

crept into the bronze of his cheek. The hand that held the knife clenched suddenly. That city dude, that little sawed-off, hammered-down thingummybob was going to put his arm around—

"He has a box with him," continued the girl. "It's only a small deal box, but I'm sure there's something valuable in it. He wouldn't leave it at the station for the men to bring up with his trunk, so he carried it home on his knees in the buggy. It was very heavy. He made as much fuss over it as though it contained minted gold!"

"Which it probably did. How do you know he isn't an escaping bank-teller?"

"John!"

"Or a crook of some kind. I was reading in the paper about a fellow who robbed a paymaster's car—"

"John! How horrid of you! You're—you're awfully glum this evening. You don't seem a bit interested in anything. What are you thinking about to put that scowl on your face?"

John closed and pocketed his knife and threw away the switch. Then he pulled his hat down over his eyes.

"I'm thinking of my wheat," he said. "Wheat!"

Rosemary put a great deal of scorn in the word.

"Yes—wheat," repeated John. "It means—oh you don't know what it means to me—"

"Wheat! How practical and unromantic and—and stupid! Wheat! Mr. Fitzherbert talks of poetry and grand opera and—and love."

Rosemary almost whispered the final word. Then, receiving no comment from her companion she gave a short laugh and started home. John remained standing where she left him, his eyes following the small figure in pink gingham until the whispering corn swallowed it up.

"Bye-bye, sulky old John!" called back a clear voice. But John did not deign a reply. Instead he turned on his heel and made all speed in the opposite direction.

Once he stopped and looked back to where a faint light could be seen, emanating from the Carr home. His strong hands clenched and his mouth set in a straight line.

"Talked to her about love, eh?" he muttered. "I'll—I'll talk to him about love, I will! I'll smash the fellow's head if I ever get within arm's reach of him!"

The next evening Rosemary did not appear at the trysting-place, nor the next. Then John, stung by her indifference, and filled with seething resentment at the implied comparison in her last conversation, between himself and the newcomer, also avoided the spot where they had had so many stolen meetings.

The two homesteads, lying as they did, side by side, were yet quite unlike in many respects. Carr's quarter-section had been worked for fifteen years and was well-fertilized and improved. It invariably gave the best returns for the labor expended. Carr owned good barns and his home was the best in the district.

But the adjacent farm had belonged to a succession of thriftless and shiftless owners. The story of a ghost-haunted shack on this land had deterred several would-be purchasers, and for some years the farm had lain idle.

Then John Ward had taken it up. And, from the moment that his plow turned the first sod of the first furrow, good luck seemed only waiting round the corner to meet and embrace him. The supposedly-haunted cabin was turned into a machinery shed, and the optimistic young fellow erected a modest frame house and sent for his mother to come from the east. That was four years ago.

The place had immediately taken on a degree of prosperity quite foreign to it. But the Wards had been hailed out twice, and in the autumn of the third year the old lady had died. Thus had young Ward and success eluded each other.

But John clung to the forlorn hope that a fresh start and a successful year would make up for two "bad" years and an accumulation of machinery debts. And there was Rosemary!

So like the tenacious young Canuck he was, he had squared his shoulders, and set his hand once more to the plow, refusing to recognize failure, or admit defeat.

On the following Sunday afternoon Rosemary, having coaxed her testy but indulgent father to allow her to drive the bay team, she and the entertaining boarder set out together for church,

twelve miles away. It was a splendid equipage, taking it big and large, and more than one neighbor in shabby old buggy, or dilapidated buckboard turned to stare after the handsome rubber-tired vehicle, the glossy bays with their nickel-plated harness, and the no less striking occupants of the rig.

But five miles from home, on a lonely stretch of road, some freak of destiny sent an old yellow sheet of newspaper careening across the path of the spirited team, and they bolted.

A solitary pedestrian in "store clothes" was walking moodily along the grass-strip half a mile further on. His head was bent, his great brown hands clasped behind his back. Suddenly he heard hoofbeats—swift, mad "thud-thudding" in the rear—and turning, beheld a runaway team, with foam-spattered manes, with a pale-faced, golden-haired girl standing up in the buggy and sawing desperately on the reins, and John Ward (for it was none other) darted out into the roadway.

Up went one muscular arm and caught the bit-rein of the foremost bay, which dragged him on for half a dozen stagger-

ing paces, but with a mighty jerk the young man succeeded in halting the beasts, and then with a gentle hand he stroked the neck of the animal nearest him and began to speak soft words into her frightened ear.

After a moment he turned to the thoroughly terrified girl crouching on the seat. His own face was no less white.

"Are you hurt?" he asked, and his voice trembled.

"No John. Oh John—thank God you came! Oh—"

"Are you hurt?" he repeated.

"No, no, John! But they nearly pulled the wrists off me. I—"

"Are you all alone? Was your father thrown out? Where—"

"No—I—that is, Mr. Fitzherbert was with me."

"Where is he?"

"He—jumped."

"Jumped?"

"Y—yes, a little way back."

John said no more. Quietly he climbed in beside the girl and took the lines from her trembling hands. He drove her home, by another route.

Two weeks passed, and then one morning as John Ward came out of the village post office he met his friend, Billy Wiggett, sergeant of the Mounted Police. Billy drew him back into the little building and sought a quiet corner. Then he began to speak in low, excited tones.

John rode home with knitted brows. Once or twice he jerked his horse to a standstill in the road, and sat silently pondering upon what Billy had just told him.

"If it's true—that she's engaged to him," he muttered, "I'll be the last one to place a stumbling-block in her way. But, my God! If that other piece of news is true, too, I ought to—but no, I can't! Someone else will have to do it."

It was plain that he was puzzled as to his proper course. With absent eye he gazed out across the yellow wheat that lay shimmering like a golden sea in the heat of the July sun. There was wheat, wheat wherever the eye rested. The grain was almost ready to cut. A week or so more of this ripening weather, and barring all accidents, the farmers of this district would have good cause for re-



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