

rake. My friends, it is the will of God. To-morrow you will see how the plan works and next summer all the farmers in the parish will have machines like mine."

"Let us go, M. Duhamel," said the *cure*, "it's no use to talk any more." Let us go, Damase. Good-by, Theophile. I am sorry that you cannot think with us. Perhaps some day you may change your mind."

So the *cure* and the labourer went away, but Bonhomme Duhamel remained behind. He had something more to say, some faint hope that all would yet be well.

"Theophile," he said, when they were alone, "I have always thought well of you. I was a friend of your father and I have always thought of you as a son. I believe that you will yet return to the ways of your fathers. If there is anything that I can do to induce you to do this I shall be very glad. Theophile, my son, I have ambitions for you. My daughter, too, I am sure that she does not dislike you. Who can tell but that we might arrange? You have spoken of it before, but I would not listen. Now, for the good of the parish, for my own sake, I ask you to consider. We shall yet be happy and I shall live in peace in my old age."

"M. Duhamel," said Theophile, looking very serious, "it is true that I have wished to marry Philomene and it is still the desire of my heart.

But would she be glad to marry one who had given up the ambition of youth and the set purpose of manhood for the sake of a life of ease and stupid content? M. Duhamel, I will not believe it. If Philomene would do this she is not what I think, and I will not marry her. But if she thinks with me I will carry out my plan of life and marry her as well, in spite of everybody."

"Theophile," said the old man, "you have great courage, but I think that you are making a sad mistake. If you find it to be so, remember what I have said."

III.

FROM this moment ill luck began to fall upon Theophile and everything that he did. To the neighbours it seemed as though he had exhausted the patience of the good God and provoked the vengeance of Heaven. Perhaps it was not so, but it is certain that misfortune followed him, and that, like Pharaoh of Egypt, he did not repent, but only hardened his heart.

On the day after the visit of the deputation Theophile began to mow his hay with the new machine. Scarcely had he driven twice around the field when the teeth of the mower were broken against a jagged rock. It was necessary to send to Quebec for another set, so that nothing more could be done that day.

On the following morning the machine was started again, but presently it ceased to move, and Theophile was obliged to spend most of the day, with the aid of the parish blacksmith, in replacing certain little bolts and screws that for some reason were missing. About sunset all was in order and Theophile had the pleasure of cutting an arpent or two before dark, promising himself many hours of work on the following day.

That night, in the midst of a terrific thunderstorm, a bolt from heaven seemed to fall upon the new barn, which in a moment, with all its contents, including the mower and the horse-rake, was a mass of flames. The neighbours from far and near came to see the fire and to talk with complacency of the vengeance of the good God.

But Theophile was not yet subdued, for he sent immediately to Quebec for another machine, and it was not until he found that there were no more for sale that he decided to give up the struggle for that year. With a smile on his face he approached Damase Tremblay.

"Damase," he said, "I am beaten for this time.

Will you be so kind as to cut my hay as you did last year?"

"With pleasure, M'sieu' Beurepaire, and I am sorry, also, that you have had such bad luck."

So Damase Tremblay, with ten associates, went to work at once, cutting with scythes, raking with long



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hand-rakes, and binding into bundles in the time-honoured way. Soon Theophile's hay was as far advanced as any of his neighbours', and, if all had gone well, his losses would have been made good by the profit of that one summer. The neighbours, too, had the finest hay that had ever been seen in L'Ange Gardien, so that they had it in their hearts to forgive Theophile and to rejoice at the prodigal's return.

But now occurred a calamity involving the whole parish, a disaster such as had not been known within the memory of man. Upon the fragrant heaps of hay, dry and ready for binding, there fell a drenching rain, rendering it necessary to spread out on the fields all that had been so labourously gathered, that it might dry again and be raked together as before. No sooner was this done than all the work was spoiled by another day of cold and dismal rain. It is hard to believe, but nevertheless true, that despite the prayers of Father Perrault, the same evil succession continued for more than six weeks, until the summer was gone, and the good hay was mildewed and rotten on the ground.

The disappointed haymakers returned to the poverty of their neglected farms, while the discouraged *habitants* of L'Ange Gardien remained to struggle through the long winter, striving, by means of minute economies, to spare the little hoards laid up for a rainy day.

Theophile suffered with the rest, but was not slow to point out the fact that several farmers of Beauport, by use of the new machines, had saved their hay before the rains began. This was a fact that the neighbours could not deny, but it was not pleasant to think of it, nor to be reminded of it at such a time. To have lost perhaps five hundred dollars was bad enough, but to be told that an expenditure of fifty dollars might have saved it all was even harder to bear. So their previous dislike of Theophile ripened into hatred. No longer did they mutter imprecations as he passed by, but turned away from him in silence and bitterness of soul.

Only Damase Tremblay remained a friend to Theophile, for he had left his barren farm at Malbaie and had come with his family to live in one of Theophile's little houses, so that under one roof, at least, in L'Ange Gardien, were contented parents and happy children.

Often during the long winter did Theophile sit by the fire in his great kitchen, thinking of his failures in the past and dreaming of the success which

would surely be his in the coming summer. Always he thought of the little Philomene. Now her roguish face smiled at him from the rising flames, now her graceful form, shadowy yet irresistible, was at his side, only to melt away into thin air as he reached out to touch her hand. It was a consolation to think that a real, bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked Philomene was not so very far away, and that, perhaps, before another winter, she would be with him, his dear companion and friend for all time to come.

But never did Theophile visit the home of Philomene, and not once did she give him the slightest encouragement. Even when they met on the public road she would have passed without a sign of recognition, but that Theophile always said, "Good-day, Philomene," in a loud and cheerful voice, and Philomene could not help saying "Good-day, M'sieu'" as politely as possible, with the feeling that a young man with such agreeable manners could not be so very wicked after all.

On a certain bright winter's day it seemed impossible to pass by in this unfriendly way. The sky was blue and deep blue the shadows of the maples upon the white snow, while from the heart of every crystal there shone a beam of sunlight and reflected love. The beaten road creaked under foot and the frosty air caused the blood to tingle, the cheeks to glow, and the

eyes to shine with the joy of living.

"What a fine day, Philomene," said the young man, as they met at the corner of the road. "It is magnificent, is it not?"

"Truly it is, M'sieu'," said Philomene, pausing a moment as she spoke.

"*Mon Dieu*, Philomene, how beautiful you are! And those furs—it is not in Quebec that one sees the like."

"You flatter me, M'sieu'," said Philomene, a gleam of mischief in her eyes, "is it possible that you do not always think of mowing-machines, as I have been told?"

"Bah! the mowing-machine, it is for you, Philomene, also the rake and the new barn—the house too, if you will have it. I give them all to you, Philomene."

"Oh! you are too generous, M'sieu', I could not think of taking away the idols which you love so much."

"No, Philomene, it is you that I love, and these things, they are all for you."

"How can you say that?" said Philomene, with an impatient stamp of a little moccasined foot. "You love yourself only and you will give up nothing. Ah! I am sorry for the young lady at Quebec. I think I shall tell her what you are like."

"Philomene," said the incorrigible one, "there is no young lady at Quebec. She is in L'Ange Gardien. And tell me, Philomene, when you will marry me. Shall it be next June, or perhaps in October?"

"I will never marry you," said the angry little Philomene. With that she turned and walked away with head erect, not once looking back, but when she returned home she went all the rest of the day and said she would enter the Ursuline Convent at Quebec.

In a few days, however, Philomene was as bright and smiling as ever. Isidore Gagnon came often to the house, and it was reported that he would marry the daughter of Bonhomme Duhamel in the early autumn.

This was the last and greatest of Theophile's misfortunes, and he came very near to losing heart. But every day he went about his daily work and every evening he sat alone by the fire, smoking his pipe and thinking of what might have been, though not without a hope of what might yet be, when the day of adversity had passed away.

At length the winter came to an end, and spring blossomed into summer, until the haying season ar-