

Why, she was forty-one, she told him. Yes, actually!
"Bien sûr!" She knitted away.

"Impossible! What, actually? Then you must have been born very young?"

She was a baby when she was born, she assured him.

"I can't believe it, Madame! If you are forty-one now, you must have been twenty at birth," he said, inconsequently. "And you cooked where you came from, I feel sure."

"How? What does M'sieur mean?" she asked, bewildered.

"My dear Madame, you cook so celestially," he said.

"But, but——" She did not understand, she said. She cooked with charcoal, always. Anyhow, she was sure she was forty-one.

"Then Madame will be very wise?"

She hoped so, she said, lifting up her knitting to count the stitches. She tried to be wise. Bien sûr!

"Madame being wise, she will know where Château Royal is to be found?" Still jestingly, but half hopefully he said it.

"Château Royal? Tiens, tiens . . . Château Royal?" she said. "Why, yes, everybody knows that, don't they? A wonderful place too, by all accounts. Though I have never seen it, I."

"You know where it is? Do you really?" he cried, delighted.

"Certainly, M'sieur.—bien sûr."

"You do? By Jove, I knew it was somewhere here—that boy as good as said so." Excitedly he leaned forward. "Where is it, Madame, where is it? Château Royal, with a picture in it—I'm hungry for it—serve it at once!" He sprang up.

Tolerantly she smiled. "M'sieur would find it heavy on the stomach," she said. "It is not here, it is far, it is near Paris. At Versailles."

Versailles? Back he dropped in disappointment, sitting silent a minute, while wrens and blackcaps chattered at him ironically from the branches overhead. Then he too smiled, a tolerant and patient smile, at his own expense.