

SOUTHERN WEEKLY POST.

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A FAMILY NEWSPAPER—NEUTRAL IN POLITICS.

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RA LEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA, SATURDAY, SEPT. 3, 1853.

WHOLE NO. 92.

SELECTED POETRY.

TIS NOT FINE FEATHERS THAT MAKE FINE BIRDS.

A Peacock came, with his plumage gay,
Strutting in regal pride, one day,
Where a little bird hung in a gilded cage,
Whose song might a seraph's ear engage.
The bird sang on while the peacock strutted,
Vainly showing to the neighborhood.
And the radiant sun seemed not more bright;
Than the bird that basked in his golden light;
But the little bird sang, in his own sweet words,
'Tis not fine feathers that make fine birds!'

The peacock strutted—a bird so fair
Never before had been there,
While the small bird hung at the cottage door—
And what could a peacock wish for more?
Alas! the bird of the rainbow wing,
He was not content,—he tried to sing!
And they who gazed on his beauty bright,
Scared by his screaming, soon took to flight;
While the little bird sang, in his own sweet words,
'Tis not fine feathers that make fine birds!'

Then, prithee, ake warning, maidens fair,
And still of the peacock's fate beware;
Beauty and wealth will not win your way,
Though they're a-tal'd in plumage gay;
Something to charm you'll sure know,
A part from fine feathers and outward show;
—A talent, a grace, a gift of mind,
Or else small beauty is left behind!
While the little bird sang, in his own true words,
'Tis not fine feathers that make fine birds!'

SELECTED STORY.

From Dickens' Household Words.

MAHUOT COCQUEL.

Is the reign of Philippe the Good, Duke of Burgundy and Count of Flanders, or, more precisely, in the year one thousand four hundred and forty-two, the neighborhood of Tourney in France was traversed by a gang of cut throats, who contrived to get the gendarmes of the Count completely at defiance.

The very evening of the day on which the burgomaster Van Robec, accompanied by the magistrates and principal citizens, left Tourney for the purpose of obtaining an audience of the duke respecting these outrages, a cavalier presented himself at one of the gates of the town and demanded entrance. According to the custom of those troubled times, he alighted from horseback, and followed to the guard house the soldier whose duty it was to arrest his further progress. The new arrival was doubtless in possession of an efficient passport of some kind or other; for he had scarcely entered, when the officer of the guard motioned the gatekeeper to allow him to proceed, wishing him good night at the same time, and treating him with the utmost deference. It might be eleven o'clock at night, and the moon illumined the turret of the houses, and the steeples of the town, whose vast shadows stretched out at full length, and assumed thousand fantastic forms as they fell massively on the neighboring buildings. All seemed buried in profound slumber. At least, the silence which prevailed gave good reason to suppose so. Never before, in one of the streets, which led from the principal square to the ramparts, a bright light shone from behind one of the lozenge windows of the burgomaster Van Robec's house. Its owner had departed to the Duke's camp with a heavy heart, at the thought of leaving his daughter alone with the aged governess; who would be powerless to preserve her from the assidues of the gallants who were wont to frequent the house.

It is true that Jeanne was soon to marry a cavalier whom her father had authorized to pay her court;—and that this cavalier—who was known by the name of Philippe du Gardin—kept sufficient watch over his bride to intimidate those who were tempted to approach her.

Philippe had been an hour in company with Jeanne, when the cavalier, of whom he has spoken, entered the street. Observing a ring fixed in the wall of a neighboring hostelry, he fastened his horse to it, and moved towards the house of Van Robec; before which he placed himself under the shadow of the front screen of a mercer's shop. There, with his eye constantly fixed upon the illumined window, this man watched his prey. His hand convulsively grasped the pommel of his sword, which he drew from the scabbard whenever he perceived that a slight degree of movement was taking place within the house. At last the street-door opened; and Philippe, after having tied a kiss upon the forehead of his bride, proceeded home-wards. The cavalier, quitting his retreat, advanced towards him.

"Halt, my gentleman!" he said. "I am not mistaken. You are Philippe du Gardin, the betrothed husband of the young girl with whom you have just parted?"

"Before replying, allow me to ask who you are; and with what object you put that question?" said Philippe. "I do not know you, I have never seen you; consequently, I can have no business with you. Leave me."

"Oh no," returned the assailant. "I have not travelled a couple of leagues on purpose to find you, to return without calling you to account for your insults."

"Insults!"

"Yes, my dainty primrose," replied the cavalier. "It was only yesterday that I heard of your visits to the Dame de Beaufoird, and you perceive I have not been slow in—"

"The Dame de Beaufoird?" exclaimed Philippe with emotion.

"Yes, young man!" The Dame de Beaufoird, with whom I am in love; and whom I mean to keep to myself. You understand?"

"Your mistress?" shouted the youth, drawing his sword. "Your mistress? It is false!"

"A liar, am I?" cried the cavalier coolly, placing himself in the attitude of defence before Philippe. "No!" replied the youth.

"And those tender letters which I have discovered, and which have informed me that, while you were paying court to her, you came here to marry a prostitute?"

"Those letters are true; but all the rest is false!"

"The lady is mine; and as I do not choose that she should belong to any one else—at least during the lifetime—make use of your sword."

"Sir cavalier! In what I have spoken there is mystery which I am not permitted to reveal; but, the truth of my accusations, when I hear it said

that the Dame de Beaufoird has a favored lover, and that you are that lover; then, in spite of the happiness which I expect to find in an approaching and a joyful union, I do not hesitate to accept your challenge, at the risk of perishing in the struggle."

No answer was given to these words; but the two swords were instantly crossed, and sparks flew to the right and left. Four or five passes sufficed to disarm Philippe.

"Resume your sword," said the cavalier coldly. "Our combat is only to be ended by death."

Philippe took his sword, and the duel commenced with fury on both sides. In a few seconds the youth fell to the ground, pierced through the chest, and yielded his spirit without uttering a word. Quick as lightning, the adversary mounted his horse, and disappeared through the gate of the town by which he had entered, taking the road to the northward.

At the clashing of the arms, Jeanne and her governess in terror had ventured to look out from the open window. The first object which met their view was the body of Philippe, outstretched in that part of the street where the moonbeams were shining brightly. A cry of despair escaped from Jeanne's bosom. At that cry the neighbors arose in alarm. What was their surprise when they recognized the betrothed husband of Van Robec's daughter? Their first care was to carry him to the burgomaster's house. In spite of the exclamations and remonstrances of the governess, who returned to her mistress utterly overcome, the neighbors laid the body of Philippe on Van Robec's bed, and one of them went to fetch a surgeon, to be authoritatively assured that he was really extinct. Jeanne, who from the first story of the house beheld her betrothed lying on the ground and who heard all the bustle within doors, insisted on entering the room in which Philippe had been placed. In vain the governess tried to oppose her wish. In a few minutes the girl was in the midst of the sorrowing neighbors, who did their utmost to tear her away from so sad a sight. But Jeanne struggled against them, embraced the corpse of her betrothed closely in her arms, lavishing upon it the most affectionate endearments. When the doctor came at last he had to testify to the double fact, that Philippe was dead, and that Jeanne was seized with madness.

On leaving Tourney, the cavalier went across the country as far as the church of the first village; descended into a little valley, traversed a narrow brook on a bridge of planks and then, penetrating the woods in an easterly course, he succeeded in arriving at a hamlet where he stopped before the gate of a chateau. This chateau belonged to a powerful family, who had afforded an asylum to a woman of five-and-thirty to forty years of age, of noble descent, driven by misfortune from her native place more than two years previously, to live in retirement here. The only journey she had made since her residence in the hamlet were restricted to two or three visits to Tourney; where she went, it was whispered, to see some person to whom she was tenderly attached.

The cavalier passed the night as tranquilly as if he had returned from accomplishing some perfectly simple and natural affair; and the next morning as soon as he awoke, his first care was to see the Dame de Beaufoird. Her countenance when she received him, was impressed with a deep melancholy; but that very melancholy, adding to the paleness which over-creeped her features, endued her with an inexpressible captivating interest.

"Ah! it is you, Malhot!" said the lady, in a voice of emotion. "I have passed a sleepless night, agitated by a thousand painful presentiments."

"Presentiments do not always deceive," he replied abruptly.

"What do you mean?—Good God! what is the meaning of that change in your countenance—of the hardness of your looks?"

"It is useless that I should conceal the fact. I have seen that Philippe, of whom we were talking yesterday. I could rest no longer in the cruel uncertainty in which I was placed by the letters which I discovered in your oratory. I did not choose—after having left the army of the Duke of Burgundy in order to come and ask you for the last time, whether you were willing to excuse me and thus conclude a tedious courtship;—I did not choose, I say, to remain in any further doubt respecting your conduct during my absence. This very night I have been to Tourney."

"And you have met with Philippe?"

"Yes! My measures were taken, and my information proved exact. Consequently, I had not long to wait. I remembered that particular letter in which he addresses you in the tenderest terms; and which he entreats you to crown his happiness; and in which he concludes, by daring to ask you to receive his kisses."

"Well! he has not denied it! On the contrary, he confessed—"

"And then?"

"Then, my indignation overcame all bounds. I reproached him with his own duplicity, and with your treachery. I compelled him to take sword in hand, the very moment after he had betrayed you, in turn, by embracing her whom he was soon to marry."

"Make an end of your tale."

"I killed him!" harshly replied the cavalier.

The lady appeared for a moment to be utterly overwhelmed. But, making a strong effort, she stood proud and menacing before the assassin, and said, "Do you know whom it is that you have stricken?"

The cavalier remained silent.

"But to whom do I address myself?" she added vehemently. "I entrust Heaven to pardon me for having ever known you. I should be accursed if I ever joined hands with you. You have killed my son!"

"Her son?" exclaimed the man, hiding his face. The lady, exhausted and stunned, fell senseless on the sofa.

These events filled the whole province with consternation. Jeanne did not recover her reason; and the aged burgomaster, after having in vain endeavored to discover the murderer of Philippe, died of grief. The Dame de Beaufoird quitted the chateau in which she had found shelter. Some said that she had taken the veil. Malhot Cocquel had rejoined the army of the Duke of Burgundy. He did not remain there long; for, in the year one thousand four hundred and forty-four, he came to Valenciennes, and obtained there, no one knows how, the rights of citizenship.

One fine-day of that year one thousand four hundred and forty-four, there was a great confluence of people in Valenciennes. The streets, the squares, and the hosteries were crowded. Quietly stood in

every countenance. Philippe the Good had come to visit his faithful and loyal Valenciennes.

In a noted tavern, a few steps from the church of Saint Pierre, the throng was greater than elsewhere. Malhot Cocquel entered it; and observing a vacant table, took his place there. He scrutinized with curiosity the extraordinary bustle which reigned throughout the place, when a bourgeois named Jacotin Plover seated himself beside him.

"I do not know this man so slightly, that he was surprised at the easy assurance with which he seated himself at table."

"Ah! it is you, Master Cocquel!" said Jacotin, seating himself. "I am very glad to have met with you."

"Are you?" replied Malhot, visibly annoyed. "I have something to say to you," said Jacotin. "To me?"

"I have to tell you some news about one of my relations, who lately died amongst the nuns of Liege."

"What business is that of mine?"

"Important business, you will own," added Plover; "when I have told you that her name was Gertrude."

"I here hold her last letter—her last wish. Do you desire to be informed of it?"

"It is no affair of mine," replied Malhot, rising as if to leave the room.

"On the contrary," said Jacotin, taking Malhot by the arm, and forcing him to sit down again, "it is no other person's affair than yours."

"What are the contents of the letter?" said Malhot, turning with anger.

"In the first place, she orders me to find out a certain Malhot Cocquel. You are he! See, my dear sir, she orders me, as soon as I have found him, to say to him: 'Malhot, you laid wait for a young man, who was just entering Liege, in order to put him rebelliously to death!—That's what she says. Well, I, Jacotin Plover, bourgeois of Valenciennes, am resolved to avenge the death of that boy, as well as of his bride, who died insane in consequence of your crime; and I call upon God to judge between us!'

"Never!" exclaimed Malhot with so much vehemence that all present turned towards the two men.

"Never, do you say?" answered Jacotin: "I will force you to it." And then addressing the crowd which surrounded them, and which filled the tavern, he added: "Fugitives! here is a man who is come to take up his right of citizenship, and he is a murderer. He killed one of my relations, Philippe du Gardin, my cousin's son."

A long murmur of surprise went round the assembly.

"Very wrong, this man is a murderer. I offer to justify my accusation in single combat."

"Bravo!" shouted a sergeant-at-arms, as he entered the tavern with a handful of soldiers who had been enrolled that morning for the purpose of keeping order. "Bravo! you shall both of you come along with me!" and he led Malhot and Jacotin away.

By the law of trial by battle—a relic of barbarism only abolished, here, in our own day,—the affair fell into the hands of the authorities. Preparations were then made for the duel, says the historian Le Glay d'Arden (whom we translate) in his Notice sur Valenciennes; and, as it was a grave and imposing ceremony, Philippe the Good, Duke of Burgundy and Count of Flanders, determined to be present. On Tuesday, the twentieth of March, one thousand four hundred and forty-five, the Grand Place of Valenciennes was converted into a list, around which an immense multitude was congregated. At one o'clock the champions were led in, dressed in basnet, or black sheep's leather, of one entire piece, closely sewed together from their feet to their necks, with their heads naked and shaven. Their feet naked, and their nails cut. They were accompanied by the Bretons, or masters of exercises, who had been assigned to each of them after their first confinement in prison and who carried their shields and their sticks. These shields were of wicker work covered with sheep's leather, and were three feet long. They bore for arms a cross gold on a field argent. The sticks were of medlar-wood, three feet long, and sharpened at each end.

Jacotin Plover, the appellant, entered the first, made several signs of the cross, and then seated himself on a chair covered with black cloth at one end of the list, on the side of the church St. Pierre. Malhot came afterwards, knelt down, crossed himself, kissed the ground, seated himself on the side of the balfy. The provost of the town then entered the enclosure, and the champions swore respectively on the Holy Gospels that their quarrel was good. Next, their dresses were gressed, in order that they might have held upon each other; spears were brought in silver cups to invigorate them, and two other cups containing ashes with which they rubbed their hands. When all was properly disposed according to the usages and franchises of the town, the provost threw the glove, which had been taken up as the gage of battle, and cried, "Do your duty! do your duty! do your duty!"

The champions, after having beaten each other with their sticks, grappled together, and shook each other violently. Malhot fell; but instantly got up again. Jacotin rushed upon him, threw him down once more, held him firmly to the ground, thrust sand into his eyes, and tortured him for nearly three quarters of an hour, to make him confess the murder.

Philippe the Good remained in the house of Melchior du Gardin, the provost of the town, and watched the combat behind a blind. He sent to inquire of the magistrates if there were no means of putting a stop to this horrible struggle. The magistrate replied that that could not be without prejudice to the privileges of the city and that the conflict must have its course.

At last, after being for a long while tortured by his adversary, Malhot, utterly blind and crippled in every limb, cried, "Enough!" but, on rising, he endeavored to rush upon his foe; but Jacotin twisted his arms until they broke.

The wretched man, acknowledged himself beaten, and confessing the murder, had strength enough to cry out so as to be heard at a distance: "My Lord of Burgundy, pity! pity! I served you well in your war with Ghent!" The Duke was moved even to tears. He again asked the magistrate whether it were possible to save the life of this unfortunate wretch, or at least, when dead, to accord him burial in consecrated ground. The provost answered, that the law must be fulfilled step by step. "Can while Jacotin had completed his terrible vengeance with blows of his stick. He seized

the bleeding corpse by one leg, and dragged it out of the list; after which—and this part of the chronicle cannot be read without a shudder—he went to the church of Notre-Dame-la-Grande, to return thanks to God for having caused justice to triumph!

The magistrate gave judgment that the murderer should be dragged on a hurdle to the gallows, and be there for form's sake, strangled and hung; The Duke of Burgundy, justly indignant at the execution which he had witnessed, and which, in spite of all his power, he had been unable to prevent, swore to abolish this barbarous custom. Thenceforward it was never practised in the Low Countries.

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A GEM.—One of the sweetest gems of prosy ever written is the following, from the pen of Frances Ann Butler:

"Better trust all, and be deceived,
And wear that trust, and that deceiving,
Than doubt one heart, that if believed
Had blessed our life with true believing."

"Oh in this mocking world, too fast
The dobbing of a office our youth;
Better be cheated to the last,
Than lose the blessed hope of truth!"

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"I have to tell you some news about one of my relations, who lately died amongst the nuns of Liege."

"What business is that of mine?"

"Important business, you will own," added Plover; "when I have told you that her name was Gertrude."

"I here hold her last letter—her last wish. Do you desire to be informed of it?"

"It is no affair of mine," replied Malhot, rising as if to leave the room.

"On the contrary," said Jacotin, taking Malhot by the arm, and forcing him to sit down again, "it is no other person's affair than yours."

"What are the contents of the letter?" said Malhot, turning with anger.

"In the first place, she orders me to find out a certain Malhot Cocquel. You are he! See, my dear sir, she orders me, as soon as I have found him, to say to him: 'Malhot, you laid wait for a young man, who was just entering Liege, in order to put him rebelliously to death!—That's what she says. Well, I, Jacotin Plover, bourgeois of Valenciennes, am resolved to avenge the death of that boy, as well as of his bride, who died insane in consequence of your crime; and I call upon God to judge between us!'

"Never!" exclaimed Malhot with so much vehemence that all present turned towards the two men.

"Never, do you say?" answered Jacotin: "I will force you to it." And then addressing the crowd which surrounded them, and which filled the tavern, he added: "Fugitives! here is a man who is come to take up his right of citizenship, and he is a murderer. He killed one of my relations, Philippe du Gardin, my cousin's son."

A long murmur of surprise went round the assembly.