

THE WILL OF LE BON DIEU

CONCLUDED FROM PAGE 19.

Again Michel hesitated.

"Now—blue. Take your time." A note of mingled reassurance and perplexity sounded in the Scotchman's tones. When at last he rose from his chair, he laid his hand kindly upon the applicant's shoulder.

"My dear young man," he said with sympathy, "did you know before that you are colour-blind?"

Michel passed his hands in bewilderment over his fine eyes, his mouth set with a strange sternness. What calamitous fact was this? What hideous deformity.

"Yes, it is most unfortunate, when you are so well equipped in other ways, but I find that you cannot distinguish the colours at all. You chose brown for green, pink for blue—in fact you never once chose the colour for which I asked. You must see how important this is in the life of a railroad man—the mistake in a signal light might mean the death of hundreds of people or the loss of many dollars. We have to be most particular in this and I am sorry."

Michel's head sank upon his breast; his cap slipped to the floor from inert fingers. It was a terrible revelation.

"Of course," continued the superintendent, "I can give you a job in the works—in almost any department. I'd like very much to do that—"

"Non, non, M'sieu—t'anks. Dat is not de life dat called. I am obleeged, M'sieu—you are mos' kind, but—eh, bien, I shall go home to my fader."

McGregor smiled as he clasped the boy's brown hand. "I think that perhaps after all, Michel, that will be best. I'm glad you came to me and

I'm honestly sorry that I can't help you out. You understand, don't you? And now, good-bye and good luck."

As he returned along the familiar path leading through the sugar-bush Michel's heart gave a sudden throb of gladness. It was almost dark and the distant lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep, and the faint singing of frogs at the river's edge, sounded wondrously sweet to his ears. For a moment he stood at the gap surveying the familiar notice, "*Un traverse du chemin de fer*," and as he looked it was as if he were bidding a last farewell to the road and the dead dream of his youth. Yet, strangely enough, his regret was quietly dispassionate.

Slowly he stole through the perfumed garden and for a moment stood in the trellised porch with its wealth of trailing honeysuckle. Within all was still but by the fading light he could see his mother and father sitting together at the open doorway. Honore's rough hand held that of his wife as they looked out upon the neat garden from which all pleasure had vanished in a day.

"Moder—fader!" With mingled cries of astonishment and joy they rose at the sound of his cry and threw themselves upon him in a passion of gladness and adoration.

"I have come back to de leetle house—an' to you an' Ninon. De colour-sight it is no good but I need it not here wit' you, fader. I t'ink I marry Ninon now an'—p'raps I get de bounty of de King. It is de will of Le Bon Dieu. Hein?"

A MUMMER'S THRONE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19.

"You don't know what our people are. They are good natured and kind hearted to a fault, but they are terribly indiscreet. Clarette, I am going to place myself at your mercy. I beg you to go back to the others and say nothing whatever as to our whereabouts. This gentleman is his Majesty the King of Montenegro."

King Fritz waited for the listener to be properly impressed. But from that point of view the announcement was a dismal failure. The little actress threw back her head and laughed like a peal of silver bells. Even the king smiled.

"Oh, this is delicious," she cried. "Much flattery has turned the poor thing's head. She actually believes that she has found a king. Your Majesty, I am pleased to make your acquaintance. All sorts and conditions of men I have met, but a king before—never."

"She does not recognise me," the king said, *sotto voce*.

He threw an imploring glance at Nita over his shoulder. She bit her lips, and was conscious of her own indiscretion. After all, it would be a stupid thing to betray the identity of her companion. Doubtless, it would lead to all kinds of complications. It was better far to let the thing go, and to accept Clarette's point of view. Besides, the king was standing up in the boat now, and had drawn it close to the bank. The spirit of adventure was upon him. There was something in the close contact between these actors and actresses that appealed to him. Like most people he was more or less fascinated with the stage, and here was an opportunity to make the acquaintance of a whole crowd of them, which was not to be neglected. He held out his hand to Nita, and helped her from the boat.

"Don't say anything," he whispered. "Let it all pass as a joke. I wouldn't mind so much if it wasn't for those confounded newspapers. If they get hold of this, I shall have half my ministers coming post haste to take me back home again."

"Come along," Clarette cried. "Come and have tea with the others. I will introduce your king to the crowd. I am sure they will be delighted; as things go he is a very presentable king indeed. And now, what is your name, your Majesty?"

"Mr. Fritz," the king said gravely. "I am sure I shall be delighted."

They came presently to a little valley in the heart of the woods where a fair white tablecloth was laid upon the grass. A kettle, boiled in gipsy fashion, bubbled merrily on a tripod, and an actress with a European reputation was making tea. A score of men and women, chattering and laughing gaily, were gathered round, and the king had no difficulty in recognising most of the company which he had seen at the "Oderon" Theatre. One or two glanced at him curiously, and some of the women smiled. It was only natural from his clean-shaven face and alert air that he should be mistaken for one of the profession. With a laughable suggestion of melodrama Clarette raised her hand, and introduced him.

"Behold the missing queen," she cried. "Now we know what has become of her for the last few days. We might have saved our tears. We might have saved ourselves from picturing her bent over the bedside of a dying friend. Deal with her gently, girls, for her case is hopeless."

"How so?" asked the lady with the teapot.

"Mad, my dear, hopelessly and entirely mad. She swears that she is born to the purple, and that her in-



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