

have no doubt that, sooner or later, you will enjoy the spectacle."

Just then a light waggon came up behind them, and when one of the hired men helped them in they swept out of the cool shade into the dust and glare of the prairie, and when, some little time later, with the thud of hoofs and rattle of wheels softened by the bleaching sod, they rolled down a rise, there was spread out before them evidence of man's activity.

Acre by acre, gleaming chocolate brown against the grey and green of the prairie, the wheat loam rolled away, back to the ridge, over it, and on again. It was such a breadth of sowing as had but once, when wheat was dear, been seen at Silverdale, but still across the foreground, advancing in echelon, came lines of dusty teams, and there was a meaning in the furrows they left behind them, for they were not ploughing where the wheat had been. Each wave of lustrous clods that rolled from the gleaming shares was so much rent from the virgin prairie, and a promise of what would come when man had fulfilled his mission and the wilderness would blossom. There was a wealth of food stored, little by little during ages past counting, in every yard of the crackling sod to await the time when the toiler with the sweat of the primeval curse upon his forehead should unseal it with the plough. It was also borne in upon Maud Barrington that the man who directed those energies was either altogether without discernment, or one who saw further than his fellows and had an excellent courage, when he flung his substance into the furrows while wheat was going down. Then, as the hired man pulled up the waggon, she saw him.

A great plough with triple shares had stopped at the end of the furrow, and the leading horses were apparently at variance with the man who, while he gave of his own strength to the uttermost, was asking too much from them. Young and indifferently broken, tortured by swarming insects, and galled by the strain of the collar, they had laid back their ears, and the wickedness of the broncho strain shone in their eyes. One rose almost upright amidst a clatter of harness, its mate squealed savagely, and the man who loosed one hand from the headstall flung out an arm. Then he and the pair whirled round together amidst the trampled clods in a blurred medley of spume-flecked bodies, soil-stained jean, flung-up hoofs, and an arm that swung and smote again. Miss Barrington grew a trifle pale as she watched, but a little glow crept into her niece's eyes.

The struggle, however, ended suddenly, and hailing a man who plodded behind another team, Witham picked up his broad hat, which was trampled into shapelessness, and turned towards the waggon. There was dust and spume upon him, a rent in the blue shirt, and the knuckles of one hand dripped red, but he laughed as he said, "I did not know we had an audience, but this, you see, is necessary."

"Is it?" asked Miss Barrington, who glanced at the ploughing. "When wheat is going down?"

Witham nodded. "Yes," he said. "I mean, to me; and the price of wheat is only part of the question."

Miss Barrington stretched out her hand, though her niece said nothing at all. "Of course, but I want you to help us down. Maud has an account you have not sent in, to ask you for."

Witham first turned to the two men who now stood by the idle machine. "You'll have to drive those beasts of mine as best you can, Tom, and Jake will take your team. Get them off again now. This piece of breaking has to be put through before we loose again."

Then he handed his visitors down, and Maud Barrington fancied as he walked with them to the house that the fashion in which the damaged hat hung down over his eyes would have rendered most other men ludicrous. He left them a space in his bare sitting-room, which suggested only grim utility, and Miss Barrington smiled when her niece glanced at her.

"And this is how Lance, the profligate, lives!" said she.

Maud Barrington shook her head. "No," she said. "Can you believe that this man was ever a prodigal?"

Her aunt was a trifle less astonished

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