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smile, though the fingers on the door quivered visibly, "I think the audacity you once mentioned must have returned to me, for I am going to make a very great venture."

For a moment Maud Barrington turned her eyes away. "It is the daring venture that most frequently succeeds."

Then she felt the man's hand on her shoulder, and that he was compelling her to look up at him.

"It is you I came for," he said quietly. "Still, for you know the wrong I have done, I dare not urge you, and have little to offer. It is you who must give everything, if you can come down from your station and be content with mine."

"One thing," said Maud Barrington, very softly, "is, however, necessary."

"That," said Witham, "was yours ever since we spent the night in the snow."

"Then," she said, "what I can give is yours—and it seems you have already taken possession."

Witham drew her towards him, and it may have been by Miss Barrington's arranging that nobody entered the hall, but at last the girl glanced up at the man half-shyly as she said, "Why did you wait so long?"

"It was well worth while," said Witham. "Still, I think you know."

Yes," said Maud Barrington softly. "Now, at least, I can tell you I am glad you went away—but if you had asked me I would have gone with you."

It was some little time later when Miss Barrington came in and, after a glance at Witham, kissed her niece. Then she turned to the man. "My brother is asking for you," she said. "Will you come up with me?"

Witham followed her, and hid his astonishment when he found Colonel Barrington lying in a big chair. His face was haggard and pale.

"Lance," he said. "I am very pleased to have you home again. I hear you have done wonders in the city, but you are, I think, the first of your family who could ever make money. I have, as you will see, not been well lately."

"I am relieved to find you better than I expected, sir," Witham said quietly. "Still, I fancy you are forgetting what I told you the night I went away."

Barrington nodded, and then made a little impatient gesture. "There was something unpleasant, but my memory seems to be going, and my sister has forgiven you. I know you did a good deal for us at Silverdale, and showed yourself a match for the best of them in the city. That pleases me. By and by, you will take hold here after me."

Witham glanced at Miss Barrington, who smiled somewhat sadly.

"I am glad you mentioned that, sir, because I purpose staying at Silverdale now," he said. "It leads up to what I have to ask you."

Barrington's perceptions seemed to grow clearer, and he asked a few pertinent questions before he approved.

"Yes," he said, "she is a good girl—a very good girl, and it would be a suitable match. I should like somebody to send for her."

Maud Barrington came in softly, with a little glow in her eyes and a flush in her face, and Barrington smiled at her.

"My dear, I am very pleased, and I wish you every happiness," he said. "Once I would scarcely have trusted you to Lance, but he will forgive me, and has shown me that I was wrong. You and he will make Silverdale famous, and it is comforting to know, now my rest is very near, that you have chosen a man of your own station to follow me. With all our faults and blunders, blood is bound to tell."

Witham saw that Miss Barrington's eyes were a trifle misty, and he felt his face grow hot, but the girl's fingers touched his arm, and he followed, when, while her aunt signed approbation, she led him away.

"You will forget it, dear, and he is still wrong. If you had been Lance Courthorne, I should never have done this," she said.

"No," said the man gravely. "I think there are many ways in which he is right, but you can be content with Witham the prairie farmer?"

Maud Barrington drew closer to him with a little smile in her eyes. "Yes," she said simply. "There never was a Courthorne who could stand beside him."

THE END.



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