

above the rim of the prairie. Then both went with him to the station, and as the long cars rolled in Dane turned quietly to the lad.

"Now, I am quite aware that we are incurring some responsibility, so you need not waste your breath," he said. "There are, however, lawyers in Winnipeg, if you fancy it is advisable to make use of them, and you know where I and Macdonald are, if you want us. In the meanwhile, your farm will be run better than ever it was in your hands, until you dispose of it. That is all I have to tell you, except that if any undesirable version of the affair gets about, Courthorne or I will assuredly find you."

Then there was a scream of the whistle, and the train rolled away with Ferris standing white with fury on the platform of a car.

In the meanwhile, Maud Barrington spent a sleepless night. Ferris's taunt had reached its mark, and she realized with confusion that it was the truth he spoke. The fact that brought the blood to her cheeks would no longer be hidden, and she knew it was a longing to punish the lad who had struck down the man she loved that had led to her insistence on the former leaving Silverdale. It was a difficult admission, but she made it that night. The outcast who had stepped out of the obscurity and into her peaceful life, had shown himself a man that any woman might be proud to mate with; and, though he had said very little, and now and then his words were bitter, she knew that he loved her. Whatever he had done—and she felt against all the teachings of her reason that it had not been evil—he had shown himself the equal of the best at Silverdale, and she laughed as she wondered which of the men there she could set in the balance against him. Then she shivered a little, remembering that there was a barrier whose extent he alone realized between them, and wondered vaguely what the future would bring.

It was a week or two before Witham was on his feet again, and Maud Barrington was one of the first to greet him when he walked feebly into the hall. She had, however, decided on the line of conduct that would be most fitting, and there was no hint of more than neighbourly kindness in her tone. They had spoken about various trifles when Witham turned to her.

"You and Miss Barrington have taken such good care of me that, if I consulted my inclinations I would linger in convalescence a long while," he said. "Still, I must make an effort to get away tomorrow."

"We cannot take the responsibility of letting you go under a week yet," said Maud Barrington. "Have you anything especially important to do?"

"Yes," said Witham—and the girl understood the grimness of his face—"I have."

"It concerns the fire?"

Witham looked at her curiously. "I would sooner you did not ask me that question, Miss Barrington."

"I scarcely fancy it is necessary," said the girl, with a little smile. "Still I have something to tell you, and a favour to ask. Ferris has left Silverdale, and you must never make any attempt to discover what caused the fire."

"You know?"

"Yes," said Maud Barrington. "Dane, Macdonald, and Hassal know, too; but you will not ask them, and if you did they would not tell you."

"I can refuse you nothing," said Witham with a laugh, though his voice betrayed him. "Still, I want a *quid pro quo*. Wait until Ferris's farm is in the sale list, and then take it with the growing crop."

"I could not. There are reasons," said the girl.

Witham gazed at her steadily, and a little colour crept to his forehead, but he answered unconcernedly. "They can be over-ridden. It may be the last favour I shall ever ask you."

"No," said Maud Barrington. "Anything else you wish, but not that. You must believe, without wondering why, that it is out of the question!"

Witham yielded with a curious little smile. "Well," he said, "we will let it drop. I ask no questions. You have

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