
THE HOMESTEADERS

Harris placed the letter in the hands of his wife. She tried to read it, but a great happiness enveloped her as a flood and the typewritten characters seemed to swim before her. "What does it mean, John?" she asked, noting his restrained excitement. "What does it mean?"

"It means that the homestead quarter was not sold—after all—that it is still yours, with the buildings, and machinery, and stock, and this year's crop just ready for cutting."

She raised her eyes to his. "Still ours, John, you mean. Still ours."

In the rapid succession of events everyone seemed to have forgotten, or disregarded, Gardiner. But at this moment the doctor came rushing out of the house.

"Gardiner's gone!" he exclaimed, as he came up to the men.

Some of the party removed their hats.

"Oh, not that way—not that way!" exclaimed the doctor. "I mean he's gone—skipped—beat it, if you understand. Most extraordinary! I was taking his pulse. It was about normal, and he seemed resting easier, so I slipped downstairs for the antidote. When I went back—I was only gone a moment—there wasn't sight or sound of him."

The men stared at each other for a moment; then followed the doctor in a race for Gardiner's room. They found it as he said. There was neither sight nor sound of Gardiner.