

Donald leaped down instantly from the seat of the rake and hurried to his mother's side.

"Why mom! What ails you? You ain't hurt, are you mom?"

A guttural animal like moan was the only reply of the dumb woman. Then as the two men stared at each other, like a miracle, out of the utter stillness of the evening, again arose the long weird wailing of the coyote in the bog lands. As if the cry were a whip that lashed her lips into coherent utterance, at last she articulated:

"Baby! Lost!"

Her arm described a vague motion toward the north, and the farmer's wife sank downward into darkness.

That night no less than fourteen searching parties spread out in a wide fanlike circle that covered nearly every inch of the land over a radius of five miles from the Merritt ranch. With lantern and gun, on horse and afoot, they searched the night through for the missing child.

To the south stretched for miles the grain lands, long roads and trails dividing the separate farms and here and there between a low slough or small lake.

East were grazing lands, this dry year overpastured. Half a municipality of open range, made up of hummocks and grey hills, rocky and bare. Sheep lands for the most part.

West were fine farms, both grain and cattle, and still farther west the land was wooded where it approached the foot-