

THALES OF PARIS.

FROM THE FRENCH.

ONE of the hobbies cherished in the most especial manner by the good citizen of Paris, is Philosophy; not that he takes delight in the cultivation of wisdom, or makes the study of nature his pursuit: but when things go well with him in the world; when his fortune has reached the limit of his desires; when age has abated the ardor of his passions, and in the bosom of his family he finds himself surrounded with every comfort and luxury that heart could wish; he fancies himself beyond the common accidents of life; he becomes a philosopher. His philosophy is his pet, his play-thing, his hobby-horse upon which he gets astride, and gambols like a frolicsome child. Should his wife scold, should his roast-beef be burnt, should a sudden shower break up a party of pleasure, he alone preserves his equanimity; is smiling, soothing, and consolatory; he is a philosopher. Philosophy is his sovereign panacea; with the understanding that no precautions have been neglected to secure him as far as possible against the weightier mishaps of life. His houses and furniture are insured, and his money, instead of being exposed to the hazards of joint stock companies or rail-roads, is safely invested in the royal funds.

Monsieur d'Herbois was a happy example of this consolatory system, and seemed to have been sent into the world expressly for the purpose of sounding the praises of philosophy, without ever being obliged to test its efficacy in his own case. Wealthy by a paternal inheritance, which thrift on his part had increased, he had early in life married the woman of his choice; and his only son, about twenty-two years of age, was now in his turn about to espouse a young lady, whose character, fortune, and family all exactly suited the fortunate father. And so Monsieur d'Herbois, a man of a naturally placid and even temper, was now busying himself in preparing the dower, or if you please the appanage of Gustavus, with the benignity and disinterested solicitude of a sage.

'My friend,' said he to Monsieur Durand, who was now a philosopher, 'I shall give to Gustavus my house at Sussy. I well know that this will be a great sacrifice, and that we cannot pass the summers there any more, because it is possible that my wife cannot agree on all points with her daughter-in-law; but we love Gustavus so dearly!—and beside, one must be a philosopher. We shall therefore live in Paris on the second floor; the first will be occupied by the young folks. My wife grumbles a little at this; but says I to her: 'My dear, suppose some unexpected calamity should occur, to sweep away all our property?—what would then become of us? Then we should have to climb up into the garret, and would be

forced to summon up all our philosophy, of which we shall scarcely stand in need, merely to ascend a few additional steps. Thales of Miletus acted in this manner, one of the seven wise men of Greece, who endured all sorts of troubles without complaint, and in fact defied all mankind to disturb the serenity of his soul and the tranquillity of his spirit.'

'And do you give the same defiance to men as Thales did?' asked Monsieur Durand.

'To be sure I do. You, my friend, ought to know whether I have not the right to do so. Have you ever known me to depart from my principles?'

'I know,' replied M. Durand, 'that during the time since you and I left college together, which is now upward of thirty years, I have never known you to be afflicted with any personal misfortune; and if Thales of Miletus, whose story I do not now remember, was always as lucky, his philosophy would not have cost him more than yours does.'

'To speak candidly,' replied M. d'Herbois, with a good-natured smile, 'I think that I am a little more of a philosopher than Thales himself was; for I have never been inconsistent with my professions, although a husband and a father, while Thales was a bachelor.'

'But still,' said his friend Durand to him, 'you have never been put to the test.'

'Let the test come; I am ready.'

'Suppose your wife should prove false to you, or your son not turn out in accordance with your expectations?—do you think you would support these misfortunes with the constancy of Job?'

'Of Thales, my dear friend, of Thales, if you please; do not confound them:

'For all events the wise man is prepared.'

Thus said a poet who talked Greek, and not an Arab like your Job.'

M. d'Herbois, proud of Thales, of himself, and of philosophy, proceeded to make careful preparations for the nuptials of his well-beloved son; and already in his mind's eye beheld himself dandling his little grand-children that were to be.

One morning he was about entering the apartment of Gustavus, for the purpose of consulting him on the purchase of some jewels, intended as a present for the bride. The chamber of the young man was situated at one end of the room of M. d'Herbois. The entrance to it was through this latter, and also by a private staircase, which allowed the young man to go in and out without disturbing any body. D'Herbois, just as he was about turning the handle of the glass door, the curtain of which was on his side, checked himself, on hearing the sound of voices. His son, he found, was not alone.

'Oh, ho!' thought he, 'Gustavus is perhaps bidding farewell to the bachelor's life. Can he be consoling some little beauty, who is reminding my young master of his broken vows?'

He raised the corner of the curtain, and was a little tranquillized.

The companion of Gustavus was a man. 'May be it is a creditor,' thought he; 'but this is a lesser evil.'

He placed himself so as to see and hear what was going on. Opposite to him, in the middle of his son's room, stood a man of about the age of M. d'Herbois, gray-headed, with a sharp and crafty expression of countenance, and person enveloped in a large farmer's riding-coat.

'My dear Peter,' said this person, 'listen to me ——'

'Peter?' replied d'Herbois junior; 'you are mistaken, Sir; my name is Gustavus.'

'I am not mistaken, for all that,' continued the stranger; 'listen to me, I entreat you, my good Sir; I am about to communicate a piece of news which fills me with joy; my only fear, (and I confess it is a natural one,) is that it will not give you as much pleasure.'

'Go on, Sir,' said Gustavus; 'nothing that is agreeable to an honest man can give me pain; speak out.'

The man, whose presence singularly annoyed M. d'Herbois, deliberately took a seat, and commenced thus:

'You know, my good Sir, that it is now about twenty years since Madame d'Herbois gave birth to a son. On account of the weak state of her health, she was not able to afford him nourishment herself. A nurse was sought for, and it was my wife, Margaret Pithou, of Pontoise, who was selected.'

'Ah! you are then my foster-father,' cried Gustavus, with open arms; 'walk in, walk in; my father and mother will be delighted to see you.'

'Softly! softly!' said Pithou; 'neither Monsieur nor Madame d'Herbois must know that I am here, or have spoken with you, until we have had a little explanation together, and you know all.'

'Until I know all! What is it, then, Monsieur Pithou? Pray go on,' said Gustavus, impatiently.

'Patience, my good Sir; you shall hear all in good time.'

The more interesting and mysterious this conversation became, so much the more immovable did his philosophy hold Monsieur d'Herbois, who scarcely dared move, or even breathe.

'My wife and I,' continued Pithou, drawing out his words, 'like most of our neighbors, were at that time dealers in a small way in cattle. But provided the murrain did not get among the beasts, and our cows kept healthy, we managed in one way or another to make both ends meet at the end of the year. We were young then, and had one child, a few months older than the son of Monsieur d'Herbois.'

'Than me?' exclaimed Gustavus.

'You shall see. As ill luck would have it, a speculator came down from Paris, with plenty of money, and established himself at Pontoise; bought up the finest cows, built large stables, raised the price of hay and feed; and in short, broke up all the small dealers like us; for the veal and mutton of this Parisian were always the fattest and brought the best prices. One bad year ruined us. My wife took it sadly to heart, and fell ill; her poor foster child felt the

effects of her malady; we dared not say any thing, lest it should be taken from us; in fine, my wife and the child of Monsieur d'Herbois both died on the same night. My poor Peter!' continued Pithou, addressing Gustavus, 'my poor Peter, I was then indeed in a situation to excite pity: nothing left me, no wife, no money, plenty of debts, and an infant in the arms, which looked up to me for support. A thought from heaven suddenly seemed to strike me. Said I to myself, 'The rich are placed here to succor the poor, and render them assistance; but as they are often hard-hearted, selfish, and avaricious, we must have recourse sometimes to stratagem to obtain from their credulity what their indifference refuses.' In pursuance of this idea, I gave out every where that my son was dead, and sent you, my own offspring, to M. d'Herbois, under charge of cousin Potard, who was herself the dupe of my trick. Yes, you are my own son Peter! my dear Peter!'

At the conclusion of this strange story, Pithou arose, drew Gustavus to him, kissed his forehead, his eyes, his hair, and bedewed the young man, who seemed lost in amazement, with paternal tears. 'How otherwise, my dear child,' said he, 'could you have wished me to have acted?' The time passed with Monsieur d'Herbois has procured for you the advantages of a good education, and beside that, has been so much exemption from suffering for you. In truth, when I examine my motives, and think seriously of my conduct, I cannot repent of it. Since then, fortune has been more propitious to me. I came to Paris, engaged in trade, and as others have done before me, have made a handsome fortune. You see that I am too honest to allow you to profit by the riches of M. d'Herbois; we will confess all to him. Adieu, my dear Peter! I have full proofs of what I have told you; I am going to get them, and will take them myself to M. d'Herbois.'

So saying, Pithou again embraced Gustavus, and departed by the private stairs.

Monsieur d'Herbois, upon whom not a word of this conversation had been lost, knew not what to do or think. What! Gustavus, his son! the child of whom he had not lost sight for twenty years; whom he loved more than ever parent loved a son; for whom he had deprived himself of so many comforts; who bore his name; Gustavus to be called Peter! Peter Pithou! to be the son of another! Monsieur d'Herbois was astounded, and in the utmost consternation ran to seek his wife.

'Madame!' cried he, 'Madame d'Herbois, I have no longer a son; my son has been dead for twenty years!'

Madame d'Herbois was a woman of a lively disposition, who knew her husband well, and did not always take his words literally.

'You frightened me,' said she to him, laughingly; 'but as you say that Gustavus has been dead for twenty years, I reassured myself when I thought of the good appetite he had at breakfast this morning.'

'Gustavus is not my son, Madame!'

'What do you mean by that, Sir?'

‘Good heavens, Madame, you do not comprehend me! I mean that he is no more your son than he is mine. Poor Gustavus died while nursing; we have got the son of Pithou, Peter Pithou!’

The amazed couple then recalled all the details of the early infancy of Gustavus. He had, in fact, been placed at nurse at Pontoise, and the child had been brought home in consequence of the death of his nurse, Margaret Pithou. All that Pithou had related had the appearance of truth; perhaps, alas! was true.

Gustavus at this moment entered his mother’s apartment, and M. d’Herbois now for the first time remarked that the young man did not resemble him as much as he had formerly fancied; in fact, he had neither the same eyes, the same features, nor the same figure. M. d’Herbois also mentally observed that the voice of Gustavus had the same tones as that of Pithou. Gustavus, embarrassed by his secret, knew not how to commence the painful disclosure; his eyes filled with tears; he turned from M. d’Herbois toward his wife, without daring to address or embrace either of them.

‘Come to my arms!’ passionately exclaimed Madame d’Herbois; ‘come here, my child; we know every thing; but you are, yes, you are my son; I feel it in my love! I feel it in my heart! Come to me, my dear son!’

‘You know every thing?’ said Gustavus; ‘has Pithou, then, already brought his proofs?’

‘No, my child, but your father overheard it all.’

A domestic entering, announced to M. d’Herbois that a person was waiting to see him in his study.

‘It is that Pithou,’ said he, as he left the mother and son dissolved in tears.

In the study he found his friend Durand.

‘My good friend,’ said Durand to him, as you are about marrying your son, I thought you would like to have this beautiful cameo that I have recently met with. I think it the finest I have ever seen. Look at it; and it is not dear either.’

‘To the devil with your cameo, and with the wedding, and with my son too!’ cried d’Herbois, beside himself with passion.

‘Hey day! what’s the matter now?’ inquired Durand; ‘has Gustavus been getting into any scrape?’

‘There is no such person as Gustavus. I have no longer any son; there is only one Pithou; confounded be the whole race! one Peter Pithou!’

D’Herbois then recounted to his friend the sad discovery he had just made.

‘Well, well,’ said Durand, coolly, ‘this is not so bad after all; the matter may be amicably settled; M. Pithou will doubtless listen to reason. He will possibly consent to leave Gustavus the name which he has hitherto borne; and since you possess the affections of the young man, what difference, after all, does it make to you?’

‘What difference does it make to me!’ replied M. d’Herbois, in a fury. ‘What difference? I have lost my son, my blood, my life!’

They have left me in his stead the descendant of a Pithou ! And do you ask me what *difference* does it make !'

'Patience, patience, my good Sir ! Have you not always loved him until now as if he were your son ? Have not your paternal bowels yearned toward him, as if in fact he had been Gustavus and not Peter ? Take my advice, my friend ; arrange this matter with Pithou. The young man will never lose the affection he bears you, and it will be Pithou, and not you, who will have the worst of the bargain.'

'The wretch !' continued d'Herbois, pacing the room with hurried strides ; 'to have played the fool with me in this manner ! to have trifled thus with my affections ! But there are laws against crimes like this ! Thank Heaven ! we live in a civilized land ; we have the code ; the substitution of children is punishable in France ; I will invoke the law ; I will bring the culprit before the tribunal, and he shall receive the reward of his guilt.'

'But consider,' replied Durand ; 'there were many extenuating circumstances in this offence of Pithou. He was suffering from want ; his mind was distracted by grief for the loss of his wife. To be sure, nothing can justify a crime ; but if any thing could excuse one, would it not be the anxiety of a father to save his child from imminent death ? Beside,' continued Durand, 'observe the conduct of this man. As soon as he becomes wealthy, and is able to provide for him, he comes to reclaim his son. He is not willing that he should enjoy any longer the advantages of your wealth ; he does not even wait until his child has consummated an advantageous marriage. All these circumstances would plead strongly in favor of Pithou, in a court of justice. And, in fact, the offence is not the complete substitution of a child ; it is merely a temporary one ; and the court would probably adjudge Pithou to pay to you the expenses of the education of Gustavus, or Peter ; this would be all.'

But poor M. d'Herbois would not listen to his friend. He gave himself up to all the violence of his passion, and began already to feel in his heart a strange aversion to a son, whom until now he had so tenderly loved.

'Yes, yes,' said he, 'he has the very voice and look of Pithou ; his gestures, his walk. No doubt this Peter Pithou junior will turn out a rogue, like his father.'

'But only one word,' said Durand ; 'take my advice ; marry Gustavus, who is not to blame in this matter, and buy this beautiful cameo. You will never get another such a chance.'

'I beg you, Sir, to hold your tongue about that cursed cameo !' said d'Herbois, sternly, to his friend.

'But remember, my good Sir, you are a philosopher, and have defied the whole world to disturb the serenity of your soul, or the tranquillity of your spirit.'

'Philosopher ! when I have lost my only child !'

'You have lost nothing. Gustavus is in good health. As for the one that died twenty years ago, you have never known him ; in fact, have scarcely seen him. Beside, where is the merit and

advantage of philosophy, if it is not able to console you under afflictions; to moderate grief, and impart to the mind the calmness requisite to diminish evil, and enable you to arrive at truth?'

Instead of making answer, the philosopher burst into tears; two briny streams flowed down his cheeks, attesting the vanity of his stoicism, and the superiority of Thales of Melitus over Thales of Paris.

'Ah ha!' exclaimed M. Durand, on witnessing the deep humiliation of his friend, 'have I then conquered your philosophy? But cheer up! Lapierre! Lapierre! come this way.'

Lapierre entered; he had laid aside his livery, and had on still the farmer's large coat.

'Here is Pithou, and there is no other; it is Lapierre, my valet. The claim he sets up for your son is all a matter of moonshine. I was acquainted with all the circumstances, and laid my plans accordingly. The true Pithou is still at Pontoise, employed in fattening calves. He has married a second time, has a score of children, and has no thoughts of coming here to claim a son who is none of his. And now, Monsieur Philosopher, is it thus you put in practice the professions you are daily preaching? Is it thus you exemplify the maxims of the great Thales? Let but misfortune touch your little finger, and you are beside yourself: you examine nothing, neither the truth, nor even the probability of a thing; and before the slightest proofs are laid before you, you withdraw your affections, almost discard your child, and are eager to send a man off to the galleys! And yet one of the maxims of Thales was, 'Never decide any thing rashly.'

M. d'Herbois, confused and crest-fallen, hung down his head, and by his silence confessed that the trial had been too severe for his philosophy. Being, however, fortunately possessed of a large stock of good-nature, which is sometimes better than philosophy, he did not think it worth his while to quarrel with his friend. Poor Gustavus alone suffered from the trial. M. d'Herbois from that time forth could no more trace in his features that resemblance to himself of which he had formerly been so proud; and when the young man spoke, 'That is not my voice,' said he to himself; 'it is the very tone of Pithou.'

And so Gustavus, although suitably married, did not get possession of the country-house at Sussy, which was so agreeable to M. d'Herbois during the summer season. Neither did the old folks discommode themselves in town, and the young couple resided on the second floor.

Convinced in this manner of the vanity of his philosophy, M. d'Herbois quietly resumed his position as father and husband. 'It is impossible,' said he, 'to preserve one's serenity, if our happiness is placed upon objects out of ourselves, and depends upon a wife or child. So when the mother of Thales besought him to marry, the sage replied, 'It is not yet time.' After a while she renewed her entreaties; 'It is now too late,' said Thales.

In our days, the philosophy of most people commences the day after marriage.

L I N E S T O A C A N A R Y B I R D .

WARRREN during the difficulties of the boundary question in Maine, when Sir JOHN HARVEY, Governor of the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia was deterred from actual hostility by the judicious conduct of General SCOTT, his personal friend. PRESCOTT's noble work of 'Ferdinand and Isabella' had just appeared, and the 'Crayon Papers' were in course of publication.

God bless thee! and thy joyous throat!
Thy trill, thy churr, thy piercing note,
My sweet canary!
Thou gush of song, thou waterbrook
Of joy, thou poem, doctrine, book,
Vocabulary!

Thou caged-up treasure of delight!
That know'st to make a prison bright
Through music's mystery!
To swell thy rich notes in full tide,
Or highest reach of sound divide
Like Paganini!

Where didst thou gain this wondrous lore?
Where that, (which I admire yet more,)
The glad Philosophy,
That smiles at iron bars and doors?
In loneliness a spirit pours
Of mirthful minstrelsy?

Wert ever old? or broken-hearted?
Hast ever from thy mate been parted
To meet hereafter?
It cannot be; that gleesome strain
Springs from a heart that ne'er knew pain —
'T is almost Laughter!

Now thou art still; thy chaunt is o'er;
Thou seem'st intent on something more
Important to thee.
Hast any thing to lose? or gain?
What think'st thou of the war in Maine?
And Sir John Harvey?

Would'st Scott, or Prescott, rather be?
The Cotton crop — is 't aught to thee?
The Crayon Papers?
Art rich at heart? or yet to know —
But hark! thy strain again doth flow,
Again, in music, stirs!

Ah Rogue! I see thee, have thee now —
That leap from off the transverse bough,
That knowing look, inspires;
The sound *thou* lov'st shall now be heard:
'Fresh seed and water for my bird,
And sugar for his wires!'

'T is done — and here 'King, Cawdor, Glamis,'
Not more to Macbeth were, than this
Thy stock of seed renew'd
Is joy to thee! — would I might draw,
From thy bright gayety, a Law
Of confidence and good: