



## The Richebourg Affair

**R. M. Cartmel**

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Parisian police commander Charlemagne Truchard is called back to his family's vineyard in the small village of Nuits-Saint-Georges after the death of his older brother, in R. M. Cartmel's fascinating debut, *The Richebourg Affair*. Though the death is put down to natural causes, Truchard soon finds that all is not as it seems in the quiet wine community. And when a local wine merchant with ties to the Truchard vineyard shows up with a bullet in his head, Truchard finds himself working with the local police to figure out just what's going on.

This intriguing, slow-paced mystery is replete with rich descriptions. As might be expected in a book involving fine French wines, meals are described in mouthwatering detail and the wine can practically be tasted. Cartmel also does a thorough job describing the often unfamiliar culture of the wine business, from the care of grapes to the aging of wine. This is executed fairly well, though occasionally a character will have something explained to him that he should reasonably know. This is excusable, however, given the sheer volume of information that must be conveyed. A wry humor is threaded through the book, mostly surrounding or coming from Truchard. After revealing his somewhat unusual first name, Truchard is asked, "But why did your parents think that Charlemagne was a suitable name for a child?" To which he replies, "Being rather young at the time, I wasn't conscious of very much when I was being christened."

ALLYCE AMIDON (Winter 2015)

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