

## KING OF THE MILL.

One summer evening after supper, Monsieur La Rose, the village notary, came out upon the veranda of the hotel. Castor, his hat in his hand, his smoothly shaven face ruddy and pleasant to look upon, Brabon, the drummer, who came up from Montreal to Saint-Py, occasionally on business, sat smoking quietly in a chair that was tilted against the wall.

'Good evening,' said M. La Rose.  
'Good evening, monsieur le notaire,' answered Brabon indolently.

Then there followed a little spell of silence that was intensified by the distant clatter of cow bells.

Presently there appeared in the street before the hotel a sort of living fantasy—a singularly deified old man who strode slowly past, clad in a loose robe of many colors. His eyes had the unmistakable, restless look of the daff. On his head was a crown of buttons—brass, silver, bone, pearl—presumably sewn together on cardboard and making up a headgear of remarkable brilliancy. Behind him walked a gray-haired, gray-eyed woman in ordinary garb. Her look was clear and steady, her demeanor in every way sane. Yet, though it was plain to see she was a commonplace, rustic woman, there was something august in her carriage, unaccountably so, perhaps, but as natural as the studied pose of the other was 'constrained and unnatural.' Her eyes were set fairly upon the fantastic figure before her with a meek, patient look, and an evident interest beyond his ludicrous pomp and pretension.

It was not surprising then to the notary that this apparition, emphasized in the magic atmosphere of the summer twilight, should have made Brabon to cry out with astonishment.

'Allo! What is this, monsieur? I have been in Saint-Py many times before, but I declare, this is new!'

'A very pathetic affair it is, Brabon,' said the notary, taking a chair and looking at his watch, to be assured he had time to tell the tale before going for his customary evening chat with M. Le Cure in the presbytery rose garden.

'There is a tale?'

'Well, as you will—a history, nothing absorbing, but very human. Old Césaire Moisson, a man with a large family—a thrifty, sober God-fearing man—once owned the mill by the River of Angels.'

'Yes, I see it from here; the squat white building near the cluster of willows yonder.' 'Exactly. Well, he was a man with a considerable family. I said, did I not? And when the epidemic of smallpox occurred in the village—that was many years ago, monsieur—poor Moisson's family was attacked, and one after another his wife and children passed away, and he himself, indeed, till there was only left his son Zéphirin, whom you saw go by a moment since.'

'It left him so—the smallpox?'

'No. He was not at home when the epidemic occurred; he was at college. He managed to put by enough money to educate the lad—the highest of his brood—and M. LeCure also contributed, for he had hopes that Zéphirin would become a priest.'

'Then, I presume, the shock of this great calamity unbalanced the young man's mind.'

'That may be pretty true, monsieur, though for a long time after the affair he was thought to be perfectly sound mentally. Well, Zéphirin was obliged to leave college and take up the business of the mill—a homely task it must have been for one who had but just tasted the sweets of knowledge. Then every dusty timber of the mill must have seemed to him like a ghost of the happy days when the place was brimming with laughter and good cheer.'

'He was not liked by the villagers on account of his silent and arrogant manner; he was unlike any miller who had ever been known. When the inhabitants came with their grists he received them with the grand air of a seigneur of the old days who amid his courtly entourage, received the fiefs of his dependents. 'It's like that all ways,' grumbled the crones; 'poor parents fill their children's minds with foolish notions of greatness! Poor old Césaire himself—rest his bones—was not like this peacock. Césaire knew his place bon vieux! A miller is a miller, if his head be crammed with latin or flour dust.'

'Every one pitied Zéphirin of course on account of his great bereavement; and the business of the mill suffered no serious retrogression in consequence of his singular demeanor. This exclusiveness, this hauteur, however, was taken lightly by the young folks of the village, for, for instance, mer evening like this one, for instance, they passed by the mill crying up at Zéphirin, who invariably pored over his books in the little dormer window: 'Behold, the king of the mill! Then, with gestures of mock gravity, 'Think of his mighty empire of rats!'

'Quite so,' said Brabon; 'they taunted him in his insanity with their gibes. The crown! the robes! I see now how they came! Indirectly these taunts may have affected his mind, monsieur. His curious attire and mien are obviously suggestive of the fact; but it is my opinion his sad derangement is only partly due to them.'

'Night after night the little dormer window of the mill was lighted till dawn, yet the earliest comers did not fail to find Zéphirin up and about. No one could understand, for not another light save the miller's might be found in all Saint-Py, not even at the presbytery, after 10 o'clock. At length the tongues of the gossips began to wag. It went abroad that he was closeted each night with the old man—the evil one—debating upon the sale of his soul for riches and power to satisfy his sinful pride. Again, others said it was not Zéphirin's light at all, but only the glowing of the ghosts of his family, who in all the miller had become a fearsome individual and the neighborhood of the mill was a place to be shunned after dark, unless one had no fear in his heart. If by unfortunate concurrence of sorceries a person should chance to meet a firefly while passing the mill, no plunging of steel into wood might save him from the evil spirits. Even to bless himself and utter a pious invocation, perhaps, might not avail!'

'In the midst of Zéphirin's ill repute a singular thing occurred. He was known to

have fallen into conversation with a customer. It was this way; Colette Blon came often to the mill with the grist of her mother, a poor widow with thirteen children, of whom Colette was the eldest. One day when she came along down the dandelion-dotted pathway leading to the mill, with her mother's grist in a bag upon her head, Zéphirin watched her with much interest. It common report may be believed she was certainly, in those days, a picture not to be blinked at casually. She had the figure of a nymph, and a face, for all it was commonplace at points, something unusually fine for a villager. But the step the carriage, it remains to this day, as we have seen, monsieur—dignified, distinguished, majestic. At first glance it is said, there was some remarkable resemblance between Colette and Zéphirin—and who can tell! It may have some vague suggestion of congeniality—some thin ray, as from one distant planet to another, which inspired the miller's interest.'

'When at length she arrived at the door of the mill and deposited her burden beside it, she said:

'You have a meaning step, petite, and a pretty one.'

'True?' questioned Colette, with something finely scornful on her eloquent lips. She was piqued, let us believe, since he had not noticed her pretty face, for, though a woman may be conscious of her subtlest grace and charm, homage to the feature is the thing—the real joy. 'Isn't it so, Brabon?' 'Well,' said the miller, 'I doubt not there is more in your mind than the mere grinding of yonder grist, eh?'

'It is—my mind now,' she said. 'It was my step lately.'

'It is the mind which regulates the step, petite. I always watch the step when I would know the mind,' he responded.

'Now, there is much in these fragments which reveal the cleanness of Zéphirin's mind at that period, and also the real character of the man and the best of his spirit. You see, it was the gesture, the carriage, the aspect, that interested him most. Why? Presumably, did not realize the true significance of his words, she remembered them—every one—and repeated them to her mother, who, in turn, told everything to the cure, Langlois, from whom I have the story. The girl confessed also to her mother that she was much surprised, regarding the ill-reputed miller. 'Monsieur Moisson—Zéphirin,' she declared, 'was not at all a weird man, but on the contrary, very sensible and good natured. Yet her mother warned her she must be wary; such fine qualities often screened the worst souls. Colette, however, maintained stolidly that not a word of the village gossip was true.'

'Indeed,' said she, 'they say almost as naughty things of me, because they think I am proud, and, you know, mamma, I am not proud nor wicked.' So every time Colette fetched the grist to the mill she returned radiant and full of praise of the miller. At length one day said he to her, so she reported: 'Colette, I am going to ask you something.'

'If it is one thing, I know what my answer will be,' she responded with much piquancy.

'Well, if I should ask you to marry me.'

'Then I should answer, "No!"'

'Why,' says the miller, his heart sinking to his boots, no doubt; but, rising again very quickly when he catches the twinkle of mischief in her eyes.

'Because a common miller never could win my heart,' says she, coquettishly, yet with something truly dramatic in her pose.

'That is only for a great man.'

'A seigneur?' ventured the miller.

'Higher.'

'A governor?'

'Nay, higher.'

'A prince?'

'Even higher.'

'A king?'

'Yes, a king. And then after a pretty pause: 'And that is thou, my dear king of the mill!'

'Now he draws her hands across the door of the mill and kisses her fair head that is fallen against his breast—and that is all. Let us suppose they simply looked out in a dream across the little river of Angels, to the pleasant disused meadows and green fields about here.

'Well,' says Zéphirin to her, very gravely, and with a new, strange look in his eyes, a look that frightens her not a little, 'they call me in contempt "The King of the Mill," but they shall bow before me yet, as before a king. And indeed I shall wear the robes of a king, which I am getting by rote; very night where they see my lamp burning in the dormer window. Heine! They shall sit like rats, the rats whose emperor they say I am now, while I hold them in my spell with the brave lines of Molière! of Corneille! of Racine!'

'The good saint An protect us! Who are they all?' cries Colette, now much perturbed. But the miller continues without noticing the interruption.

'And I shall come to you then with my triumphs, my fine royal robes of purple and gold ermine; with my glorious jewelled crown. And I shall kiss your hand in homage to your beauty and lay these laurels, these triumphs, at your feet, my queen? my Colette!'

'Just then appears a farmer with his grist, and the happy, frightened girl flies away like a startled bird.'

'Bon Di u!' said Brabon. 'I see—the stage has its vagary.'

'Yes,' said the notary, bowing his head, as before some great mystery. 'At the college entertainments, while strutting through the plays of these great masters, in the little hall with its small stage and crude scenery, before the common village audience, he first heard the siren voice of art. And it is a siren's voice to some you know, Brabon. 'Eh, bien! What is the difference? He is playing a role now—how heroic a role!'

'But about Colette?' interrupted Brabon, with some impatience. The gentle sentimentality of the notary escaped to an extent the bluff, practical drummer.

'Ah, there is the role!—the role of beauty and distinction! Think of it! All along she has believed in him vaguely. From the day he had frightened her with his strange talk, seemingly so irrelevant to her happiness, her poor small mind was filled with visions of mysterious greatness are joys to be in the future—much as are our visions of the life



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to come. He asked her to wait. She must never be the wife of a common miller, but of a great man—a man whom the whole world applauded. And so she is waiting, trusting, loving, believing in him infinitely; and, even when reason is falling into decay—see the devotion! Each day, all these years, she goes to the mill and attends upon him, performing the household duties, conducting the business of the mill, detailing the work and instructing the men hired to do the milling. Thus has she cared for him, as no one would care for a child, and, in all save the matter of this vagary, he is obedient to her slightest whim.

Brabon told the notary's arm.  
'See! They come again.'

Once more the bizarre figure strode past, followed by the woman. They had walked to the church, where Colette was making a novena for Zéphirin's recovery.

To look upon the notary one would suppose an angel passed, but there was on the face of the drummer only a look of perplexed incredulity.

When they were gone a little way the notary arose, looked at his watch and made as to set forth, but Brabon detained him.

'One word, monsieur. They are married now?'

'Oh, no! That could not be,' he answered, with something like a sigh. 'They are still courting, and looking forward to a day of greatness, and making ready for the wedding. Mon Dieu Brabon? That is love, eh?—Joseph Nevil Doyle.'

## HISTORICAL CRYPTOGRAMS.

Efforts of Various People to Communicate Messages in a Secret Manner.

The discovery of the key of the secret message sent by the conspirators in the Transvaal previous to the Jameson raid, and the fact it might have in the trials, has led James Payn to tell about other famous cryptograms in the article in the London Illustrated News.

One of the earliest methods of secret writing was to shave the head of the messenger and write the message on the scalp. After the hair had grown the messenger was sent to his destination, where the hair was again removed and the message brought to light.

The Spartans wound a strip of paper around a staff, wrote lengthwise the staff, and when removed the message on the paper could not be read until it was wound on another staff the same shape and size as the first one. Charles I. was beheaded through the evidence afforded by cryptograms that were too simple. Sympathetic ink has been much used, but it has always been dangerous.

Mr. Payn says that the only thoroughly undecipherable cryptogram is the simplest. To use it the two persons must have books exactly alike. Any book will do. In writing a message the first letter on the first page is a, the first on the second is b, and so on. The second message will begin where the first leaves off in the book.

## LIKE SUFFERERS ONLY KNOW.

R. Sriver, Carpenter, of Hastings, was a Great Sufferer from Kidney Disease—South American Kidney Cure Effect—of a Quick Cure—It is a Specific Remedy for a Specific Disease—It Dissolves and Eliminates All Solid Matter From the System—Is Safe and Permanent.

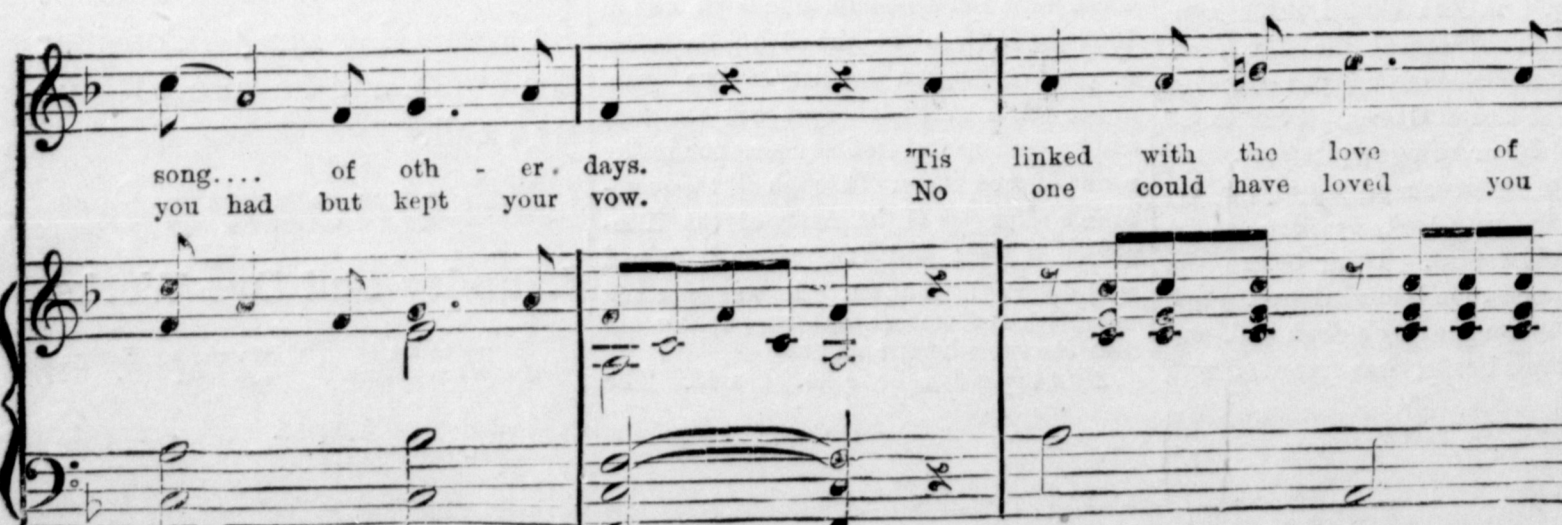
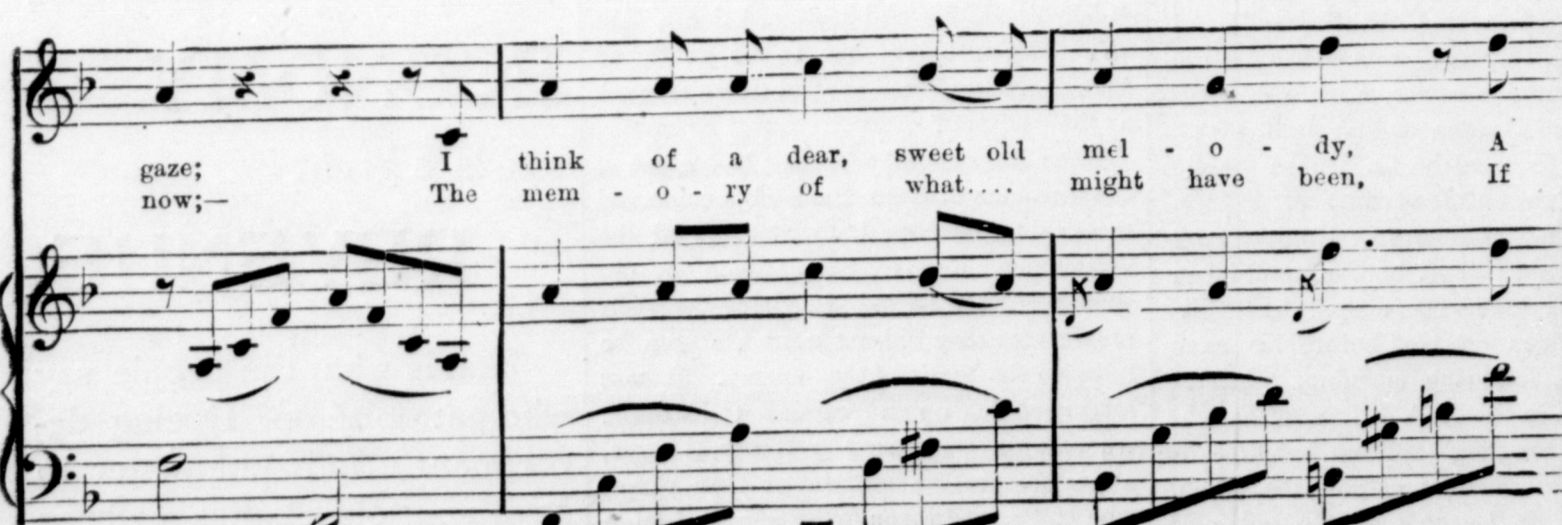
For many years I have been troubled with kidney disease, necessitating the taking of much in the way of remedies. Two years ago they became so bad that I had to seek the aid of a physician. My urine was more like blood than anything else, and was very painful. Just at that time I began using South American Kidney Cure. It gave me immediate relief, and from that time till now I have had no difficulty. I can safely and honestly recommend this great remedy to all persons suffering from kidney trouble.

## THE SONG OF OTHER DAYS.

L. B. ROBINSON.

BALLAD.

CLARENCE COHN.



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## CHORUS. Tempo di Valse.



The song of other days.—2.