

time wooer, Bert McDougall, waving for her to stop, as she was about to flee to the shack. Not since the stampede had they exchanged greetings. Outwardly calm, but inwardly wondering, she awaited his approach. Ranchers and pioneers, soft meeting emergencies and perils, learn self-control. Consequently there were no tender or harsh words exchanged. Leaning against his tired and sweating pinto, the rancher spoke earnestly and quietly.

"Miss Cameron! Stella! I am fortunate in seeing you. I have ridden far, secretly and alone, to warn you, and through you, the settlement. The straw stacks that we have tried in vain to buy for our starving cattle are to be raided tonight. It is a case of necessity."

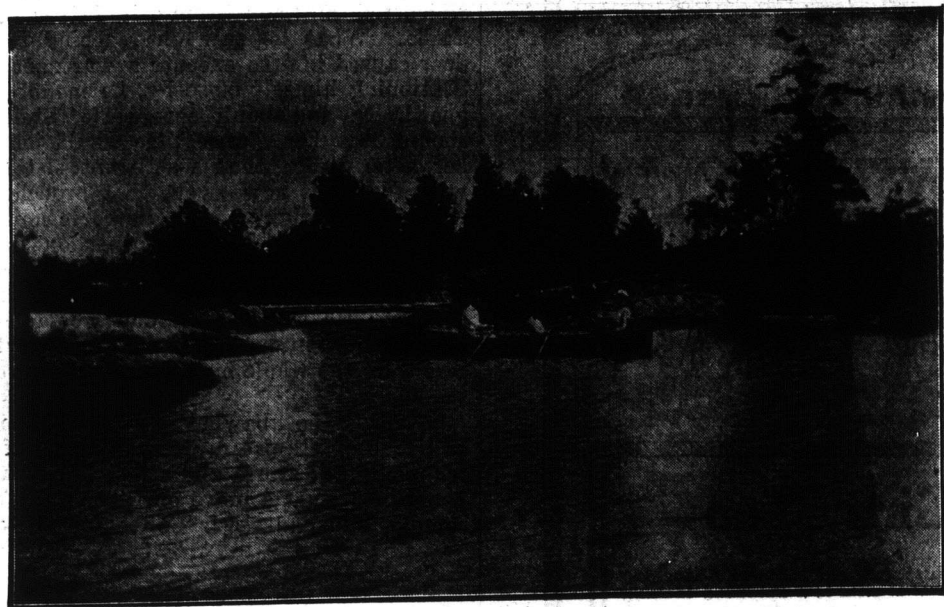
Seeing her face flush, and the indignant glance of her dark eyes.

"Will the trouble never end," she cried passionately. "Is this guerrilla warfare to go on indefinitely? Are you ranchers quite determined to drive us out? And —"

"Not so," he interrupted eagerly. "We are not so bad as you have cause to think. We must have feed for our cattle. Most of us are tired of the feud. You may expect a delegation to-morrow when we will try to make amends, but, to-night the raid will take place." This was spoken in a very decided tone, then, in a changed voice, he continued: "No one must know I have betrayed the boys, we are leal and true to each other, but woe be to the 'unfaithful,' Stella!"

fiance of the fires. What cared starving cattle for barbed wire or burning stacks? Of what avail were shots from infuriated farmers? Goaded by their drivers, they rushed into the homesteads from north, south, east and west completely encircling the settlement. Bellowing, moaning, crowding, trampling the weaker to earth, rushing over the fallen, they bore down all before them, making for the stacks burned and unburned, often buried by those they pulled down upon themselves. Until the stacks were either burnt or demolished, the ranchers had no control over the maddened creatures they had driven into the once peaceful settlement. In spite of their efforts and those of the farmers, more than one shack was burnt and other damage done. It was a night of terror to Stella and the women shut in the shacks with doors and windows barricaded. The din outside in every homestead was appalling. Bob was Stella's only companion; occasionally she heard the voice of her father or brothers as they galloped to and fro, and once Bert's call to her father concerning her safety. She knew that their little home was guarded and took comfort from the knowledge that their stacks were feeding the cattle untouched by fire.

At the dawn of day that heralded a wild March morning, with some difficulty the cattle were rounded up and slowly driven across the creek, leaving many dead animals in every homestead and a despoiled settlement. Weary and dis-



Boating on the Lake.

There is a wonderful softness in his voice now, "I have done this for you, will you be true to me?" She had been stroking the pinto, seemingly absorbed, she gazed into the wan but rugged features of the man by her side, how proud she was of him now. A telegraphic signal flashed from eyes to eyes, from soul to soul. Who shall say when, or by whom wireless telegraphy was invented? When soul speaks to soul, by a flash of the eye, when no speech is needed to carry the message. Ah! wireless telegraphy is as old as Adam. Her glance was sufficient, the man was satisfied. With a clasp of hands he remounted and was soon speeding across the prairie, while the girl returned thoughtfully to the shack.

Cottonwood Creek had witnessed many scenes of a dramatic nature when Indians roamed at will, tenting on its banks, chasing buffalo, or waylaying caravans as they trekked westward, but never in its history had such a unique battle been waged as that which occurred on that eventful night when ranchers, cowboys, farmers and cattle were mixed in a great melee. The enraged and insulted farmers cared not how or by whom the warning came. They believed the ranchers capable of everything bad; they would meet them on their own ground and give them a warm reception. Fencing was taken down, cattle corralled, stacks encircled with barbed wire, and everything barricaded as far as possible. When dusk deepened into night, a pyramid of fire towered upward, a silent signal which was followed by others till the prairie west of the creek was illuminated by countless huge bon fires, and the air infused by the odor of burning straw. Out on the plains, gradually drawing nearer, a vast herd of cattle snuffed the air frantically, and cowboys muttered curses and threats, realizing the signi-

fied, the farmers viewed the desolation, and later in the day assembled at the Cameron shack to decide upon their future course. Rage and anger reigned supreme. None heeded the chinook wind, fast disappearing snow, and balmy atmosphere. Outside all was dirty, down-trodden and ruined. In the little kitchen Stella prepared coffee, frequently going to the window, which commanded a fine view of the wide reaching plains. Smilingly she gazed; she had confided in no one as to whom or what she expected. She scarcely knew herself, but she smiled, and, woman-like, trusted. She listened to the conversation within and a frown gathered on her brow. "We'll not try it again," her brother Fred spoke; "we need not expect any redress nor mercy from the ranchers. They have won out; let them keep the prairie. We will go further west." In this the younger men concurred without a dissenting voice; but even now the older farmers would remain. They had ventured and dared much; they would wait for their patents, and then would sell.

Coffee served, the men strolled out one by one, ill-satisfied and gloomy. Someone spied a moving object away across the prairie; another, and yet another. What were they? Men or cattle? Horses! was the general verdict. No! Ranchers! Ranchers! They are returning. Now there is wild excitement, almost equalling the Indians when surprised by a war party. All the guns at Cottonwood farm were taken from their straps on the log walls; farmers rushed to their homesteads to protect them from — they knew not what — but the majority remained and awaited the coming of what appeared to be a long line of mounted cowboys, loping along the trail. No cattle in sight, and Stella, a glad light in her eyes, watched from her

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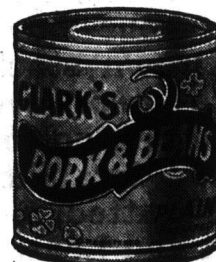
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