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The beer that is always

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ever, generally pass them on to you."

A trace of colour crept into the man's face, and his voice was a trifle hoarse as he said. "Do you know that I would ask nothing better than to take every care you had and bear it for you?"

"Still," said the girl with a little smile, "that is very evidently out of the question."

Witham rose, and she saw that one hand was closed as he looked down upon her. Then he turned and stared out at the prairie, but there was something very significant in the rigidity of his attitude, and his face seemed to have grown suddenly careworn when he glanced back at her.

"Of course," he said quietly. "You see, I have been ill, and a little off my balance lately. That accounts for erratic speeches, though I meant it all. Colonel Barrington is still in Winnipeg?"

"Yes," said the girl, who was not convinced by the explanation, very quietly. "I am a little anxious about him, too. He sold wheat forward, and I gather from his last letter has not bought it yet. Now, as Alfreton is driving in tomorrow, he could take you."

Witham was grateful to her, and still more to Miss Barrington, who came in just then; while he did not see the girl again before he departed with Alfreton on the morrow. When they had left Silverdale a league behind, the trail dipped steeply amidst straggling birches to a bridge which spanned the creek in a hollow, and Witham glanced at the winding ascent thoughtfully.

"It has struck me that going round by this place puts another six miles on to your journey to the railroad, and a double team could not pull a big load up," he said.

The lad nodded. "The creek is a condemned nuisance. We have either to load light when we are hauling grain in and then pitch half the bags off at the bottom and come back for them—while, you know, one man can't put up many four bushel bags—or keep a man and horses at the ravine until we're through."

Witham laughed. "Now, I wonder whether you ever figured how much those little things put up the price of your wheat."

"This is the only practicable way down," said the lad. "You can scarcely climb up one side where the ravine's narrow abreast of Silverdale."

"Drive round. I want to see it," said Witham. "Call at Rushforth for a spool of binder twine."

Half-an-hour later Alfreton handed the twine to the hired man.

"Take that with you, Charley, and get down," he said. "If you strip your boots off you can wade through the creek."

"I don't know that I want to," said the man.

"Well," said Witham, "it would please me if you did, as well as cool your feet. Then you could climb up and hold that twine down on the other side."

The man grinned; and, though Alfreton remembered that he was not usually so tractable with him, proceeded to do Witham's bidding. When he came back there was a twinkle of comprehension in his eyes; and Witham, who cut off the length of twine, smiled at Alfreton.

"It is," he said dryly, "only a little idea of mine."

They drove on, and, reaching Winnipeg next day, went straight to Graham the wheat-broker's offices. He kept them waiting some time, and in the meanwhile men with intent faces passed hastily in and out through the outer office. Some of them had telegrams or bundles of papers in their hands, and the eyes of all were eager. It seemed to Alfreton there was a suggestion of strain and expectancy in all he heard and saw. Witham, however, sat gravely still, though the lad noticed that his eyes were keener than usual, for the muffled roar of the city, patter of messengers' feet, ceaseless tinkle of telephone call bells, and whirr of the elevators, each packed with human freight, all stirred him. Hitherto, he had grappled with nature, but now he was to test his judgment against the keenest wits of the cities, and stand or fall by it, in the struggle that was to be waged over the older nation's food.

(To be continued.)

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