THE OLD MILL: BY JOHN MÄTTER

"Oh, to be home again, home again, home again,
Under the apple-boughs, down by the mill."

ONCE this mill was young, the timbers were green, and
the stones unworn. The waters of the stream slipped
quietly beneath the willows and crept gently among the
grasses on its banks. Then man came pushing a deter-
determined way westward and suddenly the slumbrous
waters were quickened into busiest life, the dreamy
stream that basked lazily in the sun boiled and seethed
and rushed madly through a race and over a wheel, for man had need
of its energy. The tall pine trees that for centuries had stood upon
the bank were felled and made into homes, apple trees appeared in
their places dropping pink and white petals upon the awakened
waters, while meadows became cornfields and many roads converged
to the mill over which wagons toiled, bringing harvests to its whirling
stones.

For nearly a hundred years this little stream turned the wheel
grinding the yield of the fields into food for men. Many, many times
the spring has released the waters from the icy prisoning of winter and
given glad voice to the mill. The apple trees have grown gnarly and
the roads have widened by the influx of settlers, yet this old mill of my
grandfather's on the Eel River, Indiana, still loyally grinds the corn
brought to it by the children's children of those who built it. To me,
though living far away from the merry melody of its voice, it repres-
ts the spirit of faithful service. About it is a halo of beauty and of
romance, for it has played a priceless part in the history of civilization.

It seems to be brooding meditatively upon the past, peering with
still intensity of thought into the quiet mirror of the stream as into
a crystal globe, seeing the long procession of the years passing mys-
tically in review therein. But at the call of man's need it awakens in-
stantly, the stream singing its joyous song to the accompaniment of
the rhythmic clacking of the wheel. Time has mellowed and increased
its beauty and ceaseless labor given it reverent place in the affections
of its community. Because it has played its part in history, has loyally
served while man came, lived a brief time and went again, it seems as
it stands quietly by the side of its friend, the stream, to be full of wis-
dom and human kindliness.

It is in truth a pioneer, as worthy to bear that honored name as
those of flesh and blood who marched at the head of civilization's ad-
vance. Staunch and well-tried is its heart of wood, strong its oaken
timbers as in the days of its youth, sweet is its patient song of good
work well done. Framed by the fine old trees that comfort it with cool
shadows on summer days, may it stand in all its inspiring beauty for
yet another hundred years.

(See Illustration on Frontispiece.)