

## WINE.

Oh! thou invisible spirit of wine!—if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee—devil!

*Shakespeare.*

SOME eighteen months or two years ago, I was doing my duty to my country and myself on board Her Majesty's frigate the *Astræa*, by undergoing seventeen games of chess per diem with our first lieutenant, and filling up every pause with murmurs at the continuance of 'these piping times of peace.' We had been cruising some months in the Mediterranean, chiefly for the amusement of two dandy cousins of an honourable captain, whom we picked up at Malta, basking like two yellow, over-ripe gourds in the sunshine. We had touched at most of the ports of the Ionians, where cyprus may be had for paying for, and where *falsettas* are held by hands as fair as their coquettish folds are black and lustrous.

At length, one beautiful evening, one of those twilights of chrysolite and gold, such as poets dream of, and the Levant alone can realize (having been for three preceding days, not "spell-bound," but "calm-bound among the clustering Cyclades") it was the pleasure of our honourable captain and his cousins to drop anchor in the Bay of — (I have reasons of my own for not being more explicit, where after swearing the usual number of oaths at the quarantine officers, and the crews of the Venetian and Turkish traders, who make it a part of their religion to give offence to the blue-jackets whose offence can be given with impunity, I had the satisfaction to find myself, at about seven o'clock p. m., seated at the mess of Her Majesty's gallant — th, doing as much justice to the roast beef of Old England as if we had not been within a day's sail of the Island of the Minotaur.

"Are you a punch drinker?" inquired my neighbour, Captain Wargrave, with whom as a school-fellow of my elder brother's, I had quickly made acquaintance.

"If I may venture to own it, no!" said I; I have swallowed too much punch on compulsion in the course of my life."

"I judged as much from your looks," replied Wargrave, who had promised to see me on board the frigate. "If you want to get away from these noisy fellows, we can easily slip off while Lord Thomas and his operations engage their attention."

And, in compliance with the hint, I soon found myself sauntering with him, arm in arm, on the bastions of —. We had an hour before us; for the captain's gig was not ordered till eleven; and in order to keep an eye at once on the frigate and the shore, we sat down on an abutment of the parapet to gossip away the time.

"There seem to be hard-going fellows in your mess," said I to Wargrave, as he sat beside me, with his arms folded over his breast. "Thornton, I understand, carries off his two bottles a day, like a Trojan; and the fat major, who sat opposite to me, made such play with the champagne, as caused me to blush for my squeamishness. For my own part, I should be well content never to exceed a couple of glasses of good claret. Wine affects me in a different way from most men. The more I drink, the more my spirits are depressed. While others get roaring drunk, I sit moping and des-

pairing; and the next day my head aches like an artilleryman's."

"You are fortunate," said Wargrave drily.

"Fortunate?" cried I. "I wish I could appreciate my own luck!—I am voted the sulkiest dog unchanged, whenever it is my cue to be jolly; and after proving a wet blanket to a merry party over-night, am ready to shoot myself with the headache and blue devils next morning. If there be a fellow I really envy, it is such a one as Thornton, who is ready to chime in with the chorus of the thirty-sixth stanza of "Nancy Dawson" between his two last bottles, and keeps his head and legs an hour after all the rest of the party have lost their's under the table. There is something fresh and picturesque in the mere sound of 'the vine—the grape—the cup—the bowl!' It always appears to me that Bacchus is the universal divinity, and that I alone am exempted from the worship."

Wargrave replied by a vague, unmeaning laugh, which led me to conclude that my eloquence was lost on him. Yet I continued:—

"Do you know that, in spite of the prevalence of the Bacchanalian idolatry, I think we hardly give honour due to the influence of wine. It has ever been the mania of mankind to ascribe the actions of their fellow-creatures to all motives but the true; but if they saw clearly, and spoke honestly, they would admit that more heroes have been made by the bottle than the sword."

"Have you any personal meaning in this tirade?" suddenly interrupted my companion, in a voice whose concentration was deadly.

"Personal meaning?" I reiterated. "Of what nature?" And for a moment I could not but fancy that poor Wargrave had taken a deeper share in the Chateau Margoux of the fat major than I had been aware of. A man rather touched by wine is sure to take fire on the most distant imputation of drunkenness.

"I can scarcely imagine, sir," he continued, in a voice, however, that savoured of anything rather than inebriety, "that any man acquainted with the misfortunes of my life should address me on such a subject!"

"Be satisfied then that your indignation is groundless, and most unreasonable," said I, still doubtful how far I ought to resent the ungraciousness of his demeanour; "for, on the word of a gentleman, till this day I never heard your name. Your avowal of intimacy with my brother, and something in the frankness of your manner that reminded me of his, added to the hilarity of an unexpected reunion with so many of my countrymen, has perhaps induced too sudden a familiarity in my demeanour; but, in wishing you good night, Captain Wargrave, and a fairer interpretation of the next sailor who opens his heart to you at sight, allow me to assure you, that not a shadow of offence was intended in the rhapsody you are pleased to resent."

"Forgive me!" exclaimed Wargrave, extending his hands nay almost his arms, towards me. "It would have afforded only a crowning incident to my miserable history, had my jealous soreness on one fatal subject produced a serious misunderstanding with the brother of one of my dearest and earliest friends."

While I frankly accepted his apologies and of-