



ALL EARS!!

THE LITCHFIELD FUND WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

"OUR EARS SPAN ALL FIELDS"



WE WERE EXCITED to see 2020 pass into history, yet 2021 proved to be nothing more than *2020 Redux*. And like any superhero, sci-fi or action thriller sequel, the stunts were bigger, the special effects were more explosive & the villains were eviler. 2021 was 2020 - with more supply shortages, more crime in major cities, more media lies & misinformation, soaring inflation, a weakening economy, with an added dose of incompetent, out-of-control & corrupt leaders & lawmakers. And while we try to retain our optimistic souls (just enough to wish all a happy & prosperous New Year), we brace ourselves & everyone for what 2022 may bring & for that we offer, "*Courage, Camille!*"

COURAGE, CAMILLE! The lives of 18th & 19th century French aristocrats, bourgeois & intelligentsia were very bohemian. Secret trysts as well as public love affairs were common & expected. Courtesans - well educated, intelligent & glamorous women - were well accepted as a part of society & part of the social scene, most frequently on the arm of a married man of the upper crust of society. It was into this world that Thomas-Alexandre Dumas Davy de la Pailleterie, was born in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, present day Haiti. His father was a French nobleman, his mother an African slave. This meant the child was born a slave, but his father took him to France at age 14, where he became a free person. His father placed him in military school. He rose to be a general in the French Revolutionary army, under commander in chief Napoleon Bonaparte. Dumas (he used his mother's surname) led the campaign against Austria in Italy & then led an unsuccessful attempt to capture Egypt. Returning to France on an unsound ship, he was forced to make land in Italy, & there was captured & imprisoned by the King of Naples for several years. After several policy disagreements with Napoleon (Lesson, don't get into an argument with the next emperor), Dumas was ostracized & died penniless, without a pension for his wife & three young children, including his youngest, 4-year-old Alexandre.

Being of aristocratic birth allowed young Alexandre entrance into French society, acquiring work at an early age with Louis-Phillipe, Duke of Orleans & finding an audience for his writings. Dumas wrote classics such as *The Count of Monte Cristo* & *The Three Musketeers*, novels based on the exploits & stories of his father. Though married, Dumas reportedly had more than 40 affairs, some reports identifying 7 out-of-wedlock children, including one son, Alexandre. Alexandre Dumas *père* claimed (legally recognized) the boy as his own, taking him from his dressmaker mother at age 7. He encouraged the young son & saw to his education. The younger Dumas also wanted to write & at age 24, Alexandre Dumas *fils* published his first novel, *La Dame aux Camélias* (*The Lady of the Camellias*). The novel was adapted into Giuseppe Verdi's 1853 opera *La Traviata* (*The Fallen Woman*), as well as many stage & film productions (often just titled *Camille*), & was most tragically portrayed by Greta Garbo in the 1936 film. The novel follows the exploits of beautiful Marguerite Gautier, a courtesan (dying of consumption) based on a real-life lover of the author. Marguerite wears brightly colored Camellias in her hair to tell her lovers of her availability, white when she is available, red when she is not. Marguerite meets young Armand, of noble birth, who quickly falls in love with her & convinces her to leave her life as a courtesan & live with him in the countryside. Armand's father steps in, worried about appearances, his family & his daughter's chances for a good marriage because of the scandal. He tells Marguerite that she must be the strong one, that she is the one who can do what is right & save his son. It is she who must be brave enough to do the right thing:

"Courage, Camille!" Marguerite leaves Armand. Armand believes she has left him for another man & is heart-broken. Marguerite dies a tragic, painful & agonizing death, alone & regretting her life. But Dumas portrays her as a heroic figure (as he does Armand, who has sacrificed his wealth & status for his love), nobly doing the right thing, no matter the cost. (Dumas *fills* portrays society & women this way in many of his novels, which often take a much more moral approach than his contemporaries, such as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. Dumas's point of view is based on his mother's own sorrow of losing him to his father at age 7 & his own childhood, where schoolmates knew of his family history.)

The new year will arrive to us at the stroke of midnight, whether we like it or not. How we face the new year will be, for each of us, a personal choice. But whatever 2022 brings, it will take courage to navigate the challenges of the coming year. Courage to question the narrative. Courage to seek the truth & find the facts. Courage to be one's self, speak one's mind, to state one's thoughts, opinions, beliefs & faith, & the courage to ignore those easily offended. Courage to listen to others. Courage to forgive, & if it is impossible to forgive, the courage to forget & move on. The courage to start. The courage to try. The courage to seek peace. The courage to live free, the way our Creator made us & the path our Founding Fathers chose for us.

Courage is the starting point for everything good that can be achieved in 2022. From Samuel Johnson, *"Courage is the greatest of all virtues, because if you haven't courage, you may not have an opportunity to use any of the others."* Aristotle tells us, *"You will never do anything in this world without courage. It is the greatest quality of the mind next to honor,"* & from Clare Boothe Luce, *"Courage is the ladder on which all the other virtues mount."* No matter what this new year throws at us, we must reach for more courage than we have ever had before. Haile Selassie said, *"We must become bigger than we have been: more courageous, greater in spirit, larger in outlook."* Our courage will be tested in 2022, we will find out how much courage we have. C.S. Lewis wrote, *"Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point."* But courage cannot be found by not standing up for, & believing in, what is right. From Confucius, *"Faced with what is right, to leave it undone shows a lack of courage."* To make change, it takes courage to seek the facts & to find the truth, then form our own opinions & then have the courage to speak, *freely*. Coco Chanel said, *"The most courageous act is still to think for yourself. Aloud."* And when we speak, others listen & find their courage. Evangelist Billy Graham said, *"Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are often stiffened."* But when we speak, we must listen. From Winston Churchill, *"Courage is what it takes to stand up & speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down & listen."* Courage is the path to peace - peace among people & peace in our own mind. From Plato, *"Courage is a kind of salvation."* And through that salvation, we can be free, for as Thucydides wrote, *"The secret to happiness is freedom... And the secret to freedom is courage."*

***WE WISH OUR READERS THE HAPPIEST NEW YEAR EVER!
MAY 2022 BRING YOU AND YOUR FAMILY PEACE, HEALTH,
PROSPERITY, HAPPINESS, COURAGE AND ABOVE ALL ELSE, FREEDOM!***

SEEDS, SPROUTS, GROW, HARVEST!

THE LITCHFIELD FUND – *Tom Malenka*

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