

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers*, May 30, 1891 to February 6, 1892)

The Wail of the Wine man

In vino veritas. Listen, therefore, unto this true tale of sorrow, the beginning thereof and the end thereof. In the night season of the club there took place a choosing of standards to provide that which should inwardly rejoice the club men. And it came to pass that a certain man was chosen steward, and the man, in the simplicity of his heart was mightily uplifted thereat. But there came unto him a man of flame hiding a wily heart beneath a guileless countenance, claiming to be the senior of the stewards. His speech flowed from his lips like honey, but his words were the words of authority. "Take," said he, "the stewardship of the wine. I was the best wine man the club ever had, you will not do so well, but you shall have my advice."

The heart of the new steward was strong within him, and with bitter memories of club wine goading him to action, he accepted the trust and entered forth with upon the thorny path of the reformer. Ere many suns alas, happy days! had passed, the wine man wended his way to a certain compounder of liquors called Brachman. Sweet was the greeting of Brachman, and, hard and though he was by many sad spectacles of fallen wine man, a tear stood in his eye, as he mentally traced the doom of this new victim of club poverty. The wine man boldly accused this vendor of vice and vaunted himself against the extreme bitterness of the wine that he himself had drunk from the mixing vats of Brachman. No anger now disturbed the new smiling face of the importer of California Rhine wine. "You don't like the wine?" said he. Come back in the store and I will dispatch my minion who will fetch wine that is wine." And the wind that was then tasted had at least the semblance of the foreign juice of the grape.

The heart of the wine man leaped within him, as he thought of the joy to come in the club when this new wine era should have begun. Then the wine man struck a snag. As when a ship upon the goodly Ohio smiteth upon a tree that reclineth aslant upon the stream, and the terrified boat men cry aloud for succor, and with difficulty, if at all, rescue their ship from the angry Waters.

So upon the evening of the champagne dinner, did the wine man collide with the treasurer of the club, Terrible was the ire of the treasurer. "Dost thou think that thou, oh new and presumptuous wine man, art the first to seek better wine? Nay, 'tis the evil way of all wine men, and thou even as they, must come down from thy high horse, else will the day of retribution be not long delayed. The fact is, B, the club can't afford to drink decent wine. The treasurer is a man of weight, with whom one would not gladly cope in man-ennobling strife, and the heart of the wine man quailed within him. The light of that mysterious doubled decked lamp in

the ceiling grew dim before his eyes, Long did he ponder sitting apart, and chew the cud of reflection, nor did there seem to him to be a speedy end to his troubles.

A sadder, but wiser man, the wine man laid aside his fond ambitions; and, with the ghoulish laughter of the senior trustee ringing in his ears, he sorrowfully returned to the ways of worldly wisdom – and execrable wine, breathing this prayer to Bacchus:

“O looser of cares! forgive this yielding to the violence of money bags. We thank thee, if it be thou who hast also given us this gift - we heartily thank thee that thou hast given us beer.”

J. R. Bishop

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Theo Kemper Editor