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TOWANDA:

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Selected Poetry.

THE FIRST BIRDS OF SPRING.

Ye come, ye come, bright warbling things,
And joy is in your song;
Ye bear upon your dewy wings
The spring's first breath along.
Ye herald in the happy morn,
That is the birth of flowers;
Ye tell that winter's chills have gone,
Its snows and icy towers.
Ye bid the earth its carpet weave,
In Nature's matchless loom;
The warp from many a grassy leaf,
The woof from flower's loom.
Ye bid the naked branches dress,
In all their proud array,
And all things don their loveliness,
To welcome back the day.
Ye bid the icy fetters fall
From many a prisoned rill;
And onward joyful at your call
They gambol down the hill.
All nature wakes from sleep; the cloud
Shades not the sun's bright ray;
No more the storm-wind's howling loud,
Disturb the zephyr's lay.
Pass on, pass on to other lands,
Ye birds of merry note;
Sing there of spring, ye joyful bands,
From every tuneful throat.
And gladden every heart that hears
Your message from above;
Pass on and dry up winter's tears,
Sweet harbingers of love.

Selected Tale.

[From the Democratic Review.]

THE DOUBLE MISTAKE.

Translated from the French by Hon. H. J. Harris, of Miss.

Balthazar Polo was a true saint, who had assisted at the funeral of Louis XIV—a kind-hearted and charitable man, and a pious Christian. An affair of love had led him, in the midst of many perils, to New Mexico. God had finally settled him at Adayes, to take care of the bodies and souls of the inhabitants. Here he taught those to read who had capacity enough to learn, repeated their Aves to the little children, cured the yellow fever, proposed riddles to the young men and played with the girls, on Sunday, at blind-man's-buff—a very new play, which he had himself introduced, together with melons and sun-flowers. Father Polo was at once the priest, schoolmaster and physician of the village. He was indeed an accomplished man, of a very tender conscience, profound slumber, sensitive heart, enormous appetite, and of a physiognomy without spot or blemish, except that he had a cataract over his right eye, which had been originally much the best of the two. Thus it was that his vision was weak and uncertain. To the worthy priest, the brightest day was only as the feeble twilight of the morning, or the timid rays of the moon, when first she rises above the trees. But he was so good, so pure-hearted, so charitable, so full of excellent intentions, that no one allowed himself to laugh at the innumerable mishaps he committed—so much respected was he, and in every way so worthy of respect and regard.

The day came when a mistake of the good priest was followed by much chagrin and many tears. At the time I speak of, the most beautiful girl in the village of Adayes, even in the judgment of the women themselves, was Therese Paccard, the daughter of a Frenchman who had married a Spanish wife.

Not far from the village lived a young man, the son of a Spanish father and French mother—a fine looking fellow, somewhat more Spanish than French, as Therese was more French than Spanish. Our hero, dissatisfied with tending herds on the prairies of Avoyle, had emigrated near to Adayes, where he had purchased a small tract of land, and elevated himself to the dignity of a proprietor. He lived with his father and mother and a whole army of sisters, in a small cabin which he had erected with his own hands. Richard Alvarez, then in his twentieth year, was the handsomest man in the village, notwithstanding he wore the costume of the prairies—a straw hat, a round-about, and a buckskin pair of pantaloons, with moccasins to match.

Alvarez saw Therese, and loved her. Therese dropped her eyes beneath the burning gaze of Alvarez, and grew alternately red and pale. Alvarez, too, when the dark eyes of Therese fell upon him, was similarly affected. At the end of a month or so, the young girl went to consult Balthazar Polo. Bad as his eyes were, the worthy priest saw her blushing.

"Yes, my child," he said, "yes, my child. I understand you. It is true the young man is not rich and you are very poor; but you are both honest, industrious, and of a fitting age; you love one another, as I see very clearly; and it is not for me to forbid your being happy."

About the same time and tending to the same result, that is to say, to marriage, there was going on, between a couple of maturer years, a courtship less passionate, perhaps, but more prudent and more respectable. Madame Labedoyere, the widow of a wealthy planter, childless and past forty, had lived eighteen years on her large and fertile plantation. Whether from idleness or weariness, Madame Labedoyere had determined to receive the homage of an old and wealthy Frenchman, who vegetated like herself near the village of Adayes. M. Dulac, the rich Frenchman in question, was a little man, over sixty years of age, hypochondriacal to the very marrow of his bones. She went to work, therefore, to ingratiate herself with the ridiculous old Frenchman; she showed him the most unbecoming attentions,

sent him the most delicate viands, addressed him in tones of the faintest treble, and shaved off the moustache that ornamented her upper lip. The old gentleman grew pensive. He asked himself, egotist that he was, whether the attentions and cares of so beautiful and charming a widow might not be a useful resource to him in the ever increasing infirmities of his old age. He went so far as to study phrases of gallantry, which he threw out, one after another, with much grimace; and as Madame Labedoyere was as much pressed as he was, after some moments of hesitation and displays of becoming modesty, she consented to unite her heart and her slaves to the heart and slaves of M. Dulac.

The venerable couple and the two young lovers had thus changed vows the most dear, each one dreaming nothing but to receive the sacrament of marriage. Balthazar Polo, the good Providence of all husbands, was called upon to witness the quadruple obligations. Without knowing it, the two couples had selected for their marriage the same day and the same hour.

It happened, also, that all the bachelors at Adayes, young and old, had agreed to receive the nuptial benediction the same day. That year is still called, in the annals of the parish, "The year of the weddings."

"You know, Richard," said Therese to her lover, "that Father Polo has promised to marry all who present themselves to-morrow at noon, and the day after to-morrow at four o'clock in the morning. How embarrassing it would be to marry before the whole world! But, my dear Richard, if we were to marry day after to-morrow at noon, who will see us? or if any do see us, being married themselves, what can they have to say? Let us marry, then, my dear Richard, if you please, day after to-morrow, at four o'clock in the morning."

The young bridegroom yielded so the force of this reasoning, and parted from his betrothed to make the necessary preparations for the wedding.

One thing is worthy of remark, that the caprice of the young and timid girl was likewise the caprice of the wilful and headstrong Madame Labedoyere. She insisted with M. Dulac, that she should be married with the others at noon, but would go to the altar *incognito*, the day before lent, at four o'clock in the morning. He consented.

At length the last day of carnival arrived. The joyous carnival was about to die, and Lent raised its sharp-pointed visage, when, at three o'clock in the morning, the church was thrown open, with a discordant and furious clattering of the three broken bells. The worthy Balthazar Polo, who had been performing the marriage ceremony all the preceding afternoon, was the first at his post. The church was speedily filled by the future conjuncts and their friends, the happy pairs coming in one after another, and forming a spectacle of great variety and singular confusion. Nearly all the new bridegrooms were wrapped in cloaks of a sombre hue, in which they sought protection from the inclemency of the morning. In fact, the sky which the evening before had been blue and serene, had suddenly become changed with thick and mottled clouds; March, the soiled child of the spring, had passed from smiles to tears, from pleasure to anger. Fourteen couples, in two opposing rows, the men on one side and the women on the other, knelt down, leaving an interval for the priest to pass along, and unite the pairs by giving them his benediction. Behind the grooms stood the relatives and friends of each, ready to receive the bride after the ceremony, and to conduct her in triumph to the house of her husband. The body of the church was buried in darkness, the only lights being two candles of beeswax placed upon the altar. Outside there was gathering a terrible storm. As the day advanced, the night grew still more dark; the wind blew with great violence against the holy edifice, and rushed in gusts through the half-open door.

In this deplorable circumstance of the night and the storm, Father Polo saw, what others had told him frequently, that it was necessary to hasten the ceremony, if he wished the newly married pairs to arrive without inconvenience at their several homes. He hurried accordingly through the conjugal ranks, scarcely taking time to place the wedding rings upon the fingers held out to receive them. The ring being received, the worthy Balthazar handed the bride to her husband's friends, who hastened to envelope her in her mantilla, and conduct her home before the storm came on. This was done more rapidly than can be described. At every step the good priest took, a flash of lightning illuminated the heavens, a newly married couple disappeared from the church, and Father Polo proceeded to the next.

In this hasty and touching ceremony, M. Dulac and Richard Alvarez were on their knees at the side of each other; opposite to them respectively were Madame Labedoyere and Therese Paccard, both trembling, the one with fear, the other with love—both enveloped in their cloaks—both stretching out their hands for the wedding rings, with their heads bowed down for the priest's benediction. Balthazar Polo, more blind than ever, reached the two couples at a rapid pace. Fourteen carriages, the noise of the storm, the glare of the wax candles, the mantillas of the brides, brought about a very necessary result. The worthy priest, troubled in heart and soul, placed on the finger of the beautiful Therese the ring of the old and withered Dulac, while Madame Labedoyere received the ring of the handsome Richard, and to end the ceremony, he handed Therese to the friends of Dulac, and delivered Madame Labedoyere to those of Richard. A loud crash of thunder extinguished the beeswax candles—the church was shrouded in darkness, and Father Polo fervently commended to the protection of Heaven all whom he had that night made happy. These hastened to mount their horses and depart. The kinsmen of Richard, all thinking the load somewhat heavy, placed Madame Labedoyere upon the beautiful, sure-footed and fleet horse, which he had brought for Therese. On the other hand, Therese threw herself lightly on the little ambling

pony, which M. Dulac had purchased expressly for the widow. Thus the two brides rode on, the one in a trot, the other in a pace—Madame Labedoyere escorted by a number of active and vigorous young gentlemen, the fluttering Therese by several staid old planters, and quite a number of other persons of mature years.

Therese arrived with her escort, at the house of M. Dulac, just as the first drops of rain began to fall. In the morning twilight, she observed in the building a species of consequence, which did not comport exactly with her ideas of Richard's cabin. The trees and shrubbery indicated a lordly mansion, rather than a humble cottage. But as she had no time to collect her thoughts, all this made but a faint impression on her mind. Arrived at the portico, a swarm of slaves rushed out to welcome their new mistress. One took her mantilla, another conducted her to a spacious and splendidly-furnished room, a third hastened to offer her a chair, while a fourth, who had on her arms bracelets of silver, presented her a mirror, that she might re-adjust her hair, somewhat disarranged by her ride. The young girl opened her eyes, and began to doubt whether she was awake or asleep. She regarded the apartment with an earnest look. The room was furnished with large gilt chairs with seats of crimson velvet, and exquisitely wrought ottomans encircled by garlands of oak; an immense mirror, gilded and carved like the chairs, hung against the papered wall just over a magnificent mahogany sofa. Around the room were suspended the ancient portraits of the family, in long flowing wigs and brilliant armor. As to herself, she was seated in a large armchair of faded damask, with tarnished gold fringes, her feet resting on a flowered foot-stool, and before her, on a marble stand, a wedding breakfast which nothing could surpass in richness and profusion. There was claret in long bottles, champagne secured by wax and pack-thread, glasses of rock crystal, silver plate with coat of arms, Sevres porcelain so rare and costly at this day, and on plates of jappaned ware, the savory trout, the chicken salad, the fricasseed mallards, and many other delicious viands of French cookery, such as the young girl had never tasted or dreamed of.

"Ah!" said Therese, contemplating the splendor and the comfort, "this cannot be the mansion of Richard; unless it may be," she added, after casting round another look, "that after all, Richard is rich, and has intended me a happy surprise!" Her doubts on the subject lasted but for a little while. The inner door of the chamber opened slowly, and she saw enter an old gentleman, with a lean and jaundiced face, and a step painful and infirm. This personage, straightening himself up as well as he could, introduced himself by saying: "M. Dulac has the honor to salute Madame Dulac."

The poor child gazed at him in astonishment. As to the old man, not less surprised at first, but in a different manner, he recovered quickly, and eagerly seized the hand of the beautiful girl, which she dared not withdraw, out of respect for one who reminded her of her grandfather. Throwing aside all the fine phrases he had studied to please the widow, he said:—"Ah, Madame, pardon my embarrassment. My good fortune confounds me. I am dumb with surprise and joy. How much you are changed since I saw you last! How happy am I to find my wife thrice as young and ten times more beautiful! Suffer me to congratulate you on this grand miracle, and to pour out my thanks to Heaven."

"It is no miracle, Monsieur," replied Therese, withdrawing her hand; "I am what I always have been; but there is something strange in all this, that I cannot understand."

"You have good reason," replied the old man, "very good reason to say so; it is indeed strange. In the place of my faded widow, I have found a fresh and blooming girl, with a lustrous eye and white and delicate hand—a timid and trembling virgin as the sovereign mistress of my house and heart. It is strange—in fact—it is very strange; it is a miracle that I cannot account for myself, but for which, once more, I thank you and Heaven."

At these words the terror of the young girl increased. "Ah, Monsieur," exclaimed she, "we are the sport of some fatal mistake. You are not Richard; it is Richard that I want to see."

And wringing her hands, she cried out, "Richard, oh! Richard!" She started up to leave the house; but the enamored old Frenchman placed himself before the door. The beauty, which had struck him so vividly before, seemed to him more charming than ever. An overpowering passion inflamed his dried up soul, while he studied, more at leisure, her round, plump face, her forehead covered with curls, her finely moulded cheeks of a color so surprisingly red, her large black eyes which the tears rendered more brilliant, and her pouting and vermilion lips.

"May I take the liberty, Madame," said M. Dulac, "to inquire who it is you call upon by the name of Richard?"

"It is Richard—my husband Richard—Richard Alvarez, whom I married this morning."

"Excuse me, Madame," replied M. Dulac, in the blandest tones. "I know nothing of Richard Alvarez. The person you married this morning is myself. I am the one to whom you pledged, before the altar, faith and fidelity. Oh, my young wife, my beloved young wife, look at the ring upon your finger, with the motto: 'YOU'RE TILL DEATH.' That ring is mine. Henceforth, I am your protector, your friend, your father. You are my wife, if not by consent of our wills, at least by the decree of Heaven, which has united us by a bond that cannot be broken."

M. Dulac would have gone on, had not a fit of coughing cut short his harangue, so solemn and so loving.

Therese, comprehending the whole extent of the accident, which had married her so contrary to her wishes, cast herself into the chair, weeping and desolate. The enamored old man tried to console her. He showed her the most delicate attentions, and presented her the rich

est presents—pearl necklaces, gold chains, silk dresses, French gloves, perfumed handkerchiefs, and all the ornaments which had been destined for Madame Labedoyere. He spoke to her of the extent and commodiousness of his house, the size of his plantation, the number of his slaves, and the bales of cotton and the pounds of indigo he raised to the hand; and wound up by assuring her solemnly that at his death he would bequeath to her his whole estate. Perceiving that she listened to him somewhat more attentively, he seasoned his discourse with a little calumny against Richard, so poor and so incumbered with a family. He insinuated adroitly, that the accident which had made him the happiest of men, could not have happened without some aid on the part of Richard. Then he represented Richard in the arms of the rich widow, forgetful of poor Therese, whom he had sacrificed for the sake of fortune. His manner was so sincere, so submissive, that Therese began to regard him with an eye of favor. She placed the gold chain upon her neck, clasped the gold bracelets on her arms, and little by little consented to share with M. Dulac the banquet he had prepared. Seated at his side, she held out her glass for the champagne, and drowned her nose and her sorrows in its sparkling foam.

In the meantime, Madame Labedoyere, now Madame Richard, was rapidly borne to the cabin of her spouse, on the mettlesome courser that Richard had brought from the Avoylees. Although the dwelling of Richard was further off than that of M. Dulac, yet owing to the rapidity of the pace, she made the passage in the same time as Therese, and arrived just as the day was breaking. Her surprise was greater even than that of the young girl. The room into which she was led had a floor of roughly hewn and badly jointed planks; the bare beams of the loft were blackened with smoke; an entire cypress log was blazing brightly in the huge fire-place; a few old chairs, a dozen of stools, and two large arm chairs, constituted the whole of the furniture.

Into this room the widow was introduced. No slave was present to receive her. A white-headed girl assisted her in taking off her mantilla. When she stood before them, in all the blaze of other jewels, and her robes of rustling silk, the two old folks who had risen up to welcome her—the one an old man of sixty years, with a white beard and a buckskin pair of pantaloons, the other a respectable matron, some ten years younger, with a large cotton bonnet and coarse woolen dress—withered their hands stretched out to embrace their daughter, and bowed themselves to the floor in respectful silence.

"What a handsome dame!" said the old woman to her husband.

"What a wife for Richard!" whispered the blonde who had taken off the mantilla.

Madame Labedoyere cast upon the group and cabin looks of bitter disdain. Her eyes, black and haughty, flashed fire as she spurned the miserable chair they offered her. Her moustache, which had sprouted up anew, bristled on her curled and sneering lip.

"Where am I?" she exclaimed; in whose house, and with whom? This is not the home of my husband."

"Where is my wife?" said Richard, entering at the same moment, his face radiant with joy.

"Where is my wife, that I may embrace her?" Then seeing the widow, "What woman is this?" he asked, in a tone of voice disturbed and anxious, he could hardly tell why.

"It is the woman," replied one of his friends, "it is the wife the priest gave us for you."

"And a beautiful dame she is," said Richard's mother; "a handsomer one, I dare say, is not to be found in all the Avoylees."

"But I am not your wife!" exclaimed the widow, in a furious voice—"I am not your wife. Let some conduct me to my husband. I will not stay a moment longer in this wretched cabin."

"You speak truly," replied Richard. "You are not my wife. It was a young girl I married, and, thank Heaven, one much prettier than you—Therese Paccard, my lovely Therese. There is some fatal mistake here, which I must clear up. You must remain as a hostage until I find my Therese. Unless Therese be given up, you shall not leave this miserable cabin as you see fit to call it."

"Ah," said Richard's mother, struck by a sudden idea, "you see that all this has happened through the bad eyesight of Balthazar, who has given you this unlucky dame by mistake."

"In that case," answered Richard, "it will be necessary for Balthazar to find and restore me my wife. What right has he to cheat me out of her another's advantage? Why has he given me this haughty woman, who is old enough to be my mother? But I will go to see Balthazar, that he may restore me my dear Therese. In the meantime keep strict guard upon this woman, and detain her till I return."

Having uttered these words he rushed out of doors, notwithstanding the rain, which was now falling in torrents. His mother called to him in vain. Mounting his horse, he rode at once to the village of Adayes. He had a long interview with Balthazar Polo. The good priest tried to persuade him that a mistake was impossible; he felt sure that he had given the rings to the proper persons, and the brides to the friends of the husband. But all the worthy priest could say only increased the fury of Richard. He asked Balthazar if he thought the whole world was as blind as himself—if he imagined that he (Richard) could not distinguish between a woman of forty and a pretty girl of sixteen. At last Balthazar inquired if he knew the name of the man who had knelt by his side, as it might be that his betrothed had been carried off by him. Struck with this thought, Richard knew not what to say. In his excitement he had not learned even the name of the woman he had left at his home. It was necessary to get this information from the widow, and he therefore prepared to return. He was unwilling, however, to quit the village before he had made a visit to the house Therese. Inquiring there, they told him they knew nothing about her; she had left the house in her wedding clothes, and they had supposed she was with her husband. He went then to church, in the vain hope that the night still be there.

He found only the sexton, and the horrible figures of the saints, who regarded his agonies with entire indifference. The Virgin De Los Dolores, completely absorbed in her own griefs, had no tears to shed for those of Richard, so new and so bitter. He was also tempted to throw down the vile paintings, and trample them under his feet; but as he had to look out for Therese without delay, he mounted his horse again, and soon reached his home, drenched with rain.

The fury of the storm, which would have spoiled Madame Labedoyere's wedding robes had she ventured abroad, enabled her to support with some patience her detention at the house of Richard. On his return, he found her sitting in a chair, with an air of sociability rather than of discontent. Her more sober reflections had not been at all to Richard's disadvantage. Should Therese be found, M. Dulac was still left; but if not, it was easy to repair his loss by a young man of so fine an appearance and fresh complexion. Young, passionate, proud, loving in the extreme, he might well compensate her for the riches and asthma of M. Dulac; and if he was poor, she had more than enough for both. On the whole, before Richard returned, she found her situation quite supportable.

Soaked with rain and panting for breath, Richard demanded of the woman her name, and the name of the person she had married that morning. The whole family were called into council, and deliberated upon the information thus received. Even the widow herself, in this emergency, descended from her pride, and gave them the benefit of her advice. It was unanimously resolved that Richard should go to the house of M. Dulac, and demand his young spouse. If given up, Madame Labedoyere was to be surrendered to her husband and to liberty.

This concluded upon, Richard and his father prepared themselves for the journey, like paladins of the olden time. To the impatient young how long appeared the road, and how cruel his old father, whom nothing could induce to hurry his pace. It was in vain that Richard remarked to him frequently that the day was declining, the road a long one, and unless he rode faster, it would be dark before they reached their destination. The old man replied that it was many years now since he had been on horseback, and he had no idea of breaking his neck for Richard's benefit. Besides, he said, it would make no difference, provided, they arrived before the night set in.

At length, however, they reached the house of M. Dulac, just at the twilight hour it was no longer day, nor yet quite night. The rain had ceased to fall, and the sky was once more serene. The impatient young man knocked loudly at the door. After some delay, it was opened by an old negro, who informed the travellers that M. Dulac had just retired with his newly married wife.

"And what woman?" eagerly inquired Richard.

"A very handsome and noble dame," replied the negro, "whom my master brought home this morning."

At this answer the breath and heart of Richard failed him. He had neither voice nor courage to interrogate the negro further. His father then took charge of the matter. The negro answered freely. He informed them that his new mistress was about sixteen, from the village of Adayes, and her name Therese Paccard, that she cried very much at first in the parlor, but afterwards at the table seemed very contented and happy.

What Richard suffered during this recital, it is impossible to describe. His French and Spanish blood waged a fierce battle in his veins. At last his French pride triumphed. "Let us go, father," he said, "let us go. I understand the whole thing. Therese has sported with me cruelly. Let us go, father—let us go."

The old man held back his son, and said to the negro sternly, "It is necessary that I should see your master, and at once."

"It is impossible," replied the negro; "our master has forbidden us to enter his chamber, under any pretext, before morning."

"Go, tell your master, you slave of Satan," exclaimed the old Louisianian, "go tell your master that I must see him, and that too, instantly."

The black went to inform M. Dulac. A moment afterwards he returned with a message to Richard and his father, to the effect that it was his wedding night, that he had retired with his new spouse, that he prayed them to excuse him at so happy a period, that he would receive them to-morrow, and comply with their wishes, whatever they might be.

At every word the negro spoke, the old herdsman swelled out at least half a foot, developing by degrees his broad shoulders, his brawny arms, his huge fists, and the fury which inflamed his breast. "Go, tell your master," he exclaimed once more to the slave, who had left the inner door partly open, "go, tell M. Dulac that if I do not see him at once, I will overturn his house, and bury himself, his slaves, and his wife beneath its ruins."

No sooner had he thrown out this threat, than a window in the lower story was opened, at which a head in a woolen nightcap presented itself; and M. Dulac inquired in a harsh and broken voice what the noise meant, and what they wished with him at that unseasonable hour of the night.

Richard's father acted as spokesman. He explained, in a few words, the object of the visit—spoke of the exchange of the women, by which his son had been victimized—and demanded, in a loud voice, the wife of Richard, offering to give up in return, the diamonds, the dresses, and the bride of M. Dulac.

A deep silence followed. Richard held himself ready to burst into the apartment, should he hear a shriek, or even a sigh; but he heard nothing.

"You see, Messieurs," M. Dulac then replied with a triumphant air, "that there has been no mistake. I am perfectly satisfied with the happy marriage I made this morning, and I trust your young wife is satisfied also; at any rate you perceive she makes no objection. She is my wife according to the laws of the church; she bears on her finger the ring of a lawful

spouse, which the priest gave her in my name. As to the widow Labedoyere, I have no desire to see her; she is a very respectable woman, who will, I have no doubt, suit Richard admirably, and I wish him with her all manner of happiness."

Having said this, the old man drew in his head. Richard then made a last desperate effort. "Therese," he cried out, "my Therese—Therese Paccard!"

It was M. Dulac who replied this time, in a tone a little more elevated. "Young man," he said, "is this a suitable hour to court my wife? Do you wish to take her from me the very hour of our wedding? You have started quickly, Messieurs, on your gallant expedition. Even in France such conduct as yours is never heard of. Even there they leave the husband a few hours repose. And you, M. Alvarez, as I understand you call yourself, I am surprised that a gray haired old man like you, should countenance Richard in this wicked business. You wish to give me, you say, Madame Labedoyere in exchange for my wife. You will please excuse me. I am quite content with my lot; you should be satisfied with the woman who has fallen to you. Good night, Messieurs; I wish you a safe return." With these words the woolen cap disappeared, the window came down, the shutters creaked upon their hinges, and at the same moment the old negro closed and bolted the door.

The father and son stood fixed in rage and astonishment. The old man advised that the door should be burst open; Richard wished to forget the ingrate; and the two—one swearing, the other weeping—proceeded to the house of the unhappy Balthazar. The good priest received them with unusual kindness; he listened attentively to their complaints. "My friends," he said, "I am sorry, very sorry, for the great error I have committed, in which, nevertheless, I see clearly, the finger of God. What Heaven has done, I am not able to undo. Madame Labedoyere is your wife before God and man. Therese Paccard is the lawful wife of M. Dulac. Come to see me to-morrow, Richard, with your wife. I will send for M. and Madame Dulac, and endeavor to arrange matters between you as well as I can."

The next day the two couples were brought together again at the priest's house. Madame Dulac cast down her eyes in shame, and seemed heartily to despise her withered old husband. Madame Richard on the contrary, marched with head erect, clinging to the side of her spouse as if afraid that the mistake might be repeated. As for Richard, he appeared calm and resigned to the decrees of Providence, while M. Dulac smiled with the assurance of a man whose happiness nothing can disturb.

The good priest, when he saw the two pairs so badly mated, understood the whole extent of his blunder, and he thus addressed them:—"We have committed a great mistake, my friends, and I am much to blame thus to have compromised my sacred office. You," said he, addressing the two old lovers, "you are much the gainers by this sport of fortune, which has so horribly ruined these two young persons. You must make them a compensation, and the one I propose is a very small one. The law gives to these young folks nothing more than to be, Therese your wife, and Richard your husband. Make amends for the defects of the law, and repair my fault, poor old blind man that I am. Let M. Dulac give one half of his fortune to his young wife—and you, Madame, a half of yours to Richard; and then let Heaven and my young friends grant me pardon, and your marriages remain as they are."

At first this arrangement seemed a very disagreeable one to the rich parties, but the command of the priest was peremptory. M. Dulac could not think of giving up Therese, and Madame Labedoyere when she saw the comely Richard at the side of his old and ugly rival, did not hesitate to compare his youth and vigor with the other's age and decrepitude; and in her heart she congratulated herself on the exchange. The notary was accordingly called in; the deeds were drawn up in due form; and the parties withdrew—Therese with M. Dulac, and Richard with Madame Labedoyere, at whose house, now his own, he went to live.

The next night the newly married couple saw their grief renewed after a singular fashion. The custom of charivaris has never ceased to be religiously observed in America. It is the most boisterous, and therefore the most appropriate mode of celebrating unequal and ill-assorted marriages. At the approach of night the charivari reached the house of Madame Richard. The procession marched across the yard, to the light of a pine torch, and the music of tin pans, horns, kettle-drums and horse-drums. It was headed by two horrible figures, one representing an old woman with a haughty and confident look, the other a young rustic with the air of a simpleton. These embraced and kissed each other with the most comical ardor. After them came a wag, singing at the top of his voice a ballad adapted to the occasion.

All the troupe joined in the chorus, in which the names of Richard and his wife figured conspicuously. Madame Richard prepared to give the enemy a warm reception. After the band had arrived in front of the mansion, a peasant, in the costume and with the attitudes of a circus clown, advanced and knocked loudly with a stick he held in his hand. This was the signal for the besieged to make use of their defensive arms. At the first blow of the stick, the clown and his companions were overwhelmed with greasy water, spoiled potatoes, rotten eggs, and such other projectiles as were near at hand. The revellers received perfume in exchange for their music; on the one side, their ears were stung; on the other, their clothes were ruined. The contest was altogether unequal, and the music had to retreat. Thus the joyous charivari, which had entered in such good order, withdrew precipitately, nor without leaving a large portion of its arms on the field of battle. The one at the house of M. Dulac had better success. The evening's entertainment opened by a grand overture, to which the old gentlemen listened with a very pale