

The Contest of the Frogs.

THE
Contest of the Frogs,

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THE CONTEST OF THE FROGS.

BY D. B. PURINTON.

'Twas a clear and balmy evening, in the rosy
month of June;
And the stars in silent radiance, and the silver-
crested moon
Looked upon the face of Nature, in her summer
robe serene,
As the the crimson blush of sunset, died away
in velvet green.

Closing day with matchless beauty, touched the
sable robe of night.
Bathing every form of Nature, in a soft and mel-
low light,
Breathing over wearied spirits, as by angel mes-
sage given
With its holy benediction,—thoughts of rest and
peace and heaven.

Over hill and vale and meadow thro' the forest,
glade and glen,
Willing feet had swiftly borne me from the busy
haunts of men.
I had walked and talked with Nature, in com-
munion pure and blest;
But at length my feet grew weary, and I laid me
down to rest.

By a placid lake I laid me, where a slow and wind-
 ing stream
 Hid itself beneath the bushes from the moon's
 caressing beam.
 Silence fell on all around me, hushed the voices
 of the night.
 Slumber with a gentle finger, touched my frame
 and closed my sight.

 To the weary sleep comes gently, with its breath
 of sweet repose
 Bathing sense and thought and purpose; ere he
 knows it, naught he knows.
 Thus I lay—how long I know not—till strange
 voices soft and clear,
 Called me from the vales of dream-land, to a place
 I knew not where;

 For, before my wondering vision, lay a scene so
 strangely new,
 That I dared not think it real,—real though it
 seemed, and true.
 On the broken, scattered fragments of old, moss-
 embedded logs,
 There, in stately, solemn silence, sat a multi-
 tude of *frogs*.

 Vast the number, beyond counting—half a mil-
 lion, more or less—
 Much I wondered why they sat there, but could
 neither think nor guess.
 And most strange of all the strangeness, was the
 silence so profound;
 For, in all that vast assembly, not a croaker could
 be found.

Silent sat they, still and stately, not a frog his
throat displayed:

Yet, in some mysterious fashion, came a voice
from out the shade,

Telling me that I had wandered into frog-land
while I slept,

Where Brunono, king of frogs, his ancient court
and palace kept.

And it seemed, by some good fortune I had
chanced upon the day

When, as goes the ancient custom with enlight-
ened frogs, they say,

King Brunono gives his daughter, in the bonds of
wedlock blest,

To the one of all her suitors, who might chance
to suit her best.

Thus it was that here in silence, gathered from
afar and near,

Sat the loyal frogs in waiting, eager all to see and
hear

That strange Contest which, engaging gallant
suitors, must decide

Who should win the Princess' favor, thence to
claim her as his bride.

Then the strangest thing I witnessed, that to
mortal e'er befell:

For whoever could believe it, that a frog should
rise and tell,

In the clearest, purest English, what his claims
and merits were

Which he hoped might gain the favor of the
Princess rich and fair?

Yet, howe'er incredible you think it, this is what
 I heard;
 And I venture to repeat it as I heard it, word for
 word.
 For like little Washington, I could not tell a
 wicked lie,—
 Though I lose your favor, I must keep my own
 veracity.

He who, first of all the suitors, rose to justify his
 claim,
 Was a sleek and supple fellow, known to fortune
 and to fame
 As a rising Politician, skilled to argue and to
 please.
 So it was that thus he spoke, with ready smile
 and studied ease:—

“May it please the King, I rise to state
 My claims to recognition,
 Among the nobles here who wait,
 From Princess lips to learn their fate—
 Despair, or sweet fruition.

With proper modesty I trust,
 My mode of life unfolding,
 Whereby through obstacles I thrust
 My way, by methods wise and just
 To all the world's beholding,

I hope to find my Lady's grace,
 And stand within those portals
 Whose opening arch the bliss displays,
 Of him who wins love's dubious race—
 The happiest of mortals.

When first my public life began—
 In politics a novice—
 I soon observed the happy plan
 Pursued by almost every man,
 Who runs for any office,—

And this it was—with spirit brave
 My principles uprooting,
 I flung them to the wind and wave;
 For principles I must not have,
 If I would gain a footing,

Among the favored of the land,
 Whom all delight to honor;
 Who, at Ambition's altar stand
 To win the fickle Goddess' hand,
 And worship, having won her.

And so I find it vastly wise,
 In courting people's favor,
 To hate whatever they despise,
 To love what's lovely in their eyes—
 And win their hearts forever.

When talking to a tariff frog—
 Before a close election—
 I sit me down upon a log,
 And swear to guard his fen and bog,
 By "tariff for protection."

But when a frog I chance to meet,
 Who staggers at the "Surplus,"
 Who sees disaster, dire and fleet,
 Pursuing us with hastening feet,
 And fell and fiendish purpose,—

I tell him I am fearful too
 Of national destruction,
 Unless we get *our* Bill put through,
 And wipe the tariff out of view—
 Or make a great reduction.

Sometimes to the saloon I go
 To get a little toddy;
 And then my friendliness to show
 To the proprietor, you know,
 So rubicund and ruddy.

And when of late I hear him curse
 The temperance fanatic,
 And then bewail his empty purse—
 His business growing worse and worse—
 In language most emphatic,

My heart expands with sympathy
 And rising indignation;
 And thereupon I swear to be
 A guardian of his liberty,
 And righteous avocation.

But strange to say, the other day,
 I heard a great Convention
 Declare that, voting as they pray,
 They would forever wipe away
 This, Satan's worst invention.

And when, from every christian home,
 There came a stern petition
 Against the curs-ed trade in rum,
 I thought perhaps the time had come
 To vote for prohibition.

'Tis thus I catch the rising breeze
 Of popular opinion,
 Which, by insensible degrees,
 Commands the highest place, with ease,
 In all the King's dominion.

One truth I've learned, inhabiting
 This world of jar and jostle—
 It holds in nearly every thing,
 "The stooping is the conquering."
 So, like the Great Apostle,

Becoming all things to all men,
 By every means employing,
 Their true affection I obtain,
 And crowns of lasting friendship gain—
 All enmity destroying.

My conscience thus I pacify,
 By lotions soothing, lenient,
 Whatever methods I employ—
 Ambition still to gratify—
 That seem the most convenient.

And now, your Highness, I forbear,
 Your patience not to weary.
 If I my Lady's grace may share,
 Life's future burdens all I bear,
 With spirit proud and merry."

Then with gesture mild but stately, gracefully he
 took his seat

'Mid a storm of loud applause—to every politi-
 cian sweet—

While the young, aspiring frogs that to his party
 would belong,

Tossed their ready caps in air, and cheered and
shouted loud and long.

When at length the shouting ceased and silence
was again restored,

Slowly rose another suitor whom society adored.
He was tall and neat and graceful, in most elegant
attire,

Of the latest form and fashion, which all stylish
frogs admire.

Like Lord Chesterfield in manners, faultness, polished,
soft and mild.

A disciple of Aesthetics, in the school of Oscar
Wilde.

There he stood with glove and cane adjusted to
the proper poise,

Wooing thus his lady fair, with softly modulated
voice:—

“The lady I love all others above,
The lady I’m hoping to win,
I give her my heart, and gladly impart
This treasure I carry within.

The beauties of life, I would to my wife
Most surely and sweetly display:
Her spirit to charm; all sorrow and harm
To banish forever away.

My presence serene, wherever I’ve been,
The ladies are sure to enjoy.
It always was so—I relished it too—
When I was a beardless boy.

For, when but a youth, in search of the truth,
 At college I tarried a while,
 I became a Cadet, and can never forget—
 It comes to me now with a smile—

The fairest of pearls—those beautiful girls,
 That modestly sat at my feet,
 Adoringly meek, with nothing to seek,
 If blessed with my company sweet.

And when with the Corps—a hundred or more
 To Huntington proudly I went,
 In uniform dressed--to heed the request
 The ladies so cordially sent—

And, wording their praise in mellifluous phrase
 My great admiration confessed,
 It happened just so, I captured, you know,
 The hearts of the fairest and best.

And may I not dare, my Lady so fair,
 To offer my heart and my hand,
 To sit at thy feet, in rapture complete—
 The happiest frog in the land?"

Scarcely had the speaker finished, and relapsed
 into repose,
 When a sudden flounce and flutter, in the audi-
 ence arose,
 Where the little frogs were seated. Maiden frog-
 gies in their teens
 Fans and 'kerchiefs all were waving, to express
 by every means,
 Their unqualified approval of the speaker and
 the speech,

Of the man so neat and pretty, and the voice so
sweet and rich.

But the Contest must not tarry; other suitors
still were there,

Waiting to address the Princess, and their loy-
alty declare.

Then, with air of calm assurance, rose the Scien-
tific frog,

Known and honored for his learning, over lake
and fen and bog;

And, without pretence or preface, with demeanor
dignified,

Showed the reasons why the Princess should con-
sent to be his bride.

"I rise to relate what I certainly know.

For surely the Princess will never bestow,

Her hand and her heart on a dolt or a fool,

Who nothing has learned in science or school.

When visions of knowledge first dawned upon me,
A mathematician I studied to be.

I mastered the science of number and form,

Applying each model and testing each norm;

Familiar becoming with angle and line,

With tangent, co-tangent, co-secant, cosine,

With maxima, minima, circle and zone,

With cycloid and cissoid, and spheroid and cone.

Then boxing the compass in mariner style,

At squaring the circle I figured a while.

But, finding my genius was not in that line,

I turned to the science of Nature divine.

And there I succeeded most marvellously:
 For secrets of Nature were opened to me,
 And soon, at my bidding, came silently forth
 The richest of treasures, long buried in earth.

Familiar with Nature, I sought to find out
 How all of her products we see here about,
 Were formed or created; or whether they grew
 Old forms out of older, and old into new.

And soon I discovered that nothing was made,
 That matter's eternal, of every grade,
 That by Evolution we all have come forth,
 As formed in the matrix of ocean and earth;

That out of the water and primaeval slime,
 One wee little froggie developed one time.
 And, after a struggle of millions of years,
 He got himself born, head, body and ears.

And then the worst trouble was over and done,
 For, when the first frog his career had begun,
 He, finding no mate in seas, marshes or bogs,
 Divided himself into two little frogs.

And all that we see in earth, ocean or air,
 Of animal life, came from that little pair.
 Old fogies may smile and fanatics may spout,
 But this is the truth, with no manner of doubt.

The science of Nature no traces can find
 Of God or of Devil, of spirit or mind.
 Tis organized matter and nothing beside—
 The ebb of life's current, the flow of its tide.

Nor is this the whole of my learning and lore,
 In Physics and Chemistry—acid and ore,

In Botany—flowers and cryptogams too,
The test-tube and microscope bring to my view.

I study all phases of Nature with zeal,
And learn with her laws and her forces to deal.
Her secret arcana my wisdom unseals,
And all that's worth knowing, to mortals reveals.

And now, noble Princess, both gentle and fair,
The sum of my knowledge I offer to share
With thee, till life's varying journey is o'er,
If thou wilt be mine; I can offer no more."

Views so liberal and modern, couched in words so
bold and strong.

Met a general response from all free thinkers in
the throng.

But, before a word was uttered, or of censure or
of praise,

Quickly rose the Self-made frog, of practical and
worldly ways.

Rich he was as any Croesus, shrewd as Gould or
Vanderbilt,

Rough in form and rough in manners, talking
plainly as he felt.

Now, aroused with indignation at the sentiments
confessed,

Thus, in terms the most illiterate, his mighty
rage expressed;—

"I ain't much at speakin', but I know a thing or
two,

And them soft and silly fellers I can see right
through.

No; there ain't no bottom in the whole consarn-ed

lot,
 And I wouldn't give a fig for all the stuff they've
 got.

Goin' round the kentry talkin' politics and sich,
 Haint no way for any frog to prosper and git rich.
 Now, supposin' I'd a fooled away my time like that,
 Where'd a bin my gold and land and cattle slick
 and fat?

Look at that young dandy dude, w'y he ain't no
 account.

All he's got is on his back, and that's no great
 amount.

He's too soft and lazy, and I reely don't suppose
 All his life he's earned enough to buy them fancy
 clo's.

There's that evolutioner that thinks he knows it all,
 Bringin' everything we see, the big as well's the
 small

Out o' mud, and nuthin' else, w'y reely, 'pon my
 word,

That there's the silliest stuff that ever I have
 heard!

May be he was made o' mud; its more than like
 he was:

But how on airth could he find out the rest o'
 natur's laws?

I was made o' sunthin' better, and I'll let that
 feller know

He can't put on me no pedigree so mean and low

One thing now I'd like to know, I couldn't for
 my life

See how sich poor, shif'less fellers could support
a wife:

Specially a Princess, who had been a livin' well.
What on airth they're thinkin' of, is more than I
can tell.

Guess they think with larnin' and with dressin'
up so smart,

They can git the better o' the Princess' head and
heart.

If I know'd no faster stock was entered in this
race,

W'y I'd jist wade in myself, and give 'em all a
chase—

B'lieve I will; so jist you put my name down on
the list.

True, I ain't so young and slick and supple as the
rest,

But I've got a fortune, and I know it can't be beat
Nowhere; and I'll lay it all before the Princess'
feet."

Words are poor and weak and helpless, to de-
scribe what happened next.

Shouts and cheers and screams and hisses—some
were pleased and some were vexed—

Mingled in one common chorus, universal, clear
and strong,

While above the din, resounded piercing echoes,
loud and long.

Then arose a clumsy fellow, who was chosen here
of late

To instruct in Metaphysics, in Brunono's School

of State.

He was not a beauty surely, such as maiden
fancies catch—

Lofty cheeks and hollow eyes, and yellow hair
and beard to match.

Yet he boldly rose, determined to redeem this
Contest fair,

From the coarse, disgraceful language that had
just been uttered there.

So he couched what thoughts he had, in words
magniloquent and grand;

Used, it seems, to hide his purpose like the fa-
mous Tallyrand.

“Most regal, magnificent Princess,
Descent of Brunono, the Great,
Thy beauty transcendent, evinces
The blood of the Potentate.

Becoming it seems that the suitors
Aspiring thy pleasure to wait,
Address thee in dignified language,
Befitting thy regal estate.

The themes of my life's speculation,
Whose claims I would fain represent,
Are worthy of all contemplation
By thinkers, on wisdom intent.

The manifold forms of cognition,
Perception and consciousness' seat,
The intricate steps of transition
From Percept to Concept complete,—

Criteria—tests universal
 Of all categorical truth,
 Admitted beyond all reversal
 By age and by tenderest youth,—

The powers of Association
 Which thoughts recollected exert,
 The methods of Redintegration
 With spirit aroused or inert,—

The Infinite, how unconditioned,
 The sum or the substance of all;
 Contingency not unprevisioned,
 Determined before it befall—

The creed of the famous Agnostic
 Who nothing of Deity knows;
 Theologies, dark, pantheistic
 Whose God into everything grows—

Philosophy's intricate history,
 The methods by which it proceeds,
 Its incomprehensible mystery,
 Bewildering dogmas and creeds—

Such questions as these to consider,
 All seekers for truth it behooves;
 Compared unto which every other
 Its poor insignificance proves.

But these speculations I master,
 Defying belligerents all
 Wherever with direful disaster,
 My strokes of philosophy fall.

I therefore admonish these suitors
 Advancing competitive claims;

That now they withdraw from this Contest,
And seek them appropriate dames

In humbler and lowlier station,
Where maidens, perchance, they may find,
Obtuse, and of slight penetration,
Befitting their smallness of mind.

And now, lofty Princess, attractive
To all that within me is best;
That sentiment, high, retroactive,
Must surely inhabit thy breast.

The homage of friendship unending
Devoutly I tender thee now—
The thought of the ancients defending—
True friendship but once I bestow."

Then uprose the frog Athletic, of proportions vast
and strong,
Bearing features, face and form that to the Em-
erald Isle belong.
Forth he strode and firm he stood, with giant
strength and conscious skill,
In the art of self-defence, no secondary place to fill.

"Me name it is Sullivan; Ireland's me home.
Across the wide saize it's a woin' I've come.
A gintleman true, of leisure and aize,
Divartin' the public wheniver I plaize,

Wid sparrin' and sportin' in ilegant style,
And winnin' of bets and of wagers the while.
An artist I am of most ixcellent grace,
Accomplished in frescoin' frogs on the face.

A pugilist mighty, of world-wide renown,
 In ivery country me name it is known.
 I lived in Americay manny a day,
 And just for two raizons I jarneyed away.

And one was, they gave me a horrible name,
 They called me "Professor"—I wasn't to blame,
 For anny thing worse than to black a frog's eye,
 Or twist his proboscis a leetle awry.

And niver's the time that for office I ran—
 For Prsident, Congress, or Alderman's van—
 And yit, whenever a paper I read,
 "Professor John Sullivan" stood at the head.

Of manny an article givin' at length
 Results of me strikin' and proofs of me strength.
 And when I discovered me awful disgrace,
 Be sure, I detarmined on lavein' the place.

I came to Ould England, me fortune to find.
 And there I was courted, was wined and was dined.
 And sartin' it was that they made me a pet.
 The King—however, he's not the King yit—

They call him the Prince till his ould mudther
 dies,
 And thin to the top of the Kingdom he'll rise—
 The King I was sayin'—he tuck me right in.
 He fancies me wark, and desires me to win,

Whenever I *argue* with knuckle and fist,
 And on me own physical vartue insist,
 And so I detarmined and heartily swore
 That niver I'd live in Americay more.

But now I've returned, to secure me a bride—
 If only the Princess would stand at me side,
 And shure it must be, if protection she wants,
 Its meself that must stand an amazin' good
 chance.

I offer her now all the strength of me arm,
 Which niver a frog in the Kingdom can harm;
 For indade its meself that with banner unfurled,
 Is wearin' the Champion Belt of the world."

Such a speech, so unexpected, in its matter and
 its style,
 Struck the nerve of titillation, and most audible
 the smile.

But another suitor waited, little caring to express
 His affection for the Princess, in such cold and
 formal phrase.

He was delicate and modest, of retired and
 thoughtful life,

Deeming it a profanation to disclose in public
 strife,

Thoughts devout and feelings sacred—hidden se-
 crets of the heart,

Which to one and one alone, 'tis sweetest pleas-
 ure to impart.

So he waited for the suitors to declare their claims
 and vows,

Till the only one remaining, now reluctantly he
 rose

As required by ancient custom, in that pres-
 ence to declare

His affection for the Princess, whose in turn he
 hoped to share.

But his words were few and simple, nothing need-
 less, nothing vain,
 No attempt to show his learning, or his wisdom
 to explain.
 Thus he spoke with manly bearing, not of pride
 and not of fear,
 Little thinking, little caring, how his rivals might
 appear;—

“Tis little I know; all my life I have sought
 To find out the truth that I can and I ought.
 Believing in God, I am trying to be
 The best and the greatest he purposed in me.

So, loving the lovely, the gentle, the true,
 Inspires me with courage to dare and to do;
 And this is the reason, though vain it may be,
 That now, gentle Princess, I dare to love thee.

I cannot of station or family boast,
 Nor marshal supporters in numerous host,
 Nor claim an abundance of wisdom or pelf;
 I've little to give, so I give thee myself.”

Breathless silence, deep, expectant, o'er the vast
 assembly reigned.

Every anxious eye uplifted, every eager ear was
 strained;

Listening all to hear the Princess, as she mod-
 estly arose,

To declare of all the suitors, whom she loved and
 freely chose.

“I thank you, my suitors, for sentiments kind,
 Expressed by you all with such frankness of
 mind.

Your friendship I prize, and your virtues esteem,
As worthy of praise and of honor they seem.

Refinement of manners and mildness of speech
Are worthy of seeking by all and by each.
Achievements in Science and Politics too
Command the respect of the good and the true.

I honor Philosophy's loftiest sweep,
Its vigor of grasp, its profundities deep.
Nor would I despise even muscle or pelf;
But he is accepted who gives me himself."



