

realized that the other was perplexed by the same question, while the girl was astonished to find her vague suspicions shared. While they sat silent, Colonel Barrington came in.

"I am glad to see you looking so much better, Maud," he said, with a trace of embarrassment. "Courthorne is resting still. Now, I can't help feeling that we have been a trifle more distant than was needful with him. The man has really behaved very discreetly. I mean in everything."

This was a great admission, and Miss Barrington smiled. "Did it hurt you very much to tell us that?" she asked.

The Colonel laughed. "I know what you mean, and if you put me on my mettle I'll retract. After all, it was no great credit to him, because blood will tell, and he is, of course, a Courthorne."

Almost without her intention, Maud Barrington's eyes wandered towards the photograph, and then looking up she met those of her aunt, and once more saw the thought that troubled her in them.

"The Courthorne blood is responsible for a good deal more than discretion," said Miss Barrington, who went out quietly.

Her brother appeared a trifle perplexed. "Now, I fancied your aunt had taken him under her wing, and when I was about to suggest that, considering the connection between the families, we might ask him over to dinner occasionally, she goes away," he said.

The girl looked down a moment, for, realizing that her uncle recognized the obligation he was under to the man he did not like, she remembered that she herself owed him considerably more and he had asked for something in return. It was not altogether easy to grant, but she had tacitly pledged herself, and turning suddenly she laid a hand on Barrington's arm.

"Of course; but I want to talk of something else just now," she said. "You know I have very seldom asked you questions about my affairs, but I wish to take a little practical interest in them this year."

"Yes?" said Barrington, with a smile. "Well, I am at your service, my dear, and quite ready to account for my stewardship. You are no longer my ward, except by your own wishes."

"I am still your niece," said the girl, patting his arm. "Now, there is, of course, nobody who could manage the farming better than you do, but I would like to raise a large crop of wheat this season."

"It wouldn't pay," and the Colonel grew suddenly grave. "Very few men in the district are going to sow all their holding. Wheat is steadily going down."

"Then if nobody sows there will be very little, and shouldn't that put up the prices?"

Barrington's eyes twinkled. "Who has been teaching you commercial economy? You are too pretty to understand such things, and the argument is fallacious, because the wheat is consumed in Europe—and even if we have not much to offer, they can get plenty from California, Chile, India, and Australia."

"Oh, yes—and Russia," said the girl. "Still, you see, the big mills in Winnipeg and Minneapolis depend upon the prairie. They couldn't very well bring wheat in from Australia."

Barrington was still smiling with his eyes, but his lips were set. "A little knowledge is dangerous, my dear, and if you could understand me better, I could show you where you were wrong. As it is, I can only tell you that I have decided to sell wheat forward and plough very little."

"But that was a policy you condemned with your usual vigour. You really know you did."

"My dear," said the Colonel, with a little impatient gesture, "one can never argue with a lady. You see—circumstances alter cases considerably."

He nodded with an air of wisdom as though that decided it; but the girl persisted. "Uncle," she said, drawing closer to him with lithe gracefulness, "I want you to let me have my own way just for once, and if I am wrong I will never do anything you do not approve of again. After all, it is a very little thing, and you would like to please me."

"It is a trifle that is likely to cost you a good deal of money," said the Colonel dryly.

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