

## A LEGEND OF L'ANSE CREUSE.\*

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A woodpecker sat on an oaken stump,  
Pecking away with a ceaseless thump,  
And now and then, as he cocked his eye,  
Darted a glance so keen and sly,  
You'd have thought, had you seen him that summer day,  
Old Greenback has something queer to say.  
When that stump was a stately tree,  
Sturdy in trunk and sound in knee,  
Forward a little from the wood,  
Close by the edge of the bank it stood,  
And acorns dropped where the ripples break  
Over the brim of the smiling lake.  
When that tree was at its best,  
An emerald bird, with crimson crest,  
All through the summer, from dawn till dark,  
Hopped and tapped on its ridgy bark ;  
The limbs have dropped, the trunk is dead,  
But the plumes are shining on back and head,  
And the restless eye is clear and keen  
As when the old oak's leaves were green ;  
But under his throat, perhaps you'd say,  
Rubytop shows a spot of gray.  
Orchard and field for many a rood  
Cover the dust of the buried wood,

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\* I am indebted to the courtesy of Hon. James V. Campbell for the use of this charming poem, also for much historical information and flattering interest and encouragement.

And low-roofed houses, old and quaint,  
Browned by the weather and bare of paint,  
Shelter a people—so they say,  
Brown and quaint and old as they.  
The urchin tumbling in the grass,  
The merry youth and the blooming lass,  
The farmer who tills the teeming soil  
When hunting and fishing leave time for toil,  
And the jolly old man who sits and drones  
Of the winter signs in the wild-goose bones,  
Seem living over as in a trance,  
The old, old life of sunny France.  
This restless age,—this age so fast—  
There fights at odds with the hoary past;  
Vainly it matches its eager will  
With those who win by sitting still,  
And hears an adage old and worn,—  
Who goes for wool may come back shorn.  
There kindly nature spreads her stores  
In rich profusion out of doors;  
Bright gleam the apples, pears, and cherries,  
The brambles bend with luscious berries;  
The bullfrog, with his croaking harsh,  
And the fat muskrat, haunt the marsh;  
The wild duck floats among the reeds,  
The red deer in the woodland feeds,  
The grouse, the partridge, and the quail  
Their bounteous larders never fail;  
And, yielding more ethereal fare,  
The daintiest creatures swarm in air.  
But, if your feet are ever found,  
O muses, on such level ground,  
Come hither from Parnassus' hill,  
Of melting whitefish eat your fill;  
And from your lubricated throats  
Will glide such smooth and pleasing notes  
As never yet the pipes did follow

Of your precentor—bright Apollo,  
In the fall weather, cool and hazy,  
When the slow sun is getting lazy,  
And from his cold bath in the river  
Comes out all red with many a shiver,  
With feet too chilly as they pass  
To melt the hoar frost on the grass,  
Northward his yearly journey takes  
The shining “white deer of the lakes.”  
Swift through the lymph, in countless herds,  
Thicker than thickest flight of birds,  
The living shapes of silver dash,  
Till all the rustling waters flash,  
As when beneath the breeze of June  
Their myriad waves reflect the moon.  
Then all the dwellers in the land  
Come trooping gaily to the sand ;  
Through day and night the populous shore  
Echoes the clanking of the oar.  
The meshes of the spreading seine  
Are tried by many a grievous strain,  
And the gay crowd, with jovial din,  
Hail the rich harvest gathered in.  
Then comes the kindly winter’s reign ;  
Then mirth and pleasure scour the plain,  
The rapid pacers come and go  
Like phantoms o’er the heaten snow,  
And where the summer shallows ride,  
Swiftly the painted carioles glide.  
Not Hector o’er the Trojan field  
By his illustrious coursers wheeled,  
In his mad circuit whirling round,  
Thus saw his steeds devour the ground ;  
Nor Pindar, yielding loud acclaims  
To the great victor of the games,  
E’er saw upon the Olympic plain  
Such ponies of heroic strain.

And should they meet at break of day,  
Fresh baited with ambrosial hay,  
The sun's team prancing up the cope,  
They'd beat him half way down the slope.  
But oh, my colts, too swift ye pace,  
You've borne me past my stopping place;  
Backward return in slower mood,  
And while you whinny o'er your food,  
Again upon the bank I'll stray,  
And if he has not flown away,  
Hear what the old bird has to say.

High on the stump the old woodpecker sat,  
Twisting his neck this way and that,  
And soon as he found an ear to listen,  
He bristled his crest, and his keen eyes glisten,  
On his breast feathers he wiped his beak,  
Opened his mouth and began to speak.  
Hearken, stranger, while I tell  
Wondrous things that once befell  
The people of this drowsy land.  
Here on this pulpit where I stand  
Preaching my sermon to only one,  
Long ago I sat in the sun,  
And saw a sight that shook with fear  
The hunter fierce, and the trembling deer.  
The bright warm rays of an August noon  
Hushed each sound but the locust's tune;  
But a gentle wind blew from the west,  
Dimpling with ripples the water's breast,  
And catching the swans' wings where they float,  
Drove each one on like a well-trimmed boat,—  
A stately boat, with canvas white  
As a sheet of snow in a starry night.  
Now here, now there, the great fish rise  
To snap at the gaudy dragon-flies;  
The loon like a porpoise rolls and dives,

Screaming as if for a hundred lives,  
And solemn bitterns stand and think,  
Each on a leg, by the rnsly brink.  
Just as the sun in his path on high  
Stayed his course in the middle sky,  
Speeding along with a foaming wake  
A great ship sailed upon the lake;  
And the loon dove down, and the white swans flew,  
Scared at the sight of the wonder new;  
For never had vessel along this shore  
Cleft these quiet waves before.  
No better craft was ever seen  
Than brave La Salle's stont brigantine:  
Out from the prow a Griffin springs,  
With scales of bronze and fiery wings,  
And the ship that earned so wide a fame  
Bore on its scroll the Griffin's name.  
When the cunning Robes of Black  
Troubled the zealous Frontenac,  
And strove his venturous hands to keep  
From reaching out to the western deep,  
The wrath of the sturdy Norman rose  
At the jealous arts of his patron's foes,  
And the ship he built for his dangerous quest,  
He named from the valiant noble's crest.  
And vowed he would make the Griffin fly  
Over the crows in the western sky.  
A gilded eagle carved in wood  
On the crown of the quarter-deck castle stood,  
And from the staff astern unrolled,  
Floating aloft with its lilies of gold,  
The great white flag of France is spread,  
And the pennon decking the mainmast head  
Bears the chieftain's arms on a field of red.  
Three black-nebbed falcons gaping wide  
Scowl through the ports on either side.  
And the old sergeant says they speak

Each for a common day in the week,  
 While the great bow gun with its heavy knell  
 Rings as loud as a Sunday bell.  
 But another standard is seen to-day  
 As the gallant cruiser wins the bay,  
 For the cross is waved, and the censer swings,  
 And the seamen kneel as the mass bell rings,  
 For to-day is the feast of the Abbess Claire;  
 And the corded priests, with chants and prayer,  
 Sprinkling the lake with holy water  
 Name it after the Church's daughter.  
 Then in a trice the gunners catch  
 Each in his place the blazing match,  
 And the flame leaps out, and the trembling shore  
 Quakes at the terrible cannon's roar.  
 And stout La Fleur with chuckling grin  
 Said as he patted his culverin—  
 In my church there's never a friar  
 Sings like the Abbot who leads the choir!

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Out in the lake the Griffin lay  
 Wind-bound at anchor many a day,  
 While the ship's company explore  
 The novel wonders of the shore;  
 And as they reach upon the way  
 The bend at Pointe à Guignolet,  
 Before them spreads a lovely bay;  
 Its limpid waters softly glide  
 Like the slow creeping of the tide,  
 Upward and backward on the beach,  
 But ne'er beyond one margin reach.  
 And in its lonely beauty there,  
 So still, so smiling, and so fair,  
 To their charmed eyes it seemed to be  
 A sunny strip of Normandy,  
 Where mermaids in the moonlight play,  
 And happy children all the day.

Here,—said La Salle,—when history's page  
Inscribes us of an ancient age,—  
When populous cities rich and great  
See ships in fleets ascend the strait,—  
When this new world shall lead the van,  
In the great onward march of man,—  
Though men of other blood may press  
More boldly through the wilderness,  
And though the flag of France may be  
Unknown upon this mimic sea,  
Yet, something whispers in my breast,  
Here shall be quietness and rest.  
Though commerce through the forest break,  
Or churn the waters of the lake,  
The inland road shall not be nigh,  
The busy craft shall pass it by.  
And if our phantoms should be found  
Exploring then this pleasant ground,  
It still shall seem familiar earth,  
As the old region of our birth,  
Beside the shore a cross they plant,  
The reverend priests an anthem chant,  
And the stern soldier, as he went,  
To seek the shelter of his tent,  
Cast backward many a yearning look,  
Made homesick by that fairy nook.  
The ship sailed on, but the friendly shore  
Saw it returning nevermore.  
And many a day had come and fled  
And many a fall the leaves had shed,  
Before the early morning dews  
On the white clover by L'Anse Creuse  
Were dashed by footstep from their cup.  
Ere the dry sun had drunk them up.  
But when I grew to my chagrin  
A little baggy about the chin,  
And could not find sufficient cause

For a wrinkle or two around my claws,  
The pleasing scene I daily viewed  
No longer was a solitude.  
Neat farms and gardens lined the strait  
From Erie up to Huron's gate,  
While on the narrow strips of land  
The cottage homes so closely stand,  
Their numbers stretching up and down,  
Appear like one continuous town.  
In front of each upon the bank,  
A narrow wharf of single plank  
Stretched out to where a steady hand  
Might fill a bucket to the brim,  
Sinking it down below the rim,  
Yet never touch the bottom sand;  
While to this simple jetty tied  
Canoes float safely by its side.

Whenever Monday's morning ray  
Brings to the world its washing day,  
The busy housewives and their daughters  
There with their labors vex the waters.  
The garments in their fingers gathered,  
With vigorous rubbing drenched and lathered,  
And paddled with a cunning knack,  
Resound with many a rousing whack ;  
While the fair laundresses at work  
In no Carthusian silence lurk,  
But skilled alike to wash and speak,  
Gossip enough for all the week.  
In the small hamlet of L'Anse Creuse,  
One Monday, buzzed the stirring news  
That the old Seigneur of Beauvais  
Was busy all the previous day,  
Devising how his daughter fair—  
The arch and graceful Lady Claire—  
Might find ere long an honest mate,

Of gentle blood and good estate,  
Who by some valiant feat at arms  
Might prove him worthy of her charms.  
He was a man whose antique blood,  
Traced backward to the very flood,  
Had with such notions filled his brain  
As once disturbed the knight of Spain.  
He passed the vigor of his years  
Roving among his gallant peers,  
Exploring widely to advance  
The glory of his native France,  
And oft a pleasant hour had spent  
With gallant Tonty in his tent.  
Long years ago they made their way,  
And camped beside this smiling bay,  
To wait the gathering of the force  
Destined to guard the northern course.  
Then met the boldest hearts arrayed  
That ever pierced the forest shade.  
There met the venturesome Beauvais,  
La Salle's stout warden La Forêt,  
And the sagacious Durantaye,  
Whose flag had waved o'er many a post  
On the remotest northern coast;  
With his old comrade true and tried,  
Renowned Du Luth, who far and wide,  
Honest in heart, and strong in hand  
Swayed the fierce tribes through all the land.  
There, as they feasted at their ease  
Beneath the stately forest trees,  
With many a tale of savage fray  
They passed the pleasant hours away.  
And when the hallowed spot he knew,  
Once honored by the Griffin's crew,  
Said bold Beauvais, this cross so tall  
Shall stand one day beside my hall,  
When age from labor shall release,

To let me dwell at home in peace.  
So, when he settled to retire,  
And light anew his household fire,  
He was the first who found his way  
To dwell beside the cross and bay.  
He mingled reading and the care  
Of watching o'er his darling Claire,  
And soothed his fatherly alarms  
With chronicles of deeds of arms.  
As up she grew to womanhood,  
Merry and bright, as well as good,  
He dreamed of noble cavaliers  
Bearing her colors on their spears,  
And jousting on the meadows green  
To win the smile of Beauty's queen;  
And a great tournament he planned,  
The prize to be his daughter's hand.  
The damsel having mother wit,  
And some small will for using it,  
Had been enabled to discover  
She need not languish for a lover.  
And though she knew that young Beauclerc  
Was prompt enough to do or dare,  
She was not anxious for her sake,  
That he another's head should break,  
Nor would it suit her views at all  
Should others profit by his fall.  
So, with a smile upon her face,  
And many a blushing maiden grace,  
She met her honest father's question  
With a more practical suggestion.  
The Greeks, in that heroic time  
Which all the poets call sublime,  
Instead of carving up a friend,  
In public games did oft contend,  
And deemed a vegetable crown  
And name by Pindar handed down,

More likely to adorn the State  
Than if they earned a broken pate.  
When the hard winter's frost shall make  
A slippy ice-field of the lake,  
No ancient circus could compete  
With such a course for flying feet;  
And if no youth my hand may claim  
But him who pleads a victor's name,  
Then let his honors be my price  
Who wins a race upon the ice.  
The sire approved, and gave command  
To publish it through all the land,  
That on the coming Christmas day  
A horse race o'er the frozen bay  
Should by its fair results decide  
What lucky hand should claim the bride  
Then to the shore in state he went,  
Where the good dames, on work intent,  
Their weekly store of clothes did scrub  
In the great common washing tub;  
And sought their willing aid to bear  
His festive message through the air.  
Swiftly it traveled toward the south,  
Leaping from ready mouth to mouth:  
And while its echoes still did play  
In broken murmurs round the bay,  
Past Windmill Point, on pinions quick,  
It reached the mouth of Tremblé's creek;  
And like a bullet from a gun  
Crossed the ravine at Bloody Run;  
Thence like the west wind on the main,  
Shook the great flag at Pontchartrain;  
Then like a brightly falling star  
Gleamed on the household of Navarre,  
And shot along its flashing way  
Around the bend of Godfroy's bay,  
Startling the ghost that lingered still

Sighing in Gobeye's haunted mill.  
The violet banks of Bellefontaine  
And the cool shades of Lover's Lane  
Heard a low murmur, as of bees  
Humming among the linden trees.  
As up the Rouge the story sped,  
Old Va-de-bon-Cœur, as he shook his head,  
Marveled that any other place  
Was chosen for a Christmas race;  
But cracking all his knuckles bony,  
Forthwith began to train his pony.  
Beyond this region of the horse  
The message reached the broad Ecorce,  
Rousing the herdsmen as they roam  
O'er the wide acres of St. Cosme.  
Across the channel to Grosse Isle,  
Shouted with sympathetic zeal,  
And thence beyond, the tidings go  
To the rich island dark with shade  
By the gigantic lindens made,  
Within whose woods the Wyandot  
Had built his town in a charming spot,  
Guarding Lake Erie's open door;  
In the rough sailor pilot's lore  
'Tis known as the island of Bobalo.  
In the short passage of an hour,  
Sped by this tireless motive power,  
The news had entered at the gate  
Of every household on the strait,  
And the gay bachelors all prepare  
To struggle holdly for the fair;  
While pouting maidens—half offended—  
Wish that the day had come and ended,  
That they who fail to win the prize  
Might find a better use of eyes;  
Yet none the less they toil and fluster  
To look their prettiest at the muster.

And, sooth to say, the gallant wrong  
Would find his journey very long,  
Who traveled till he found the graces  
More prodigal of charming faces.  
The summer into autumn glides,  
The mellow autumn long abides,  
Till dark December claimed a part in  
The unruffled season of St. Martin;  
And many a lovely bosom fluttered,  
And many a savage youngster muttered,  
As the sun neared his last decline,  
While winter yet had made no sign.  
But when the dreary solstice came,  
The morning sky was all aflame,  
And from the pblar deserts vast  
The wind came howling fierce and fast  
All day the clouds their snowflakes shed,  
The sighing waves were dark as lead,  
Sounding upon the gloomy shore  
Like the dull plash of melted ore.  
But in the night no vapor mars  
The lustre of the burning stars,  
High in the firmament the moon  
Shines dazzling as the sun at noon,  
And the cold beams the waves congeal  
Like a great floor of glimmering steel.  
All through the night from shore to shore  
The imprisoned waters moan and roar,  
But vain are all their throes to break  
The dungeon walls that hold the lake.  
On Christmas eve the drowsy heads  
Went early to their downy beds,  
That all from sweet repose might borrow  
More blooming roses for the morrow;  
While even the watchful chanticleer  
Forgot to blow his clarion clear,  
And sitting snugly on his perch.

Was silent as the village church.  
 But when the rays of morning creep  
 Down the gray spire of St. Philippe,  
 And cast its shadows o'er the way  
 Just at the foot of Grand Marais,  
 The wooden cock that at its peak  
 Stood opening wide its gilded beak,  
 Thought surely there was something wrong  
 To make his brothers mute so long.  
 Uprising on his sinewy toes,  
 Far out his gorgeous breast he throws,  
 While of the bracing air he quaffed  
 A deep exhilarating draught;  
 Then from the bot'om of his throat  
 He crowed so fierce a trumpet note  
 That all the country stared aghast,  
 Astounded by that sudden blast;  
 And every rooster, roused to feel  
 A rival worthy of his steel,  
 Met the fierce chapel guardian's crow  
 With a defiant *coquerico!*  
 Up from their beds the slumbering people  
 Sprang at that summons from the steeple,  
 And every bachelor and maid  
 In rustic garments neat arrayed,  
 With sparkling eyes and glowing face,  
 Prepared to figure at the race.  
 Too far from Fashion's halls to get  
 The work of Ma'm'selle Tond-Minette,  
 The blooming damsels managed still  
 To show the power of taste and skill.  
 And when they all had met together,  
 Rose tinted by the bracing weather,  
 They made philosopher and dunce  
 Fall swift in love with all at once.

The mass was over, and the sleighs.  
 Came sliding o'er the crystal ways.

As shining birds from flower to flower  
Dart swiftly in the summer hour.  
The swan-necked carioles make the scene  
Lively with scarlet, gold, and green,  
The bright-eyed pacers, roan and bay,  
Caper like little boys at play,  
And toss their heads, as if they knew  
As much as human horses do.  
The lady Claire, with courteous mien  
Beams like a radiant fairy queen;  
But while she swiftly moved her eyes  
O'er the contestants for the prize,  
She turned a moment pale as snow,  
Then blushed with such a ruddy glow  
That all the maidens then and there  
Owned there was none so good and fair,  
And wished success to lovely Claire.  
For well, with ready wit, they guessed  
She had a purpose in her breast  
That none from her devoted swain  
The triumph of the course should gain;  
And each with sympathizing face  
Hoped that her own true lover's place  
Would be the second in the race.  
Then forth advancing in his sleigh  
The stately form of old Beauvais  
Appeared among the shouting throng,  
And with a voice like Stentor's strong,  
Taught by his daughter's shrewd device,  
Who knew the mysteries of the ice,  
Announced the scrupulous rules to guide  
The contest for the peerless bride.  
In a straight run the course shall reach  
From where the trending of the beach  
Rounds into Pointe à Guignolet,  
To Huron Point across the bay;  
Thence turning at the blasted elm,

The limit of Maconce's realm,  
Back to the starting point again  
Across the white and slippery plain.  
And he whose steed's returning feet  
Shall first upon the margin beat,  
Shall take my mansion and my land,  
And, if she will, my daughter's hand.

The graybeards shrugged their shoulders wide  
At such a long and freezing ride;  
Eight miles across the raven's flight  
Must reach before his feet can light;  
And when upon the glassy floor  
That space must twice be travelled o'er,  
The horse that wins without a founder  
Must be as hard as an eighteen pounder.  
But the swift pacers cocked their ears,  
In scorn at such unworthy fears;  
And, ranged in order on the shore,  
The friendly rivals reached a score,  
Waiting the signal to begin  
The race that only one could win,  
Each in such sliding carriage placed  
As suits his money or his taste.  
Jumper and cutter, train and pung  
Behind the nimble pony swung,  
While the trim cariote's graceful wedge,  
With its shafts hung low at the runner's edge,  
Was decked in the spoils of the shaggy bear,  
Ready to cleave the frozen air.  
But what has troubled the Sieur Beauvais,  
And what the cause of the long delay?  
The course is long and the day is brief,  
The night comes on like a stealthy thief,  
And woe to the wight who rides astray,  
Far from the land on the wintry bay.  
Alas, the old man's eyes are dim; ♪  
For under his features hard and grim

His soul is soft and his spirit mild,  
And his heart is aching for his child;  
He knew her love for young Beauclerc,  
And marveled why he was not there.  
He was a youth of manly heart,  
Lithe as a panther, straight as a dart,  
And loved to share the hunter's toil  
More than he cared for his costly spoil.  
Changing their names with one another,  
The Swan creek chieftain called him brother,  
And a sturdy man he saw who met  
The tawny or white Eshtonaquet.  
The chief just come from a prairie trail,  
Brought home a horse like a spotted quail,  
With long slim neck and Arab head,  
But a back that sloped like the roof of a shed,  
And legs that raised his ample chest  
Up to the height of an Indian's breast.  
And he gave a hint to young Beauclerc  
That none with this strange beast might cope,  
Though he should train an antelope,  
To run the race for his lady fair.  
He framed a jumper of ironwood tough,  
Limber and stout, hut rude and rough,  
His harness strong and his reins to guide  
He made from thongs of bison hide,  
And there he sat with the jeering racers,  
Proud of themselves and their well groomed pacers,  
Wrapped in the shaggy robes of skin  
That his red brother clad him in;  
And many a scoff and scornful laugh  
Greeted the sleigh with the brown giraffe.  
A whisper from the Lady Claire,  
And the old man with dubious air  
Shouted the signal. Off they fly,  
Skimming like swallows across the sky,  
But far behind, with drooping tail,

And swinging his legs like a clumsy flail,  
The prairie beast goes steadily on  
As if there were never a race to be won,  
While the neat ponies their sinews strain  
To reach the verge of the frozen plain.  
But when they turn at the blasted tree,  
Panting and foaming, lo, they see,  
Jogging along as fresh and stout  
As when from the shore they first set out,  
The clumsy brute whose movements seem  
Like the measured sweep of a walking-beam.  
And as the home-bound rivals ride  
Just in the midst of the basin wide,  
The shambling nag with his terrible stride  
Passes them all, and in his eyes  
Gleams of a conscious triumph rise.  
Wider and wider he spreads apart  
His hoofs, and shoots like a fiery dart,  
Till his nimble limbs so swiftly fleet,  
He seems like a body without any feet  
Shot like a ball through the midst of the air,  
And he reaches the goal when there's nobody there;  
For they thought it was safe to sit long by the fire,  
Not dreaming this monster, with sinews of wire,  
And never within a decent stall,  
Would thus so horribly beat them all.  
But the boys when they saw the meek young men  
Moodily driving back again,  
Shouted a mocking *mange l'avoine!*  
And the merry maids with smiling lip  
Welcomed them back from their leisure trip.  
But they looked more blithe when the jolly priest  
Asked them in to the wedding feast;  
And never since that Christmas-day  
Have the good dwellers by the bay  
Danced at the bridal of lady fair,  
Sweeter and brighter than lovely Claire.