

## Paris

Doctor Martin Lister (1638-1712) was a well-known zoologist and antiquarian, of a type - although of an older generation - known perfectly to any reader of the Aubrey-Maturin novels; he and Stephen would have been inseparable: “I was to see Monsieur Verney at his Apartment at the upper-end of the Physick-Garden; but missing my Visit, went up with a young Gentleman of My Lord Ambassador’s Retinue, to see Mr. Bennis, who was in the Dissecting Room, working by himself upon a dead Body, with its Breast open and Belly gutted: There were very odd things to be seen in the Room. My Companion, it being Morning, and his Senses very quick and vigorous, was strangely surprized and offended; and retired down the Stairs much faster than he came up. And indeed, a private Anatomy Room is to one not accustomed to this kind of Manufacture, very irksome if not frightful: Here a Basket of Dissecting Instruments, as Knives, Saws, &c. and there a Form with a Thigh and Leg flayed, and the Muscles parted asunder: On another Form an Arm served after the same manner: Here a Tray full of Bits of Flesh, for the more minute discovery of the Veins and Nerves; and every where such discouraging Objects.” Or: “Monsieur Poupart of the Academic-Royal did accompany him in this Visit to my Lodgings, who very kindly invited me to his House to see his Dissections of Insects, particularly of the Horse-Leech lately published, he was unwilling to hear that Francesco Redi had made the Dissection of Animal at least 20 Years ago, and discovered it to be androgynous...”; and so on. As with so many wines, either you enjoy the flavors of this kind of prose, or you don’t; obviously, I do.

In any case, Dr. Lister, being in a mood for Paris, “the first opportunity which offered it self I readily embraced, which was my Lord Portland’s Acceptance of my Attendance of him in his Extraordinary Embassie”. In other words, he went along for the ride, arriving on the first of January, 1698; and thereafter, “I busied my self in a place where I had little to do, but to walk up and down; well knowing, that the Character of a Stranger gave me free Admittance to Men and Things. The French Nation value themselves upon Civility, and build and dress mostly for Figure: This Humour makes the Curiosity of Strangers very easie and welcome to them.” When he returned to London, he wrote a book about everything he saw, called, with his characteristic straightforwardness, *A Journey to Paris in the Year 1698. By Dr. Martin Lister*.

And that’s just what it is: what a lively, intelligent, curious, and good-humored Englishman saw as he wandered all over Paris in the late winter of 1698. And

as he says, “to content you, Reader, I promise you not to trouble you with Ceremonies either of State or Church, or Politicks; for I entred willingly into neither of them, but only, where they would make a part of the Conversation, or my Walk was ordered me. You’ll easily find by my Observations, that I incline rather to Nature than to Dominion; and that I took more pleasure to see Monsieur Breman in his White Wastcoat [sic] digging in the Royal Physick Garden, and sowing his Couches, than Monsieur de Saintot making room for an Ambassador; and I found my self better disposed, and more apt to learn the Names and Physiognomy of a Hundred Plants, than of Five or Six Princes. . . I was no more concerned in the Embassy, than in the sailing of the Ship which carried me over: ‘Tis enough for me, with the rest of the People of England, to feel the good Effects of it, and to pass away this Life in Peace and Quietness. ‘Tis a happy Turn for us, when Kings are made Friends again.”

I don’t know if he was surprised by how popular the book was – the French even published an edition in French, surely an English tourist’s ultimate fantasy for the fate of his Paris travel diary – but it’s not hard to see what made it that way; he’s simply such excellent company, and tells us so many details we wouldn’t otherwise know.

The following brief excerpt is a perfect example: what wines he was served, and what he thought about them. There’s nothing much to it, and yet little else like it; and his very lack of expertise makes it so much more credible what he was served than the regional marketing campaigns (“and Charlemagne himself, passing through the valley of the Merde, raised his hand in salute to the fine wines of. . .” etc.) usually served up to us as wine history instead.

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🍷 *Wine in Paris, in the Spring of 1698* 🍷

The Wines about *Paris* are very small, yet good in their kind; those *de Surene* are excellent some years; but in all the Taverns they have a way to make them into the fashion of a *Champagne* and *Burgundy*.

The Tax upon Wines is now so great, that whereas before the War they drank (p. 163) them at Retail at 5 *d.* the Quart, they now sell them at 15 *d.* the Quart, and dearer, which has enhanced the Rates of all Commodities, and Workmens Wages; and also has caused many thousand private Families to lay in Wines in their Cellars at the cheapest hand, which used to have none before.

The Wines of *Burgundy* and *Champagne* are most valued; and indeed, not without reason; for they are light and easie upon the Stomach, and give little disturbance to the Brain, if drawn from the Hoghead, or loose bottled after their fashion.

The most esteemed are *Vin de Bonne* of *Burgundy*, a red Wine; which is *Dolce Picante* in some measure, to me it seemed the very best of Wine I met with.

*Volne*, a pale Champagne, but exceeding brisk upon the Palate. This is said to grow upon the very borders of *Burgundy*, and to participate of the Excellency of both Counties.

There is another sort of Wine, called *Vin de Rheims*, this is also a pale or grew Wine; it is harsh, as all *Champagne* Wines are.

The White Wines of value are those of *Mascon* in *Burgundy*.

*Mulso* in *Champagne*, a small and not unpleasent White Wine.

*Chabri* is a quick and sharp White Wine, well esteemed. (p. 164)

In *March* I tasted the White Wines called *Condrieu*, and *d'Arbois*, but found them both in the Must, thick and white as our Wines use to be, when they first come from the *Canaries*; very sweet, and yet not without a grateful flavour; they clear towards Summer, and abate much of the flavour and sweet taste. Those Wines thus in the Must are called in the Prints *Vin des Liqueurs*.

There is a preparation or rather stifling of the White Wine in the Must,

used in *Burgundy* and elsewhere, which they call *Vin Bourru*; it gives a sweet taste, and it is foul to the Eye; those also are called *Vin des Liqueurs*. This is only drunk a Glass in a morning, as an equivalent to Brandy.

*Vin de Turenne en Anjou* of two years old, was one of the best White Wines I drank in *Paris*.

*Gannetin* from *Dauphiné*: this is a very pale and thin White Wine, very like the *Verde* of *Florence*, sweet, and of a very pleasant flavour, especially while it is *Des Liqueurs*.

The Red Wines of *Burgundy*, *Des quatre feuilles*, as they say, or of four years old, are rare; but they are esteemed much more wholesome, and are permitted to the Sick, in some cases, to drink of; they are fine, and have a rough, but found taste; (p. 165) not prickt, as I expected. This Term *Des quatre feuilles* is used also to *Volné*, or any other sort of Wine, which is kept any time.

There are also in esteem stronger Wines at *Paris*, as *Camp de Perdris*.

*Coste Bruslee*, both Red Wines from *Dauphine*, of very good taste, and hot upon the Stomach.

*De l'Hermitage* upon the *Rosne*.

But the most excellent Wines for strength and flavour are the *Red and White St. Laurence*, a Town betwixt *Toulon* and *Nice* in *Provence*. This is a most delicious *Muscat*. These are of those sorts of Wines, which the Romans called *Vinum passum*, that were made of half Sun-dried Grapes: for the Grapes (especially the White Muscadine Grapes) being usually sooner ripe, than the common Grapes of the Country, called *Esperan*, viz. the latter end of *August*, (as I have seen them in the Vintage at *Vic*, *Mirabel*, and *Frontinac*, three Towns near the Sea in *Languedoc*, where this sort of Wine is made) they twist the Bunches of Grapes, so breaking the Stalks of them, that they receive no longer any nourishment from the Vine, but hang down and dry in the then violent hot Sun, and are in few days almost turned into Raisins of the Sun; hence, from this insolation, the flavour of the Grape is exceedingly heightened, (p. 166) and the strength and Oiliness, and thick Body of the Wine is mightily improved. I think the *Red St. Lauren* was the most delicious Wine I ever tasted in my life.

Besides these, here are also the White Wines of *Orleans*, *Bourdeaux* Claret, and those Excellent Wines from *Cabors*: also *Cabreton*, White and Red, from about *Bayone*, strong and delicious Wines: and all sorts of *Spanish*

Wines, as Sack, Palme, Mountaine Malaga, Red and White, Sherries, and indeed the *French* are, of late, very desirous to drink of the strongest wines.  
(pp. 162-166)

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