drop down, and we could just go up-stairs and walk out.' In fact, many houses had thus fallen into these caves, and it was by no means an impossible thing. It served to season our fears with a laugh; but since then the constant silence had made us hope we were going out into the suburbs and toward some opening. Alas! it came not, and now when our thief left us we were so dispirited that for a time no one said a word of his sudden departure. Then the Duke, seeming to understand how we felt, said, 'He will come back soon'; and my mother, whose sweet hopefulness was sapped by this long fatigue, answered, 'Or perhaps he will not. God knows.' Even I, a lad, heard her with astonishment, because she was one who never doubted that all things would come out right, and all people would do what they should.

"I liked our thief, and when an hour went by, and there was borne in on me the idea that he had deserted us, I burst into tears. Just as my mother drew me to her, saying, 'Do not cry, my boy. God will take care of us,' I heard our thief, beside me, cry cheerily, 'This way, Madame. I will show you the light of day.' As we heard him we all leaped up. He cried out, 'This way, and now to the left, Monsieur le Duc; and now this way,' and so through several alleys until he paused and said, 'See! The light of day,' and certainly there was, a little way off, a pale reflection against the gray stone wall beyond us.

"'I thought,' said our thief, 'that as we turned into the *impasse* I felt a current of air. I was not sure enough to speak, and I went just now to see whence it came. We have gone under the Luxembourg or perhaps Val-de-Grâce, and past the barrier.' Then he explained that this cross-passage, whence came the light, was short and tortuous, and was partly blocked by debris; that it opened into a disused quarry; and that it was beyond the city barrier. Upon this, it seemed needful to think over what was best to be done when once we were out; but my

mother cried, 'Wait a little,' and knelt down, as we all did, and said aloud a sweet and thankful prayer for our safety, and concerning the thief God had so strangely sent to help us in our extremity.

"As she ended, I looked at the man, and as we stood I saw that now the rascal was shedding tears. A moment later he passed his sleeve across his eyes, and said: 'If it please you, Monsieur le Duc, let us go to the opening and see more of the neighborhood.' We went with them a little way, and stood waiting. It was so wonderful and so lovely to get a glimpse even of the fading light of day! It came straight up the cave from the west. We made no objection to being left alone, and just stayed, as it were, feeding on the ruddy glare, and blinking at it like young owlets. Every now and then my mother turned to St. Maur or me, and smiled and nodded, as much as to say, 'We have light.'

"Before long they came back, and there was then a long talk of which we did not hear all, but not for want of eager ears. This council of war being over, François went back into the caves, and soon after returned laughing, and dressed in the clothes of the unlucky municipal guard.

"'One must not criticize what one inherits,' he said. 'The pantaloons are brief, and the waistcoat is of such vastness as I would choose to wear to-day to a good dinner.'

"As the light was now quite good, I saw this comical figure as I had not seen him before. He was tall and gaunt, with a nose of unusual length, and was very ruddy for so thin a man. He seemed to be all the time on a broad grin. He looked queer enough, too, in the short pantaloons and baggy waistcoat.

"'Now,' he said, 'I am to tie the Duke's hands behind his back. He is, you see, an aristocrat I am taking to Sainte Pélagie. Madame his wife and these children follow as I shall order. Poor things! they do not want to escape.'

"At this the Duke, whom most things amused, submitted to be tied, but laughed heartily at the comedy, as he called it.

"'*Dieu!*' said the thief. 'This is an affair of all our lives. See, Monsieur; you have but to turn the wrist, and you are free, in case of need.'

"The Duke, still smiling, promised to be a perfect and indignant aristocrat, and our thief entreated us all to look as sorrowful as we could. Of this lesson, my mother, poor lady, had small need; but we boys had recovered our spirits with sight of day, and when the thief besought us and showed us how we were to look, we were seized with such mirth that the Duke at last bade us understand that it was no laughing matter, and we promised to act our parts. Finally we were made to fill our pockets with the most of the gold found in the bag, and the rest the Duke and my mother stowed away, while the thief took the Duke's pistols, and, leaving the others, girded on the dead man's sword.

"'Now, guard yourselves,' said the thief, as we went out of the catacombs

and across the debris of stone, stumbling, still unaccustomed to the light, and so down a slope and around a pond in the middle of the unused quarry. On the far side a road led out between the broken walls of stone. Here the thief halted. 'Have you a handkerchief, Madame?' he said. 'Use it. Weep if ever you did. Never may tears be of so much use again. And you, lads, if you laugh we are as good as dead.'

"'What day is it?' said my mother, and the tears were quite ready enough.

"'It is July the twenty-eighth,' answered the Duke.

"'Oh, no,' said I. 'Mama, it is the 10th Thermidor.'

"'That is better,' said our thief. 'Let us move on.'

"The quarry road opened into a lane, and here were market-gardens and rare houses, and a deserted convent or two, and a network of crossways through which François directed the Duke, who walked ahead, as if under arrest. We followed them anxiously beneath the ruddy evening sky, wondering, as we went, to see scarce a soul. The Rue d'Enfer was the first street we came upon as we left the suburban lanes; but still it, too, was deserted. The Duke remarked on this singular absence of people; but as we were now near a small cabaret François called out, 'Get along, aristocrat.' The Duke said some wicked words, and we went on. A man came out of the café and cried after us: 'Family of the guillotine! *À bas les aristocrats!*' and would François have a *petit verre*? But our thief said no, he was on duty, and our comedy went on.

"It was necessary to pass the Barriere d'Enfer, where usually was a guard and close scrutiny. To our surprise, there were but two men. One of them said. 'Ah, Citizen, what have you here?'

"'Aristocrats under arrest—a *ci-devant* duke.'

"'Have an eye to these,' said the officer to his fellow; 'and you, Citizen, come into the guardroom and register their names.' 'Certainly,' said the thief, and we were set aside while he passed into the room with the guard. After some ten minutes he came out alone very quietly, and said to the other guard, 'It is all correct and in order, Citizen,' waited to tease a black cat on the door-step, asked the hour, and at last, giving the Duke a rude push, cried out, 'Get on there, aristocrat! I have no time to waste.'

"At this we moved away, and he hurried us along the Rue d'Enfer past the Observatory. A little further he struck hastily to the left into the Rue Notre Dame des Champs. By the Rue de Cimetière, along past the Nouvelle Foire St. Germain, he hurried us, and hardly gave us leave to breathe until we came out amongst the trampled gardens and tall alleys of box back of the Luxembourg. Never pausing, he wound in and out, until by these roundabout ways he came forth into the Rue Vaugirard. As we went across the great ruined gardens, a few people scattered among the parterres looked at us, as if curious, and whispered to one another.

Our thief was still in great haste.

"'Must I get you a grand carriage to help you?' he cried. 'Get on, aristocrat! Soon the Republic will give you a carriage; come along. Make haste, or we are lost,' he added in a lower voice.

"'What the deuce is it?' said the Duke. The thief's uneasiness was visible enough.

"'*Mille tonnerres*! Duke,' said the thief; 'that child of Satan at the barrier knew me.'

"'And what then?'

"'Now he does not know me.'

"'*Mon Dieu!*' exclaimed the Duke. 'You are a brave *garçon*.'

"As we entered the Rue de Varennes, an old woman glared at the false municipal, crying out, 'Thy day is over, accursed!' She shook her fist at him. Not understanding, we hurried on. As I looked back, her gray hair was hanging about her; she stood at the wayside, shaking her upraised hands. I could not comprehend what it meant.

"Here, as we went on, for the first time we met great numbers of people, all coming from the river. A few were talking in suppressed voices; and some, turning, stared after us as we went by. Most were silent, as folks not often are in France. At one place it was not easy to get on as fast as our thief desired. In place of quickly making way for an officer, as was usual in those days, the people in our path jostled the municipal, or made room sullenly. At last François cried out to some young fellows who blocked our way, 'Let these suspects go by, citizens; they are under arrest.' This was like a spark to powder. A woman cried out, 'Poor children! Are they yours, Citoyenne?' My mother, bewildered, said, 'Yes, yes.' Then a young man near me shouted, 'Down with tyrants!' Our thief was puzzled. 'Hold, there!' he cried. 'What is this?' 'Down with the Terror! Robespierre is dead.' And as if it were a signal, the great crowd, ever increasing, cried out, 'He is dead! Robespierre is dead!'

"In a moment we were pushed about and separated. François, our thief, was cuffed and kicked hither and thither. The silence became an uproar of wild cries. 'He is dead! Robespierre is dead!' It was a great madness of release from fear, and a tumult of cries, sharp and hoarse—an outburst of human emotion, sudden and strange to see. Near me a woman fell in a fit. Men ran about yelling, 'He is dead!' All was confusion and tears and mad laughter, any one embracing the citizen next to him. There were others who ran here and there through the crowd, jumping up and down, or catching some woman and whirling her as if in a dance. I lost sight of the Duke, and Mama, and the thief, who kept hold of this my friend; but no one of them all did I see again until late that night.

"As I was now where I knew my way, I went to and fro, afraid to ask ques-

tions, until I got to the quay. There I saw a lad of my own years, and it being by this time quite near to dark, I felt that I had a good chance to run at need. 'Halloa!' I said. 'I am a boy from the country. What is the news?'

"'Oh, a fine sight, and you have missed it. They have cut off the heads of Robespierre and Henriot and twenty more. He had nankeen breeches and a blue coat, and my father says that is the end of the Terror. You ought to have got there three hours ago. Chop—chop—like carrots.'

"Now I was old enough to have heard much of Robespierre, and to have some idea of the great relief his death might mean. So I thanked my news-teller, and ran as fast as I could go to my home, in this present house. I stood, however, a moment, uneasy, at the opening of the long covered way. Of a sudden I screamed, for a man caught me by the arm. *Mon Dieu*! It was our neighbor, the charcutier opposite.

"He said, 'Have no fear, my lad. Fear is dead to-day. Get thee home; they look for thee. Robespierre is dead. *À bas les Jacobins!*'

"'And my father is here?' I heard him cry, 'Yes,' as he caught me up and ran with me along the court, kissing me. And there, at the door, was my mama, and behind her Duke Philip and his son, and, to my joy, the thief in short breeches. There was much to say as to how my father had made believe he was the Duke, to give us a chance to escape a search, and how, long before the miscreant's death, he had been released through the help of Fouquier, and came home to find us all gone. It was, in fact, the day after we fled from the cave that he was put in possession of his house. When the municipal who went with him as a matter of form came into the sitting-room where now we are, my father said, 'Wait and let me give you a glass of good wine. I will fetch it.' So saying, he took a lantern and went across the garden in deadly terror and anxiety, not dreaming but what he would find us in the lower cave. When he saw the trap open in the floor of the plant-house, he was filled with dread, and quickly descended to the upper wine-cellar. There was the municipal the Duke had wounded, lying dead in a great pool of blood and wine; for the ball had gone through him and tapped a great cask of wine, of which, indeed, I think I spoke. My father then opened the trap in the floor of the cellar, and went down the steps. A great wind came through the opening in the wall, to his surprise. He called, but none answered. At the foot of the stone stair lay the naked body of the municipal whom the Duke killed outright with his first pistol. Imagine my father's perplexity on finding the gap in the wall leading into the great dark labyrinth of the catacombs, and the rush of damp, malodorous air, and the black gulf beyond, and the answerless silence when he called.

"He came up at once with a bottle, and made fast the traps and covered them with rubbish. Then he gave the officer his drink and a handful of assignats,

which may have been five francs, and after that sat down to think. *Eh bien!* it is a long tale, and here comes supper.

"Another day you shall hear how my father carried the dead officers into the catacombs and left them there, and of two dangerous quests he made in those caves in search of us, and of a strange adventure which befell him. On Sunday week come and dine, and hear it all."

"It is most interesting," I said.

"And this is the house, and we were in the cave," said Pierce.

"And," said I, "that was your mother's glove we saw moldering on the cask, where she left it?"

"Yes. A few years ago we found in a corner the baby's rattle. The little fellow died last June, an old man, and the mother and the good, brave Duke are gone. And now you will sup with his son and grandson."

"Ah," exclaimed young St. Maur. "Here is François and supper." Upon this the long, lean man who had admitted us said, "Monsieur is served. I shall carry in the wine." And he added, to me, "Monsieur may have let fall his handkerchief," and, so saying, he returned it, lying on a salver. Upon this the Duke and the rest of them laughed outright, but made haste to explain at once.

"François," said Des Illes, "will you never be old enough to acquire a little virtue? My dear M. Michel, we have had our good thief François with us all these days, ever since that adventure in the cave. He has money in bank, but to steal a handkerchief now and then he cannot resist. I must say, he always returns it."

"Monsieur will have his little jest," said François. "The supper waits." With this he left us.

"What a delightful character!" said Pierce. "And did he really pick my friend's pocket?"

"Assuredly," said the Duke. "For many years he used now and then to ask a holiday. He commonly came back rather forlorn, and apt for a while to keep the house and be shy of gendarmes. It was our belief that he went off to get a little amusement in his old fashion. I suspect that he got into serious trouble once, but Des Illes is secretive."

"And how old is he?" said I.

"That no man knows," returned our host, rising. "To be asked his age is the one thing on earth known to annoy him. He says time is the only thief without honor among other thieves."

"Queer, that," said I, as our host rose. "The old have commonly a strange pride in their age."

"I have none," laughed the Duke.

"This way," said Des Illes, and we followed him into a pretty dining-room, and sat down below a half-dozen canvases of men and women of the days of the

Regency.

It was a delightful little supper, with clarets of amazing age and in perfect condition. Toward the close, Des Illes retired for a few minutes to add the last charm to what the younger St. Maur called the toilette of the salad. When we had praised it and disposed of it, Des Illes said to me: "Monsieur, our good fortune has brought you here to-night, on the evening when once in each year we sup together in the mourning costume which may have excited your curiosity."

To this we both confessed, and Des Illes added: "On this day we, who are among the few who remember the Terror, meet because it is January the twenty-first. On this day died Louis Sixteenth. You will join us, I trust, in a glass of older wine in remembrance of our dead King." Thus speaking, he rose and himself took from the mantel-shelf a bottle. "It is of the vintage of 1793, an old Burgundy. Its name I do not know, but, as you see, each bottle was marked by my father with a black ribbon."

Standing beside me, he filled our glasses, the Duke's, that of St. Maur, and last his own. Pierce and I rose with the rest. The Duke said, "The King, to his memory." and threw the glass over his shoulder, that no meaner toast might be drunk from it. I glanced at Pierce, and we did as they had done.

"It shows its age." said Des Illes, "but still holds its bouquet. Fading—fading!"

"One would scarce know it for the wine we knew when it and we were young," said the Duke.

"Know it?" said Des Illes. "Ah me, dear Duke, if you yourself, aged twenty-five, were to walk in just now and say, '*Bon jour*, Duke, how is myself,' would you know him, think you?"

"*Pardie*, my friend; you have ghostly fancies. Give us some younger wine and a gayer jest."

"With all my heart," said Des Illes.

"Let it be the Clos Vougeot of '20," said the younger St. Maur. "It was with that wonderful vintage that I made my first entry into the highest society of the great wines."

"A fine seigneur is that," said Des Illes.

"It reminds me rather of some grande dame," returned St. Maur. "There is something haughty about the refinement of a high-caste Burgundy: a combination of decisive individual quality with good manners."

"How pretty that is!" said Pierce. "The good manners of a wine!"

"And is n't champagne just a bit like a grisette?" laughed the Duke. "But a Margaux like this, or the Romance I see yonder, are grandees, as my friend has said; and there might be more to say of them, but I leave the rest to your fancy. A little more Burgundy, Monsieur?"

As is, alas, true concerning most of the pleasant meals I remember, I can recall but faint reminiscences of the bright talk of that memorable supper.

The younger St. Maur told us a pretty story of a vineyard wooing; a thing so delicate and idyllic that I shall not dare to take it out of its social frame for you. Later, Des Illes stood up and in a queer, creaky tenor sang (and by no means ill) the song the girls sing when they trample out the juice of the grapes in the great vats. Upon this Pierce quoted:

Pink feet that bruise
The gold-green grapes of Andalouse.

I rashly tried to put it into French, and was much complimented upon what I knew to be a sorry failure.

I have a misty recollection of what came after, of old-time jests, of levities as to the Corsican, and, too, a pretty story the Duke told us of the fairy vineyards near to Dijon, which only a woman who loves has ever seen. I seem now, as I write of this delightful night, to see it all again: the little old gentleman; the clear-cut face of the Duke; his son, cynical and handsome; the sheen of jet; the somber, picturesque dresses; thief François behind Des Illes's chair, ruddy, gaunt, not less than ninety, with a smile of the same age. As I try to recall it, I remember—do I remember?—the flavor of that Clos Vougeot, and hear again the courteous voice of the Duke: "A little more Burgundy, Monsieur?"

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