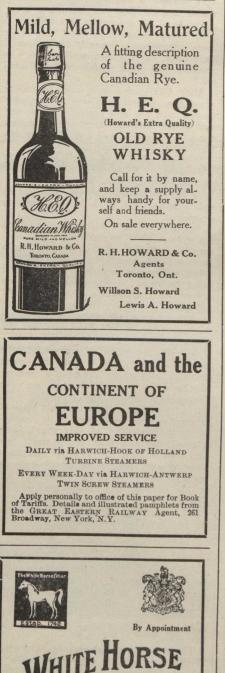
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than she would once have been, but be-fore she could answer Witham, who had made a trifling change in his clothing, came in.

came in. "I can give you some green tea, though I am afraid it might be a good deal better than it is, and our crockery is not all you have been used to," he said. "You see, we have only time to think of one thing until the sowing is through." Miss Barrington's eyes twinkled. "And then." "Then," said Witham, with a little laugh, "there will be prairie hay to cut, and after that the harvest coming on." "In the meanwhile, it was business

"In the meanwhile, it was business that brought me here, and I have a cheque with me," said Maud Barring-ton. "Please let us get it over first of ton. all."

ton. "Please let us get it over first of all." Witham sat down at a table and scribbled on a strip of paper. "That," he said, gravely, "is what you owe me for the ploughing." There was a little flush in his face as he took the cheque the girl filled in, and both felt somewhat grateful for the en-trance of a man in blue jean with the tea. It was of very indifferent quality, and he had sprinkled a good deal on the tray, but Witham felt a curious thrill as he watched the girl pour it out at the head of the bare table. Her white dress gleamed in the light of a dusty window, and the shadowy cedar boarding behind her forced up each line of the shapely figure. Again the maddening temptation took hold of him and he wondered whether he had betrayed too much, when he felt the elder lady's eyes upon him. There was a tremor in his brown fingers as he took the cup held out to him, but his voice was steady. "You can scarcely fancy how pleasant

"You can scarcely fancy how pleasant this is," he said. "For eight years, in fact, ever since I left England, no woman has ever done any of these graceful little offices for me."

Miss Barrington glanced at her niece, and both of them knew that, if the lawyer had traced Courthorne's past correctly, this could not be true. Still, there was no disbelief in the elder lady's eyes, and the girl's faith remained un-shaken.

shaken. "Eight years," she said, with a little smile, "is a very long while." "Yes," said Witham, "horribly long, and one year at Silverdale is worth them all—that is, a year like this one, which is going to be remembered by an who have some wheat on the proving which is going to be remembered by all who have sown wheat on the prairie, and that leads up to something. When I have ploughed all my own holding I shall not be content, and I want to make another bargain. Give me the use of your unbroken land, and I will find horses, seed, and men, while we will share what it yields us when the harvest is in." is in.

The girl was astonished. This, she knew, was splendid audacity, for the man had already staken very heavily on the crop he had sown, and while the daring of it stirred her she sat silent a moment.

"I could lose nothing, but you will have to bring out a host of men and have risked so much," she said. "No-

have risked so much," she said. "No-body but you, and I, and three or four others in all the province, are ploughing more than half their holdings." The suggestion of comradeship set Witham's blood tingling, but it was with a little laugh he turned over the pile of papers on the table, and then took them up in turn

of papers on the table, and then took them up in turn. "Very little ploughing has been done in the tracts of Minnesota previously alluded to. Farmers find wheat cannot be grown at present prices, and there is apparently no prospect of a rise," he read.

ne read. "The Dakota wheat-growers are mostly following. They can't quite figure how they would get eighty cents for the dollar's worth of seeding this year. "'Milling very quiet in Winnipeg. No inquiries from Europe coming in, and Manitoba dealers generally find little demand for harrows or seeders this year. Reports from Assiniboia seem to show that the one hope this season will be that the one hope this season will be mixed farming and the neglect of cereals."

"There is only one inference," he said. "When the demand comes there will be nothing to meet it with." "When it comes," said Maud Barring-

ton, quietly. "But you who believe it will stand alone." "Almost," said Witham. "Still there

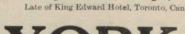


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