

THE HAND OF A FRIEND.

When battling one's way over Life's troubled ocean,
So darkened by shadows of sorrow and strife,
Beaten hard by its billows of stormy commotion,
And rest knowing not in the struggle for life,
If aught there is then that our journey may brighten,
That bids us cheer up and be brave to the end,
That helps us to hope that the future may brighten,
If anything does, 'tis the hand of a friend.

The smile of a sister is fond and endearing,
It sweetens the sands of Time's glass as they flow
The clasp of a brother is fervent and cheering,
And sacredly cherished wherever we go,
But ah! to the heart of the tolling wayfarer,
Upon whose lone pathway such joys ne'er attend,
Forbidden by fate in such gifts to be sharer,
To him what a prize is the hand of a friend.

We oft hear of Love, a mere pleasing illusion,
Created our souls to delight and deceive;
Of kisses and quarrels an endless confusion,
Some hearts to make happy and many to grieve,
But Love, with its pledges of truth and devotion,
Is oft found a myth once its ecstasies end;
To him who must sail o'er adversity's ocean,
No love-pledge can equal the hand of a friend.

Love's sun, all ablaze in the morning of gladness,
More ardent than Friendship may seem for a while,
But Love often flies from the first chill of sadness,
Whilst Friendship yet lingers and cheers with her smile,
Love, with us to-day, may desert us to-morrow,
But Friendship, once true, remains true to the end;
Unchanged by the presence of sunshine or sorrow,
A treasure, indeed, is the hand of a friend.
Quebec. E. A. SUTTON.

THE STRANGE DOCTOR.

BY RICHARD B. KIMBALL, LL.D.

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"By the way, what has become of Conant?" I asked of my college classmate, Luther Evans, the well-known, in fact, celebrated, surgeon, whom I encountered by accident at the *Hotel Bellevue des Lac*, at Zurich.

We had not met for five years, and here, on the shore of this beautiful lake, chance had thrown us together. We spent the evening in calling the roll of our classmates, and in comparing notes of information as to each one of them. Some of our companions were already in their graves; some who had started rich in promise had made shipwreck beyond any hope of recovery. There were others who had arrived at the happy haven which prosperity is supposed to afford; others still were struggling to reach it. The larger portion were married; a good many yet remained single. Sickness, misfortunes, and bad luck generally seemed constantly to have attended several; good fortune, firm health and unvaried success had been the lot of a few. It turned out, however, that the majority were recipients, in about equal proportions, of the ordinary good and ill which attend our poor humanity.

"By the way, what has become of Conant?" "Ah, Conant—Prince Albert, as we used to call him. Well, he was a prince in nature and conduct. Have you heard nothing of him?" was my friend's reply.

"Not for a long time. I saw him in Chicago six or eight years ago. His career appeared to be a brilliant one. Not long after, I was told he had left the place in an unexpected manner, and had gone no one knew whither. Ames spoke of a love affair, but I knew Conant too well to credit any such nonsense."

"Ames is a fool!" ejaculated Evans, with emphasis—"simply a fool; that is all."

"Then you don't know what has become of Conant?"

"I have not said that. In fact, I do know what has become of him," returned my classmate.

"Well?"

"I do know; no one else knows—no one else," muttered Evans, rapidly. "I know what has become of him. I shall tell you. It will be easier kept if you and I both know—easier kept. Your word to secrecy of course. I shall feel better satisfied after I have told you. Because, you know, I doubt sometimes the evidence of my own senses in this matter."

I confess I began to suspect some mellow wine we were drinking was having an undue effect on his senses; but I said nothing. I was soon undeceived. For Evans continued as quietly and methodically as if he were amputating a limb, quite in contrast with his nervous manner at the beginning.

"You remember, Albert Conant and I were room mates for the whole four years. Of course you know it, and how we were called Damon and Pythias, and all that sort of thing. The only one who fully shared our friendship was yourself. How well you know that, too, or else would I now be making this revelation? When we left college we still kept together. We attended one course in Philadelphia, one in New York. Then we went abroad. Conant devoted himself principally to medicine, and I to surgery. It was all the more agreeable, for we had a wide range of topics to talk about, and there were many branches which we pursued together, listening to the same lectures and walking the same hospitals. From Paris we went to Vienna; this was to please me, for there were special advantages there in my department. How enthusiastic we were! How truly ambitious of a career! I had abandoned medicine as a leading pursuit and gone over to surgery from a total lack of faith in the dispensatory. We were, all of us, so it seemed to me, groping in the dark, and, for my part, I was desirous to feel myself on firm ground. Not so Conant."

"I admit," he said, "that medicine is not a

science; but tell me, are we not making an advance?"

"No doubt—no doubt," I would say; "but it is mere experiment, after all. I am not willing to prescribe a medicine which I cannot predicate its effect upon my patient. A conscientious practice of medicine is mere expectancy, and that is no practice at all."

"You talk nonsense," Conant would answer. "Progress in medicine comes as progress comes in all other things, by careful study, observation and experience, and the practical application of our experience. It shall be my ambition to do something before I die towards placing medicine in its proper position as a science."

"Ah, he was very earnest, very sincere. I recollect, after we came back to Paris, that Magendie gave him a terrible shaking-up at his opening lecture in the autumn at the *Hotel Dieu*, of which Magendie was at the head. It was on the memorable occasion when that famous physician distinctly told the students not only that medicine was not a science but almost in terms that the dispensatory was a humbug, asking derisively who could cure a headache! He went on to say that in one of his wards he divided his patients into three classes. The first he treated according to the dispensatory, to the second he gave bread pills and colored water, the third received nothing at all. The latter grumbled a good deal '*les imbéciles*,' as the lecturer called them, but all got well. Every one in the second class also recovered. A few in the first class died. 'Nevertheless,' added Magendie, 'we are making progress, and I have hopes at the end of a hundred years that medicine will have become a science. Then, no doubt, phthisis will be cured.' I enjoyed the lecture hugely, and from time to time nudged Conant, as much as to say, 'What do you think of it?' for he was a great admirer of Magendie. As we left the lecture-room after he had concluded, Conant took my arm, exclaiming: 'That is what I call a great man—a man who, with such a reputation, dares to say he does not know! What I have heard does not one whit discourage me; it does me good. I am quite content to spend all the years of my life in the attempt to advance the progress of the most interesting, most humane, and the most beneficent of studies.'

"We came home at last. I settled in New York. Conant went to Chicago, where certain advantages by way of acquaintances and introductions awaited him. It was not long before he became known. His career was rapid and brilliant. We saw each other very seldom. Twice in the course of ten years he visited New York for a day or two—he came expressly to see me—twice I was in Chicago. I may say literally for the purpose of seeing him. These were days of the highest, truest enjoyment; memorable days never to be forgotten. I found Conant unspoiled by worldliness, selfishness or small ambition. The same lofty purpose which filled his breast when a student still inspired him. Meanwhile our correspondence never slackened, so that our friendship did not become an old memory, but was preserved fresh, increasing all the time. I had already married, and it was but natural that I should urge Conant to go and do likewise. I used even to add a bit of worldly wisdom to my suggestion, telling him how advantageous it was for a physician to be a married man. His reply would be: 'All in good time, my friend—all in good time, my friend; when the right person comes along I shall make haste to follow your excellent example: till then, *patience*, as the Spaniard says.'

"Well, a time came when Conant was engaged to be married. He announced it in his characteristic way, and instead of giving me particulars he said, 'Come and see for yourself.' This I had made up my mind to do and wrote him accordingly. His answer came without delay. It was a long letter, written in his happiest vein, with a smack of his old student habit, and brimful of current incidents and topics; no allusion to his engagement, for that would not be like him, but I could see plainly that he was living in a paradise.

"I shall never forget that letter—it was the last I ever received from him. I answered it within ten days, and told Conant that I was going to give myself a long vacation, at least for me. I was to spend two weeks in the Adirondacks, and that he might look for me at furthest in three weeks from the date of my letter. Four days after, I left New York, disposed of the two weeks as I had planned, and was to take the train at the nearest station the next morning for my trip Westward.

"Late that afternoon our little mail arrived. Among my letters was one which struck a sudden terror into my soul. It was the letter I had addressed and mailed to Conant, returned to me with the indorsement, '*Not found*.' I felt a wretched, sickening, sinking sensation at my heart. I sat perfectly still, my eyes fixed on those two words, till the twilight began to gather about me. This brought me to my senses. 'Pshaw!' I exclaimed to myself, aloud, 'what is the matter with you? It is some old blunder at the post-office. A mistake in reading the address, but the superscription was painfully legible and the residence not to be mistaken. A blunder—a gross blunder, that is all. In forty-eight hours it will be all right. I will overhaul those post-office fellows for giving me such a start. I will make a special report of the case to the Postmaster-general, that I will!'

"I started early the next morning. Notwithstanding all my reasoning, a dead weight hung

at my heart the whole way. I reached Chicago on the morning of the second day, about half-past seven. I drove directly to Conant's house. I ran up the steps and rang the bell nervously. I waited for a response, but none came. I rang again and again—no answer. A market-boy who was passing with his basket, stopped and looked at me.

"There ain't no one living in that house, mister," he said.

"I thought Dr. Conant lived here."

"He's moved away."

"How long since?"

"Oh, more than three weeks ago."

"Where has he moved to?"

"Don't know; and the boy trudged on."

"I felt relieved by this colloquy; there was some excuse for the return of my letter, though a flimsy one, since Conant was so well known. I was about driving to the house of a mutual friend where I might learn where he had removed to, when a gentleman, who lived in the house opposite, who evidently had been a witness of my dilemma crossed the street and addressed me.

"You are looking for Dr. Conant, I presume?"

"Yes."

"The doctor has left Chicago."

"Good God! you don't say that!" I exclaimed. "How did it happen?"

"A very sad affair, I assure you, sir. You are a friend of the doctor's?"

"The most intimate friend he has. I have just arrived from New York expressly to pay him a visit. What does it all mean?"

"If you will step into my house for a few moments," said the gentleman, "I will tell you the little there is known about it."

"I was only too glad to accept his invitation. His narrative was brief.

"You know," he said, 'the doctor was soon to be married.' I assented. 'The young lady was one of the most charming in Chicago. She died, about four weeks ago, after an illness of a few hours—a most mysterious and inexplicable illness. Upon her death the doctor disposed of everything he had, including his medical library, in fact, everything to the most minute articles, and left the city. He told no one where he was going, not even his most intimate friends, and nobody knows where he has gone. No one has heard a word from him, the whole matter is enveloped in mystery from beginning to end.'

"Sadly I descended the steps, declining the worthy man's invitation to take breakfast with him, and drove to the house of the friend I have just mentioned. I really could get from him no information in addition to what I had already received. Some details were added about the rapidity with which Conant disposed of his effects. He would converse with no one, he entered into no explanations, and in this strange manner he quitted the place where his labors had been so brilliantly successful.

"That evening I took the train back to New York. I knew, after a while, I should hear from Conant. I knew it was impossible for him to abandon the friendship that existed between us. No doubt he was stunned by so swift and sudden a blow; after the first terrible shock should be over he would come and see me, or let me know where I could go to him. He never wrote, he never came, and for nearly seven years I was in ignorance of what had become of him."

Evans paused so long in his history at this point that it actually seemed as if he had brought it to a conclusion, although I had felt it had scarcely begun. I had no disposition to break the silence, and at length he resumed.

"You must not suppose that in those seven years I made no effort to discover his whereabouts; you must not suppose I waited patiently for him to communicate with me. I employed every means which I could devise to reach him; nothing which my ingenuity could suggest was left unattempted. I visited Chicago again, hoping to gain some clue, however trifling, but I could find nothing which gave me the least assistance. I went to see his relations, but they knew less than I did. They were his cousins, for Conant's parents were dead, and he was an only child. After that, I commenced a system of advertising. I would cause notices to be inserted in the leading newspapers all over the country, and also in Europe—notice which no one would understand but Conant, but which he could not fail to understand. I kept this up year after year. I sent these to every principal city in the United States, to London, to Paris, to Amsterdam, to Berlin, to St. Petersburg, and other places. No token came from these efforts. As you will perceive, by-and-by, not one of these notices ever reached him—could not have reached him."

"Last summer I made an excursion into one of the most remote and unfrequented portions of our country. I had reached what seemed to me the extreme border of civilization—the last settlement in that direction. Two gentlemen, who had accompanied me, had given out about ten miles below, and were to wait for me till I had accomplished this little extra trip. I took a smart lad for a guide, and in this way comfortably reached the place I have indicated. A dozen families were scattered about in as many log-houses. They were engaged in felling timber—clearing the land, and, to some extent, cultivating the soil. A set of hardy, energetic pioneers, such as you meet on our northwestern frontier. I was made heartily welcome at the cabin of one of these, a 'shake-down' was promised me, and a seat at the table as long as I

chose to stay. As to trout-fishing I could not go amiss; all the small streams which coursed from the mountains towards the river were full of trout. For game, anything from the fox-squirrel to the catamount and bear could be had without much extra search.

"I do not know why I should be going into these particulars," continued Evans, after another pause, "except that I dread to approach my subject. I tell you that Conant's disappearance had made such an impression on me that I preferred these solitary excursions to any other; they served, in a degree, to tranquilize my mind and—and—I don't know exactly what I want to say, or, rather, how to express myself; but it always seemed to me I might meet him somewhere in some strange, out-of-the-way place. Do you understand?"

I nodded.

"The second day I was following a small mountain stream filled with stones and occasional large rocks, which guarded large pools of water, called by boys 'Trout-holes,' where I had to fight my way against the thicket of branches which almost completely secluded it. I had dropped my line into one of these holes, to reach which I was obliged to stand upon two slippery stones. A splendid fellow had seized the bait, and, to secure him, I made a sudden lurch to one side, heedless of where I was standing. The result was, in endeavoring to save my foothold, my ankle turned and I fell. I feared possibly that I had strained it seriously, and I had nothing to do but to hobble back to the cabin, which was, at least, a mile distant. It was slow work, and before I reached there I was suffering a good deal of pain. The people knew nothing of my profession, and the good housewife set to work in a practical way for my relief. One of the children were sent to pluck some wormwood which grew in the inclosure. It was bruised and mixed with spirits, and my ankle speedily bound up with it. I was greatly interested in the alacrity of the woman and the practical knowledge she displayed.

"If it is not any better by morning," she said, 'we must have the doctor look at it.'

"The doctor?" I exclaimed. "Do you mean to say that you have a doctor in this little settlement?"

"Yes, indeed. He was here before any of us."

"There flashed through my mind a premonition; then came a sharp, sudden pain, as if a knife had pierced me. It was with difficulty I had caught my breath.

"The woman noticed it.

"I fear you are getting ill, sir," she exclaimed.

"Yes, I feel very ill indeed," I said. "Can't you get the doctor here right away?"

"He lives a mile and a half off," she answered, 'but I will go myself. He won't come unless a person is very sick. He is a strange man.'

"Tell him," I said, 'that I am very, very sick, and he must hasten.' I thought since I had begun to faintly I would not make any half-way work of it.

"Oh, I hope you are not so bad as that," said my hostess.

"Yes, yes; I am," I answered. "Be quick, I beg of you. Stop one moment," I exclaimed.

"What is the doctor's name?"

"He don't appear to have any name, sir. At least, nobody ever heard it. I told you he was strange. We call him the 'Strange Doctor.'

"So saying, she started on her errand.

"I threw myself upon the bed and wrapped my cloak around me in a way that completely concealed my face. I knew who was coming knew to a certainty.

"In about three quarters of an hour I heard footsteps approaching. I peeped through a fold in the cloak, and saw, entering the cabin with the woman, a large, stout man, dressed in the coarsest materials, with long, flowing hair and unkempt beard. He wore upon his head a slouched hat. From underneath the broad brim shone eyes which, once seen, could never be mistaken.

"It was Conant.

"He came up to the bed, and in a quick, decisive tone he asked, 'What is the matter with you?'

"Not a soul was present in the room; the woman had gone to attend to her regular duties—not a soul was in the room save Conant and I."

"I threw back the cloak from my face and looked at him intently. He did not appear to recognize me.

"Albert," I said, 'I have come a long way to see you.'

"To torment me," he replied, without changing a muscle.

"Good God!" I exclaimed, 'can this be you, Conant?'

"No; it is not I. Does that satisfy you?" was his answer.

"It does not satisfy me," I said. "I will not be satisfied till I hear from your own lips what all this means. My presence here is accidental. I did not know you were in the vicinity. Had I known it I should have come, of course. I have searched for you over the world these seven years—these seven long years, by every means that I could devise. Now that I have found you, I will have an explanation. I will not quit the place till I get it, if I stay here the balance of my life."

"I had arisen from the bed, thrown aside my cloak and stood confronting him. His agitation was fearful to witness. Large drops of perspiration gathered on his forehead and rolled down