

## The Impostor

(Continued from page 18.)

he founded Silverdale. Maud Barrington had been his ward, and he still directed the farming of a good many acres of wheat land which she now held in her own right. The soil was excellent, and would in all probability have provided one of the Ontario men with a very desirable revenue, but Colonel Barrington had no taste for small economies.

"I want to hear all the news," said the girl. "You can begin at the beginning—the price of wheat. I fancied, when I saw you, it had been declining."

Barrington sighed a little. "Hard wheat is five cents down, and I am sorry I persuaded you to hold your crop. I am very much afraid we shall see the balance the wrong side again next half-year."

Maud Barrington smiled curiously. There was no great cause for merriment in the information given her, but it emphasized the contrast between the present and the careless life she had lately led when her one thought had been how to extract the greatest pleasure from the day. One had frequently to grapple with the problems arising from scanty finances at Silverdale.

"It will go up again," she said. "Is there anything else?"

Barrington's face grew a trifle grim as he nodded. "There is; and while I have not much expectation of an advance in prices, I have been worrying over another affair lately."

His niece regarded him steadily. "You mean, Lance Courthorne?"

"Yes," said Barrington, who flicked the near horse somewhat viciously with the whip. "He is also sufficient to cause any man with my responsibilities anxiety."

Maud Barrington looked thoughtful. "You fancy he will come to Silverdale?"

Barrington appeared to be repressing an inclination towards vigorous speech with some difficulty, and a little glint crept into his eyes. "If I could by any means prevent it, the answer would be, No. As it is, you know that, while I founded it, Silverdale was one of Geoffrey Courthorne's imperialistic schemes, and a good deal of the land was recorded in his name. That being so, he had every right to leave the best farm on it to the man he had disinherited, especially as Lance will not get a penny of the English property. Still, I do not know why he did so, because he never spoke of him without bitterness."

"Yes," said the girl, while a little flush crept into her face. "I was sorry for the old man. It was a painful story."

Colonel Barrington nodded. "It is one that is best forgotten—and you do not know it all. Still, the fact that the man may settle among us is not the worst. As you know, there was every reason to believe that Geoffrey intended all his property at Silverdale for you."

"I have much less right to it than his own son, and the colonial cure is not infrequently efficacious," said Miss Barrington. "Lance may, after all, quieten down, and he must have some good qualities."

The Colonel's smile was very grim. "It is fifteen years since I saw him at Westham, and they were not much in evidence then. I can remember two little episodes, in which he figured, with painful distinctness, and one was the hanging of a terrier which had in some way displeased him. The beast was past assistance when I arrived on the scene, but the devilish pleasure in the lad's face sent a chill through me. In the other, the gardener's lad flung a stone at a blackbird on the wall above the vinery, and Master Lance, who, I fancy, did not like the gardener's lad, flung one through the glass. Geoffrey, who was angry, but had not seen what I did, haled the boy before him, and Lance looked him in the face and lied with the assurance of an ambassador. The end was that the gardener, who was admonished, cuffed the innocent lad. These, my dear, are somewhat instructive memories."

"I wonder," said Maud Barrington, glancing out across the prairie which was growing dusky now, "why you took the trouble to call them up for me?"

The Colonel smiled dryly. "I never saw a Courthorne who could not catch a woman's eye, or had any undue diffidence about making the most of the fact; and that is partly why they have

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