

THE BEST ESTATE.

BY CHARLES SWAIN.

The heart, it hath its own estate,
The mind it hath its wealth untold;
It needs not fortune to be great,
While there's a coin surpassing gold.

No matter which way fortune leans,
Wealth makes not happiness secure;
A little mind hath little means,
A narrow heart is always poor.

Stern fate the greatest still enthralls,
And misery hath its high compeers;
For sorrow enters palace halls,
And queens are not exempt from tears.

The princely robe and beggar's coat,
The scythe and sword, the plume and plow
Are in the grave of equal note,
Men live but in the eternal "Now!"

Still disappointment tracks the proud,
The bravest 'neath defeat may fall;
The high, the rich, the courtly crowd,
Find there's calamity for all.

'Tis not the house that honor makes—
True honor is a thing divine;
It is the mind precedence takes—
It is the spirit makes the shrine!

So keep thou yet a generous heart,
A steadfast and contented mind;
And not till death consent to part,
With that, which friend to friend doth bind.

What's uttered from the life within,
Is heard not by the life without;
There's always something to begin
'Twixt life in faith and life in doubt!

But grasp the truth,—though bleak appears
The rugged path her steps have trod;
She'll be thy friend in other spheres—
Companion in the world of God.

Thus dwelling with the wise and good,
The rich in thought, the great in soul,
Man's mission may be understood,
And part prove equal to the whole!

We know not half we may possess,
Nor what awaits, nor what attends;
We're richer far than we may guess,
Rich as eternity extends!

The heart it hath its own estate,
The mind it hath its wealth untold;
It needs not fortune to be great,
While there's a coin surpassing gold!

THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

BY PHILIBERT AUDEBRAND.

Toward the end of the restoration, two young students from Paris had been spending their holidays in one of the charming villages of Morvan, on the banks of the Loire. They were both two-and-twenty years of age, and wore the hues of health upon their cheeks. During a couple of months, they had lived almost like American trappers, gun in hand, and their game-bag slung across their shoulders, incessantly beating about the bushes, scaling mountains, rising at cock-crow, and eating rye bread and a mass of French beans at the first farm they could discover in their peripatations. Sometimes, as a great treat, they washed down their savory meal by a glass of indigenous white wine, rather tart, and very heavy, but, in many respects, very similar to the Rheish wines.

When evening came, they selected either a hare or a partridge from the spoils of their day's shooting, and supped now in some wood cutter's hut, now in some wayside inn, frequented by carriers.

This kind of life pleased them exceedingly, and caused a salutary reaction in their system, which was somewhat exhausted by close study; for our two sportsmen had just taken their degrees as licentiates in law.

One morning, as they were breakfasting at an inn, exhibiting the more ambitious than appropriate sign of 'The Man-of-War,' (what, indeed, have ships to do in the heart of forest lands?) near the Pond of Varzy, one of the young men twisted up his shooting license, and, having set fire to it, proceeded to light his cigar.

'My good friend Conrad,' observed he, 'it's all very well to shoot for a few weeks; but every thing must have an end. November is staring us in the face, and with it will come fog, and rain, and sleet, and snow. Much as we like Morvan, with its wolves, and boars, and large hares, it will be unbearable in another fortnight. So we must think of returning to Paris.'

'Aye—to study, to pore over old law books and puzzle our brains,' replied Conrad, with a sigh. 'Such is, I know, the fate that awaits us, since our families are set upon making lawyers of us. But, Tancred, if we had a grain of sense we should ask leave to stay here among these mountains.'

Sosaying, he pointed to a little cluster of houses, almost hidden by a clump of Lombardy poplars and Holm oaks.

'It would be so delightful,' continued he 'to live and die on this spot, where our nurses rocked us in our cradles, and where our mothers looked on us with the eyes of affection. We have ripe fruits in our orchards, excellent wine in our cellars, and good horses in our stables. What more can we wish for?'

'Bravo!' cried Tancred, ironically; 'you had better put the finishing stroke to this delightful picture, by quoting Julius Cæsar's saying: "For my part, so far from caring to be first in a village, I'd rather be the last at Rome."'

'That is a piece of mock modesty, Tancred,' said his friend, 'which literally translated, means that one would like to be first fiddle everywhere.'

'Well, any way, a village would not suit me. Now, only suppose your wish realized—you would be made a country notary, and I, perhaps, a justice of the peace; then, before a couple of years had rolled over our heads, our families would have given us each for a wife some farmer's daughter, with cheeks as red as love apples, as notable may be.'

'Should we be so very much pitted for that?' asked Conrad.

'Hear me to the end. Our excellent wives would bring us each sixty thousand francs, which is reckoned a handsome fortune in this place; and folks would say of us, "How happy they are!" But wait a bit. Before ten more years have had rolled over our heads, I should see six sons, of various sizes, seated at my table, and you, six daughters, likewise, of assorted sizes—or you would have six sons, and I six daughters—we will not quarrel on that score, as I don't care which; but what I do care about, is not to hang any such dead weight round my neck.'

Where would be the use of all our studies? Surely, as we have as yet only tasted the bitters, let us now aspire to the sweets of the tree of knowledge, and to enjoy them to perfection, there is but one place, and that is Paris.'

'Then let us go,' said Conrad, resignedly. The next day they took their leave, and set off in diligence, as railroads were not then in existence, and in three days they reached the Capital.

We have already said that each of these young men had his diploma in his pocket, which provincial parents generally seem to consider a certain passport to fortune; while the fact is, the young aspirant must then enter upon a noviciate, a thousand times more difficult and more trying, before he can get a single client.

It was after a due consideration of all the obstacles that would beset their path, that Conrad gave up the idea of aspiring to the bar the very first day.

'My good friend,' said he to Tancred, 'you can become a celebrated practitioner, and a learned juriconsult if you please—it is not I who will enter into competition with you. I mean to throw up the whole concern before I attempt it.'

'Then, what do you mean to do?' asked Tancred.

'I intend becoming a painter, or an engraver—an artist of some sort. In short—'

'An artist! So you wish to die of hunger, do you, my good fellow?'

'Leave that old, stale joke to silly people,' said Conrad; 'you know painters no longer die in hospitals. Many have not only magnificent mansions, but country seats into the bargain. Even upstarts no longer venture to affect to disdain them.'

— Bankers, diplomatists, ministers, and even princes, are but too happy to fill their drawing-rooms with painters, poets, sculptures and musicians. Don't the newspapers mention the names of all the celebrities that attended such and such a fete, while they would never think of enumerating those of the monied men who were present? Now, I envy the fame that may be acquired by a stroke of the pen, or a pencil, or a chisel, as the case may be.'

'Each has his own views,' said Tancred, coldly. 'I have no fear but what I shall acquire both fame and fortune at the Palace of Justice.'

'I hope you will,' replied Conrad. 'But as we are now about to follow two distinctly opposite careers, and are therefore not likely to meet often, I should wish to propose that we keep up our old friendship, by agreeing to spend a day together once in every year.'

'Agreed,' said the lawyer; 'but what day shall it be?'

'Let us say the anniversary of our return to Paris. This is the 31st of October.'

'Very well, my good Conrad—in a year's time we will meet in some place which a letter from one of us will designate.'

They then shook hands and parted.

A year flies rapidly enough, especially in Paris, and more especially at the age of our two heroes, and the 31st of October seemed to come round faster than they had expected.

Faithfully to their agreement, they now met at a dining room in the Palais Royal, such being the place appointed by one of them.

'Now let's drink the first glass to our childish recollections,' said Conrad, 'to the duration of our friendship, and to the accomplishment of our dreams for the future.'

Talking of the future,' said Tancred, 'how do you get on?'

Conrad replied gaily that, in point of fortune, he was pretty near at the same point as where they started. 'But in the arts,' observed he, 'it wants a considerable time to command success. Still, I trust that in two or three years I shall reach the goal I am striving to attain.'

'What! you only expect to come into notice some two or three years hence?' asked the lawyer. Then, without waiting for an answer, he added:—'I have been luckier, I confess. A criminal case has brought me on famously.—Those who heard my address to the judge and jury, said:—"That chap promises well." Perhaps you read my speech in the Gazette?'

'And what more?' asked Conrad.

'My fellow barristers begin to treat me with great respect, I have some good clients, and to sum up, as we say, "I have fifteen thousand francs in the funds. In three more years—why, Lord, I shall have made the world ring with my name."

Conrad changed the conversation, for he hated figures; besides, he was concerned to perceive that his friend's countenance no longer exhibited that ruddy hue indicative of vigorous health, as it did that day year.

Luckily, Tancred had descended from a sturdy race of drovers, and his robust nature was calculated to bear an immense amount of fatigue.—The young lawyer, at that period, very much resembled the appearance we attributed to Jacques Cujas, his great predecessor. His head, though not fine, was intellectual. His little gimlet eye flashed like lightning, and from his somewhat coarsely molded, thick lips, as red as pomegranates, flowed a stream of eloquence, powerful, sarcastic, or insinuating, as the case might require.

The rest of the day was spent pleasantly enough. After dinner, they took a turn on the Boulevards.

'It is near eleven o'clock,' said Conrad, so I must not detain you any longer, my good friend. But let us promise to meet again in a year.'

'So be it,' said the lawyer, as he shook hands with the artist.

We will now jump over three anniversaries, as they presented no individual feature.

On the 30th of October, 1830, Conrad wrote, to remind his friend to keep their annual appointment.

Conrad, like a generous-hearted fellow as he was, had taken a part in the movement that prepared the revolution of July. He had caught the spirit that inspired artists at that moment with a thirst for moral liberty and regeneration. When the king's ordinances were promulgated, he took up arms with the students and the people at the risk of his life.

Tancred, on the contrary, like a prudent character, had not left his office. When the struggle was over, however, he had pronounced a funeral oration over his more active fellow-citizens who had fallen under the fire of the Swiss Guards, in consequence of which, he was made a knight of the 'Legion of Honor.'

'This little bit of red ribbon,' observed he to Conrad, during breakfast, will give me the right to rank with the highest members of the bar.'

'I dare say it will help to increase your reputation,' said Conrad.

'Reputation without money would be nothing. Briefs will now rain upon me. And you, master dreamer, have you no good news to tell me of yourself?'

'Yes I have, though! I am going to marry.'

'A large fortune?'

'A charming girl, as amiable as she is well informed. I love her, and I believe she loves me sincerely, and that's better than a large fortune.'

Tancred shrugged his shoulders.

'Are you serious, Conrad?'

'Quite so, I assure you.'

'In this nineteenth century of ours, and at the age of six and twenty, you are going to marry a poor portionless girl?'

'I am.'

Unfortunate friend, and unfortunate France! said Tancred, 'parodying the famous saying of the Journal des Debats, relative to the insane conduct of the despicable Charles X.'

'Do not make yourself uneasy on my account,' resumed Tancred, 'I shall work hard; besides, we mean to be satisfied with a little.'

'Each sees these things in a different light,' said the lawyer; 'and now, in return for your confidential communications, I must inform you that I am about to marry the daughter of an iron-founder.'

'Is she pretty?'

'She will bring me three hundred thousand francs on our wedding day.'

'Is she intellectual?'

'She has large expectations besides her marriage portion.'

'You don't choose to understand me. Do you love her? Does she love you? That's the most interesting point.'

'I have only seen her once,' replied the lawyer.

Unfortunate friend! unfortunate state of society! exclaimed Conrad, laughing.

They separated in less good spirits than formerly, but with the same agreement as heretofore, of meeting that day twelve months.

Conrad had not been ruffled by the lawyer's sarcasms. He relied upon his own resources, and they had not failed him. His talents increased, and celebrity began to wait upon his name. In the beginning he had been content to earn his bread by the drudgery of the art, such as making designs for title pages of cheap publications, and so forth, but now, he was called upon to illustrate the works of the great writers. This was profitable labor, which placed him in easy circumstances.

On the 31st October following he met his friend with a happy face.

'You look satisfied,' said Tancred. 'How stands your little fortune by now?'

'I have followed your advice,' replied Conrad, 'and put by a trifle for rainy days; besides which, I have bought a little cottage in St Germain-en-Laye.'

'But what is it all worth?' asked the lawyer.

'Thirty thousand francs: twenty thousand vested in the funds, and ten thousand in the little house.'

A sarcastic smile played round the lawyer's lips as he exclaimed—'Thirty thousand francs! What are you made of to be content with so little? Why, I have five hundred thousand francs, and think myself poor with that! However, I hope soon to double that amount.'

'Do you actually mean you hope to gain twice five hundred thousand francs, Tancred?'

'To be sure. Next year, I hope to become senior advocate; and before a twelvemonth I shall be worth a million.'

As it was a rainy day, our friends parted early.

'Farewell, Tancred,' said the artist.

'Farewell, and do grow a little more worldly wise,' said the lawyer.

The lawyer's hopes were literally realized.—His brethren of the bar elected him senior advocate, in compliment to his high talents—an honor which might have satisfied the ambition of any public man. But opulence was the chief aim of his exertions. He gave himself no rest—partook of no amusements—went to no dinners—he would be a millionaire, and he at length became one.

This time Conrad, having again been the first to keep their appointment, was struck by the change in his friend's person. Tancred was scarcely recognizable.

Premature baldness had left his skull exposed to the comments of phrenologists. A pair of green spectacles protected his once brilliant eyes from the full glare of day, while his emaciated cheeks wore the sickly hue of waxen images. His form was bent, and he was constantly chewing chocolate pastilles to strengthen his stomach. When the artist pressed his hand, he felt as if he were holding the fingers of a marble statue within his grasp, but he endeavored to conceal his impressions.

On sitting down to table, he filled his glass and gave as the toast, 'To our mountains in Morvan.'

The lawyer scarcely seemed to understand what he meant.

'I am worth a million, Conrad,' said he.

'I almost guessed as much,' answered the artist. 'Well, I should be most happy to hear it, were it not that it seemed to be purchased at the expense of health and youth.'

Then fearing he had spoken a little too plainly, he added, in a gentle tone—'You know, Tancred, ever since we returned from the pond of Varzy, you have treated me as a visionary, because I am satisfied with quiet happiness. Now, you must know that it is you who are a visionary. What are you the better for this million? Do you live? No—not more than a block of stone! The seasons go by without your noticing them—your life is worse than a galley slave—you never knew what it was to love! I have known you brisk, healthy, vigorous and ruddy, and now you are hastening to premature old age; and no wonder, when you rob both meals and sleep to gain time to add a few more piles of gold to your vast fortune. Your hair is streaked with silver threads, you never smile, you wear flannel, let the weather be ever so fine, and all this to be able to say, "I am worth a million!"'

Then, to soften the harshness of his strictures, he said, in a tone of real concern—'Now do listen to me, Tancred. My little cottage is becoming a comfortable house, and I have purchased the surrounding land, which gives me both a farm and a little park. We are surrounded by all the luxuries of a Parisian life. Besides which, we have delicious milk and vegetables, and plenty of Sancerre wine, which is especially reviving to invalids.'

'And what of this?' said this lawyer.

'Why, now that you are in possession of this coveted million, do throw off that nasty, black gown that constrains the wearer like De jumur's tunic, and in six months' time you will be once more the hale and hearty man you were when we returned to Paris.'

'Fiddle-de-de!' said Tancred; none of your idols for me. What makes you fancy I am ill? Why, I am the most active of all my brother lawyers. I shall not lose my time in drinking ass's milk—not I! Besides the million I longed for a year ago, is no longer sufficient for my wants.'

'How so?' cried Conrad, half stupefied.

'Why, you know I have two children—a boy and a girl. I must have money to launch my son in the world, and a marriage portion for my daughter, and something for myself. So you see that I must go on working. In three years I shall have accomplished my task—our children will then be worth a million between them, and the other million will be for us. I shall not rest till then.'

Seeing him so resolute, Conrad attempted no further remonstrance; but he thought, as they parted, their annual meetings would become more difficult to keep. Nor was he mistaken.

A few days before the 31st of October he received a letter, in which his friend begged him to postpone their friendly meeting to a other time. Tancred said he was overwhelmed with business, but trusted they would meet at the beginning of winter.

The winter passed, and not a word was said about this meeting. The two other seasons followed, but without bringing Tancred.

The 31st of October brought Conrad a letter. 'I guess its contents,' said the artist, even before he had broken the seal. Tancred wrote to say that over and above his usual occupations, he was now canvassing to be elected a member of the Chamber of Deputies, which obliged him to postpone their meeting.

'I am afraid the 31st of October will be struck out of the calendar,' said Conrad to himself. 'However, let us see what next year brings.'

This time the lawyer came to the meeting in his carriage.

Great changes take place in Paris in the space of three years. Tancred was now an important personage. He had been elected senior advocate a second time, he was a member of the Chamber of Deputies, and was, in short, one of the fifteen or twenty men of the day, who con-