

"Quack! Quack!" came from a pair of mallards as they settled on the slough.

"Caw! Caw!" cried a couple of benighted crows, flying past.

"Croak! Croak!" said the frogs, beginning to tune up for their evening entertainment.

Ah! sounds, reverse of cheerful, how they sank, like leaden weights, into her very soul.

"He'll never, never come," she sobbed, and the tears crept slowly down her cheeks, so pale in the gathering dusk.

"He's working on the C.N.R. out of Edmonton, his father told me, and he's sure to have met someone before this, who has become nearer and dearer than lonely, distant Caroline."

Where strayed that meadowlark, whose evensong of love, last night had thrilled her heart?

"What's the use?" she thought, "nobody wants me—except Mr. Hicks; and I might as well marry him, and be done with it. Then father can marry his widow, if he wishes and no one can say any more I'm waiting around for a man who doesn't care about me. I'll go right home now, and tell Mr. Hicks I've made up my mind to accept him," and she rose in grim determination, and went home.

In the front room, she found her father, alone, bending over a volume of "Bolton's Scouts," fearing no doubt, he might get rusty on facts concerning his pet subject of conversation.

"Where you been?" he asked, looking up.

"I just went up the hill to look for crocuses."

"Crow-cusses?" chuckled the old man, "no trouble finding crow-cusses this spring. They're buildin' all over the place. Never saw them so thick since the year after the Rebellion," and he went back to his book, still chuckling over his little joke.

"The crocuses will be out now," she said to herself as she hung up the dishpan, but she would not allow herself to think of the other possibility.

And the crocuses were out—hundreds and thousands of them, a perfect carpet of purplish mauve, covering the hillside, and in their midst, on the old familiar stone, sat Will Winters, a very prosperous looking Will Winters, awaiting her coming.

"Hello, Caro," he called, rising as she approached, "I thought you'd never come."

"H'm," sniffed Caroline, in a tone that belied the light in her eyes, "take some yourself, I've been up here time and again; and you didn't come, and didn't come—and I supposed you'd taken up with some bold thing up in Edmonton, and so—and so—" her voice trailed off in gloomy recollection—"and so," she began again, "I made up my mind to marry Mr. Hicks."

"Oh! Caroline!" there was a world of pained reproach in his tone, "how could you? That old hasbeen—and I never heard—and here I was working my fingers to the bone, trying to get some money to buy a farm; and now I've got a payment made on as good a quarter section as there is in Alberta; and I came to tell you I was going right on it to put in the spring crop; for there's a shack on the place, and a few implements, and I've got my old reliable team of plugs over at father's, and in the fall I was going to build an addition to the shack, and come for you. And you went and married that old Hicks."

Will sat down on the stone, and turned his back on her in a vain attempt to regain his composure.

Then the imp of perversity, which had taken possession of his sweetheart fled as precipitately as it had come. And Caroline knew from previous experience that there was room for two, on the old stone; so she slipped down beside him and put her head against his shoulder.

"I made up my mind to marry Mr. Hicks," she said, "but he hasn't been over since. I guess he doesn't want me very much; and father's going to marry the widow—and now you've turned your back on me," her voice trembled pathetically.

"Oh! you hateful girl," cried Will Winters, catching her in his arms, "to go and make me think—" but he never finished the sentence.

"Quack! Quack!" the drake on the slough called, reassuringly, to his wife, who had shown signs of agitation, as a crow flew over her nest, with a loud "Caw! Caw!" But the crow saw her not; he was flying back to his mate in the willows, to tell her how easy it was to dig up the wheat, which that stupid man had buried that day.

"Croak! Croak!" said the frogs, tuning up preparatory to serenading the lovers on the hill-top.

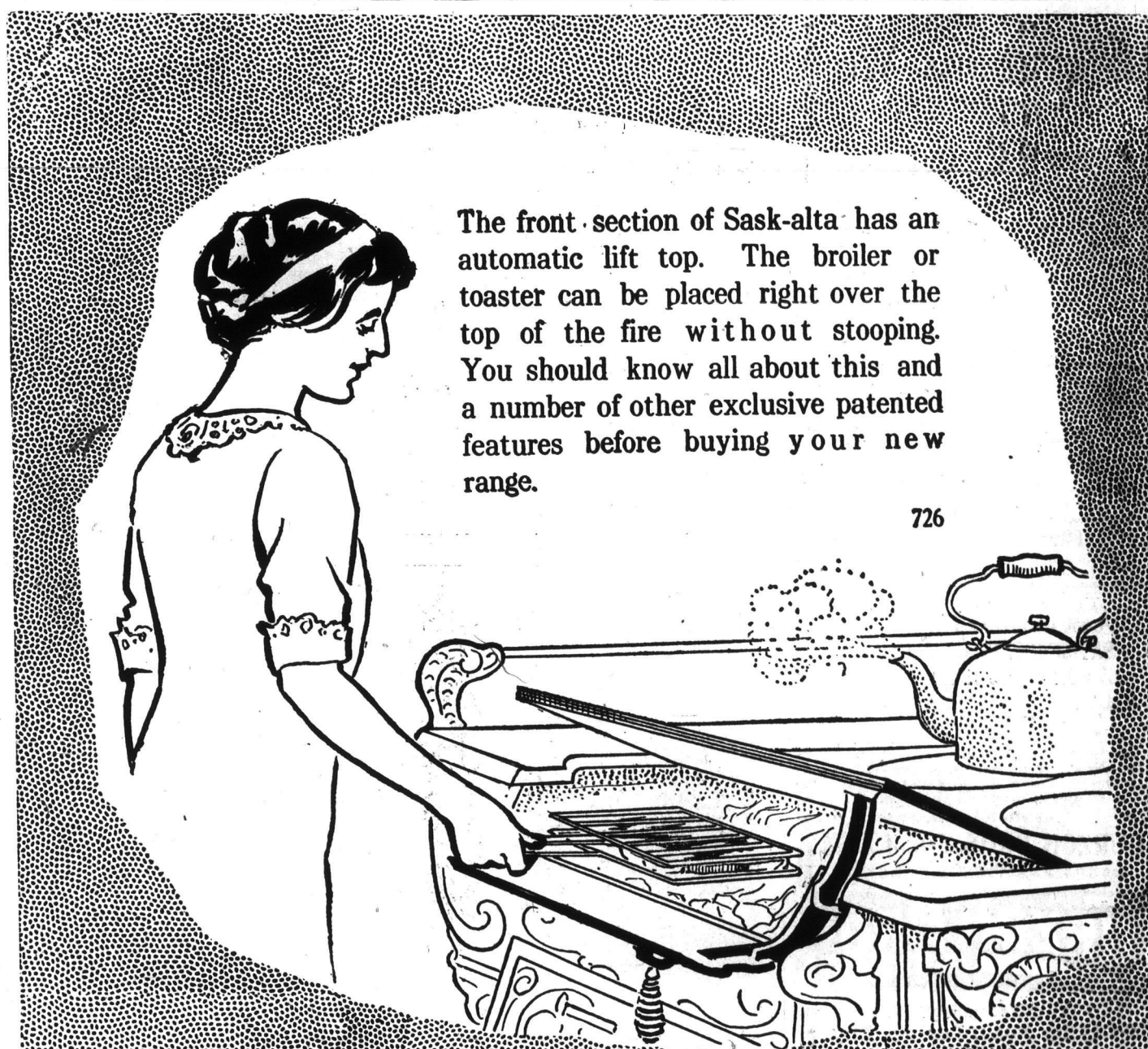
And then, on a wild-rose bush immediately behind the trysting stone, the

meadowlark paused for one short moment, pouring forth his very heart in a dulcet evensong of love.

"Yes, sir," the Captain was saying to neighbor Hicks, as the two sat meditatively puffing their pipes in the front room, "some of those fellows in the Ninetieth Battalion from Winnipeg and the other regiments, had never been on a horse before, and I guess the journey to the front was no joke to them; but some of 'em didn't have to ride back; came back, after the battle of Batoche, feet first, stretched out on

the gun carriages, with flags all over them—and was shipped east to be buried. Guess they got a decent funeral, too, different to poor Thomas Scott in the first Rebellion—for they do say as no white man knows to this day where his body was laid."

And Mr. Hicks, looking out of the window, saw a couple coming boldly across the fields, and the man had his arm around the girl's waist; so he felt, did neighbor Hicks, that the Captain's tale of death, was but a fitting prelude to the funeral of his hopes.



The front section of Sask-alta has an automatic lift top. The broiler or toaster can be placed right over the top of the fire without stooping. You should know all about this and a number of other exclusive patented features before buying your new range.

726

Sask-alta Ranges are sold everywhere by good dealers who back up our guarantee on this splendid range—McClary's

McClary's

Sask-alta

Range

LONDON TORONTO MONTREAL WINNIPEG VANCOUVER
ST. JOHN HAMILTON CALGARY SASKATOON