

## Lovely Lou the Outlaw.

**W**HOO was she? Where had she come from? Questions often asked in the town of McGrath but never satisfactorily answered and while it was gently whispered that the blue-eyed daredevil laughing Lou could account for many a missing steer, she never troubled anyone with her confidence and the questions for long remained unanswered.

She was of medium height, sun-tanned, blue-eyed, straight as an arrow, rode her great white-faced horse with provoking ease and managed her handsome cowboy lover with a toss of her head and a wink from her teasing eye.

The Bow River country was wild in those days. It was mostly a free wild life beyond the pale of the law. True Lieutenant Start of the Royal North West Mounted Police was stationed at McGrath, but even Mounted Police Officers are not ubiquitous and Lou with her gang seemed the only ones who, even in that country, possessed approximately that attribute. For to-day Lovely Lou was seen at the Post Office at Wells inquiring for mail and to-morrow with a clatter of hoofs and a cloud of dust she rode into McGrath a hundred miles away.

Cattle rustling was the order of the day and why should it not flourish amongst such men as swore eternal friendships and undying hates, drank bad whiskey and shot promiscuously if occasion offered. They were the flotsam and jetsam of civilization and the easiest way to live was the proper way according to their standard.

Over and down the land went Lou and pretty generally she was accompanied by her cowboy partner, dark, taciturn, evil-eyed and handsome.

The rustlers grew bolder and bolder. Begg of the "Bar U" ranch drove a bunch of two hundred steers into Edison and safely corraled them at the close of a dusty day. Next morning fifty of his best gazed at him from a corral across the way wearing an entirely different brand, all traces of the "Bar U" gone. Mostly all the cattle-men were of the opinion

that Lovely Lou was the head of one of the boldest and ablest gangs of cattle outlaws that ever terrorized any countryside. Often in the grey dawn of the morning a slim little figure on a weary cayouse would lope into some little town, guzzle down a long drink of raw whiskey and disappear. The knowing ones winked and Lieutenant Start would that day get his usual quota of abuse from the barroom loafers.

Lovely Lou had another deal on hand. Just on the edge of the prairie to the east of McGrath was a low bungalow-style house, by repute known to all the cattle country, and on the November night in question loud were the sounds of revelry that proceeded therefrom. A cow-boy was sitting loosely astride his pony in front of the door and with cold fingers was awkwardly rolling a cigarette when at a break-neck speed out of the darkness and into the glaring light of the blindless windows rode Lou. Pulling the big foam-flecked horse to a startling stop she leaned forward and gazed intently into the interior of the house where close by the piano and facing the window sat her sinister-eyed paramour. Caressingly she fingered the 30-30 winchester across her knee and the cow-boy who knew her pretty well said: "Why don't you shoot? I d'ar you!" "You do", she said in the sweetest of voices, and at the same moment a shot wakened the night echoes, bored through the glass and splintered the piano-cover an inch from her lover's head.

The leaden message was to him a direct: "I want you!" and in a few moments he too was riding into the darkness and away from McGrath, nerving himself for the battle of words that he well knew would be the price of his recklessness.

Lieutenant Start and Corporal Munn hit the trail from McGrath early next morning, and when a Royal North West Mounted Police Officer straps his blankets and his slicker and cleans his big 44 colts you may be sure there are breakers ahead for the violator of the cattle-country laws.

At noon they saw smoke ascending from a coulee to the left and cautiously they approached. Some one was branding, but before they could close in the



rustlers had their scent and were off. Rifles worked quickly on both sides, the smoke cleared away with Lou's paramour on his way to jail at McGrath but she had as usual made a clear getaway.

Lieutenant Start was now in deadly earnest, but in spite of his vigilance some pretty stiff stunts were pulled off in the cattle-country that fall. Vigilance was at length rewarded. One morning the news came that the ubiquitous Lou had at length been caught with the goods and was even then on her way to the jail. I'll not mention the name for some of you would certainly be wise and such would not add to the reputation of one of the present inhabitants of that prairie burg.

In this little town was a half-respectable jail presided over by a warden with a kind heart, a light head, a scolding wife and two small children. Down the street at the close of a weary day straggled three weary riders, Lieutenant Start and Corporal Munn, tired but exultant with Lovely Lou in a boy's rig-out on a pretty well worn white-faced horse. "Take good care of that parcel warden," said the Lieutenant as he wiped the sweat from the rim of his stetson, "she's as slippery as an eel and I don't want another chase like that. The law will have a few things to say to her."

For two long days and lonely nights Lou lay on her narrow cot in a darkened cell refusing food and speaking no word for the bitterest of thoughts were holding high carnival in her fertile brain. She lay with her face to the wall, a pathetic little figure with all the fight seemingly gone out from her. On the third morning the warden brought along her breakfast but as usual she refused even to look up. The soft-hearted warden opened up the door and patting her shoulder said; "Look here Lou, how are you ever going to stand until your trial comes off if you don't eat something?" Slowly he pulled the arm away that hid her pretty face and she was really crying. Lou, the bandit; Lou, the cattle rustler; Lou, the dead shot and Bow country terror, was actually in tears, for she was after all only a woman.

The warden sat down on the narrow cot and im-

mediately grew sympathetic; "Look here honey, no jury's going to convict you; no jury in this country can convict a woman—a pretty woman at that when there's no direct proof. You'll be as free as the flowers in a week. Come on and eat some breakfast, it'll cheer you up."

Slowly she turned a pretty tear-stained face towards him and in a sobbing voice replied: "No jury will convict me! why, I'm as good as convicted now! It's a life for me behind the bars. Never again to see the blue open sky; to feel the breath of the Chinook as it calls again to life and bloom with its sweet, sweet voice the many colored flowers; never again to feel the joy of the rushing wind and the music of the "White Man's" hoofbeats. Nothing but gloomy grey walls. No more for me the flowers and the springtime. I'm bidding them all good-bye. I've thought it all over. They won't convict me! No! when one man holds me here for them." She snapped the last words at him and turning to the wall sobbed as if her heart were breaking.

That night the warden brought her supper at dusk. He passed it in and was leaving without a word, when she spoke in her sweet, sorrowful girlish voice: "My God, this lonesomeness is breaking my heart. Can't you stay just a little while?"

He stopped, looked through the bars and into the depths of those tear-dimmed eyes whose magic had riveted to Lou's side many a handsome care-free rider of the plains. A hand came through and touched his shoulder—a woman's hand, and the impelling magic of that touch! "For a loaded Colts I'll give you a kiss," she said, "no one on earth will ever know it."

When the people in that bunch of shacks awoke next morning it was to find an empty jail, a missing warden, and a storming grass widow. Lieutenant Stark was wild. In an hour a well armed posse was heading out of the town and they soon made a killing. Four miles out they found a well-gagged warden and the following brief explanatory note attached:



To Lieutenant Start,—

I'd advise the town of C—to change jailers. This one is a cinch. Next one lots harder than him. Would like to meet you but am anxious to join my friends. Here's to better success in your next deal.

Lovely Lou.

They never caught her. The dark-eyed lover served his jail sentence and rejoined her in the Rio Grande country. From a cow-boy I learned that she still continued to ply her nefarious trade and true to her nature, with a smile on her face and an oath on her lips she died with her boots on beneath the blue Texas skies.

S. J.



### A HUSBAND'S PETITION.

I feel a bitter craving,  
 A dark and deep desire,  
 That glows beneath my bosom  
 Like coals of kindled fire.  
 The passion of the nightingale,  
 When singing to the rose,  
 Is feebler than the agony  
 That murders my repose.  
 By that great vow which bound thee  
 Forever to my side,  
 And by the ring that made thee  
 My darling and my bride,  
 Thou wilt not fail nor falter,  
 But bend thee to the task---  
 A boiled sheep's head for Sunday,  
 Is all the boon I ask.

---Aytoun.