

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 Beauchere
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 slippery 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 Tremble'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 Ponchartrain;
Then like a brightly falling star
Gleamed on the household of Navarre,
And shot along its flashing way
Around the bend of Godfrey's bay,
Startling the ghost that lingered still
Sighing in Gobeye's haunted mill.