

chequer is inexhaustible at Silverdale. Now I want you to take a cheque from me."

"Is it necessary, that I should?"

"Of course," said the girl, with a trace of displeasure.

Witham laughed. "Then I shall be prepared to hand you my account whenever you demand it."

He did not look at his companion again, but with a tighter grip than there was any need for on the reins, sent the light waggon jolting down the slope to Silverdale Grange.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### The Unexpected.

THE sun beat down on the prairie, which was already losing its flush of green, but it was cool where Maud Barrington and her aunt stood in the shadow of the bluff by Silverdale Grange. The birches, tasselled now with whispering foliage, divided the homestead from the waste which would lie white and desolate under the parching heat, and that afternoon it seemed to the girl that the wall of green shut out more than the driving dust and sun-glare from the Grange, for where the trees were thinner she could see moving specks of men and horses athwart the skyline.

They had toiled in the sun-baked furrow since the first flush of crimson streaked the prairie's rim, and the chill of dusk would fall upon the grasses before their work was done. Those men who bore the burden and heat of the day were, the girl knew, helots now, but there was in them the silent vigour and something of the sombreness of the land of rock and forest they came from, and a time would come when others would work for them. Winning slowly, holding grimly, they were moving on, while secure in its patrician tranquillity Silverdale stood still, and Maud Barrington smiled curiously as she glanced down at the long white robe that clung very daintily about her and then towards her companions in the tennis field. Her apparel had cost many dollars in Montreal, and there was a joyous irresponsibility in the faces of those she watched.

"It is a little unequal, isn't it, aunt?" she said. "One feels inclined to wonder what we have done that we should have exemption from the charge laid upon the first tiller of the soil we and the men who are plodding through the dust there are descended from."

Miss Barrington laughed a little as she glanced with a nod of comprehension at the distant toilers, and more gravely towards the net. Merry voices came up to her through the shadows of the trees as English lad and English maiden, lissom and picturesque in many-hued jackets and light dresses, flitted across the little square of velvet green. The men had followed the harrow and seeder a while that morning. Some of them, indeed, had for a few hours driven a team, and then left the rest to the hired hands, for the stress and sweat of effort that was to turn the wilderness into a granary was not for such as them.

"Don't you think it is all made up to those others?" she asked.

"In one sense—yes," said the girl. "Of course, one can see that all effort must have its idealistic aspect, and there may be men who find their compensation in the thrill of the fight, and the knowledge of work well done when they rest at night. Still, I fancy most of them only toil to eat, and their views are not revealed to us. We are, you see, women—and we live at Silverdale."

Her aunt smiled again. "How long is it since the plough crossed the Red River, and what is Manitoba now? How did those mile furrows come there, and who drove the road that takes the wheat out through the granite of the Superior shore? It was more than their appetites that impelled those men, my dear. Still, it is scarcely wise to expect too much when one meets them, for though one could feel it is presumptuous to forgive its deficiencies, the Berserk type of manhood is not conspicuous for its refinement."

For no apparent reason Maud Barrington evaded her aunt's gaze. "You," she said dryly, "have forgiven one of that type a good deal already, but, at least, we have never seen him when the fit was upon him."

Miss Barrington laughed. "Still, I



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