

Some Effects of the Great Kansas Flood

by D. W. WORKING

HUNDREDS of accounts have been written of the great flood which swept down the broad valley of the Kaw (or Kanawha) River during the last days of May, 1903, and yet there seems to be good reason for another presentation of the subject—the time from the viewpoint of an observer reasonably familiar with the valley for many years, and especially interested in it as an agricultural region.

On the morning of the first of July I rode from Kansas City to Topeka on a local train, noting the effects of the flood on the valley lands and crops. It was a rather bright, clouded-out day of wheat, corn and alfalfa fields, broken here and there by the roofs of houses, barns and sheds, some of which were wrecked by the force of the rushing water, fences gone or weighted to the ground by accumulations of trash which the posts and wires had caught; fields and pastures were covered with a layer of mud and sand—the heaped-up evidence of the great losses which the farmers of the valley had suffered, and from which some of them will hardly recover in a lifetime, was enough to make the heart sink. There is no guessing

the amount of the loss. The flood engines of destruction rushing with resistless fury down tall valleys, leaving them lean and bare and unproductive. The flood robs Peter without compensation, but it pays Paul with a liberal rate of interest. The houses and crops and orchards that were destroyed are so much waste, but the soil washed from thousands of hillsides and from other thousands of rich valley farms was not lost. Much of it was deposited where it will be of great benefit. Thousands of farms are richer, and will be richer for a generation to come, because of the great flood of water. They would not gladly suffer the loss of one crop if the destroying flood would insure a score of more profitable crops in the years to follow? The deposit of silt which the receding waters left has doubled the value of many a farm. The destruction wrought by the rush of water is not to be overlooked, but the incidental benefits should not be left undiscussed.

What was visible along the railroad from Kansas City to Topeka—a distance of sixty-five miles

flow of the rivers, it was inevitable that the flood should be one that would attain extraordinary proportions.

[illegible]

which made the beginning of a new channel about four miles east of the present bed of the stream. In the distance is seen the water of the Kaw, and the bluffs beyond.

The illustrations which appear on page 3 were described as follows in a letter from Mr. S. C. Orr, who made the photographs:

A washout on the farm of William Allingham, two and one-half miles south of Manhattan, in the country known as Allingham Bend. This particular washout is about seventy-five yards wide, four hundred yards long, and contains about 100,000 cubic feet of mud. Its number is much larger, some smaller—covering an area of about sixty acres and rendering it practically worthless as farming land. Where the water has dried up in these places vegetation is springing up, most prominent of which is a growth of burning cotton. The mud is deposited by the tidal flow along the western boundary of these washed lands is the new channel of the river cut during the flood across the farms of William Allingham, J. J. Harshaw, Mrs. Martha Findley and Mrs. Emily Bowen. This channel is from forty to fifty feet deep and is about 100 feet wide in all. It is about one hundred and thirty acres of ground.

"A sandied area of about sixty acres on the farm of Gus Carlson, three miles southwest of Manhattan, in the Mochlinham Bottom. The sand is from one to six feet deep, and is constantly blowing and shifting about in the wind. In some places it is mixed with soil, and scanty vegetation is springing up, but most of it is a barren waste of sand. Hundreds of acres of this once beautiful and fertile valley are thus rendered worthless. Even where the soil is not covered with sand it is covered over with a deposit of mud that has to lie for a year and go through a freezing process before it can be made to produce any crop."



the trip to Kansas City, but I do not know



VIEW OF THE FLOOD FROM BLUEMONT

catchment-basin of the Kaw. So it is hardly to be wondered at that there should occasionally be a flood to remind the people of Kansas that the "flood plain" of the Kaw really belongs to that ancient river when it chooses to claim its own.

The illustration on this page shows the flood from Blumount, a hill which rises two hundred and ten feet above the Blue River at Manhattan. In the foreground may be seen the pumping station of the Manhattan Waterworks, the Blue Valley Railroad and the Blue River itself; then a belt of timber, beyond which is shown an area of about seven thousand acres of rich farm-land under water. The line of trees and partly submerged hedge running toward the upper left-hand corner of the picture shows where the main road runs east from Manhattan. This road and the adjacent fields were much damaged by the water of the Blue

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A Pioneer Wooing

L. M. Montgomery

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Donald Fraser, sitting by the low, four-paned window of his new house, was playing old Scotch airs on his fiddle to beguile dull time away on a cold winter afternoon more than a hundred years ago. The place was a remote settlement in a nascent Canadian province, where the settlers were engaged in the arduous task of carving out homes for themselves in the wilderness.

Donald's new house had only four small rooms, but it was considered quite a pretentious edifice in those primitive days. Before it the cleared fields of his farm sloped down to the ice-bound bay; behind it great woods stretched inland, intersected here and there by trails and wood-roads. In winter the ice was the great highway of traffic, and people from far and wide passed Donald's door, often calling to warm themselves before his fire and exchange news of the various scattered settlements.

This day was bitter cold, and a storm threatened. Few travelers were abroad, and Donald had no callers. He felt lonely, and got his fiddle down for company. It was too early yet to go across the bay to Sherman's. Donald smiled to himself as he played "Annie Laurie," and thought of Nancy Sherman, more beautiful than the heroine of the old ballad.

"Her face it is the fairest that e'er the sun shone on," hummed the young Scotch-Canadian, softly.

The Frasers were one of the best families in the little colony, which was as yet so thinly populated that everybody in it knew everybody else. Alexander Fraser, Donald's father, had been one of the earliest immigrants from Scotland. He was a man liked and respected by all, and had taken a prominent part in shaping the affairs of the colony. From him Donald, his first-born, inherited his broad shoulders, sandy hair, deep-set gray eyes and resolute jaw. But it was from his Irish mother that Donald got the qualities which made him a favorite with all who knew him. The merry curve of his mobile mouth, the twinkle in his gray eyes, the gay smile, the flashing wit, the irrepressible good-comradeship that distinguished him from the more reserved pure-bred Scotch folk, even the faint suggestion of "brogue" in his ringing tones, all contributed to form a personality which was destined to stamp its influence on those rude early days. Many a blue-eyed Scotch and English lassie would have been glad and willing to listen had Donald Fraser come a-wooing, and many a girlish heart of a hundred years ago beat quicker at his step or voice. But Donald cared only for one whom many others wooed likewise. He was not openly favored above his rivals. He did not know whether Nancy Sherman cared for him or not, but he knew that if she would not come to be the mistress of his new house none other ever should. So he dreamed of her as he drew the bow over the strings and filled the low

room with the sweetness of old Lowland ballads, the fine frenzy of Highland reels and strathspeys, and the rollicking abandon of Irish jigs. When he played the last, the Irish fun in his nature overflowed him, drowning out the Scottish romance, and he wished that somebody would drop in and crack a joke with him.

When he left the north window, which he liked best because it looked out over the bay to Sherman's, and went to the south one, looking out over a dreary expanse of stumps and half-cleared land, he saw a sleigh emerge from the woods. He knew the driver at a glance, and rushing to the door, threw it open with hearty hospitality. Any one would have been welcome, but this visitor was Neil Campbell, who was Donald's especial crony. Friends they had always been, and friends they were yet—and they were also rivals. People had expected to see their friendship blotted out by their rivalry, but it had stood the test. Each loved Nancy Sherman, and each knew that the other knew it; each was determined to win her, and neither would have hesitated over any ruse that would give him the advantage. But no ill-feeling found place between them, and when Neil came from Berwick he always called to see Donald before he crossed the bay; and sometimes, so free from bitterness was their rivalry, he even took Donald over.

He got out at the door, and shook Donald's proffered hand heartily. Then he tied his restive young mare to a post, threw the buffalo-robe over her, and followed Donald into the kitchen.

Neither in appearance nor character was there the slightest resemblance between the two men. In point of looks, Neil Campbell could not for an instant compare with Donald Fraser. He was smaller and slighter, with a dark, melancholy face and intensely blue eyes—the vivid blue of the St. Lawrence water on a windy autumn day when the sun breaks out after a storm. In parentage he was pure Highland, with all the Highlander's mystic, poetic temperament. He was not so widely popular as the gay and dashing Donald, and he was not a favorite with women; but his few friends loved him rarely, and it was said by some that if a woman once loved him she would do and dare all things to win him.

Neil threw himself down before the roaring fire with a sigh of satisfaction. It was ten miles from Berwick to the bay-shore, and though a lover thought little of that when his lass waited for him at the end, a blazing back log and a "taste" of good Scotch whisky were not to be despised at the half-way station. "It's cold the day," he said, briefly.

"You'll be going over the bay, I'm thinking," said Donald, good-humoredly.

A slight tinge of color showed itself on Campbell's dark face. While he bore Donald no grudge for their rivalry, he could not refer to it in the unreserved way of

his friend. To him Donald's offhand way of looking at the situation savored of greater confidence than he possessed, and this stung him. He only nodded in reply to Donald's remark.

The latter had meanwhile been rummaging in his untidy bachelor cupboard, and now he emerged with a bottle of whisky and a couple of tumblers. This was a matter of course a hundred years ago. A woman might offer her women friends a cup of hot tea, but a man treated his callers to a "taste" of the best whisky obtainable. If he failed to do so, he was looked upon as seriously lacking in what were then considered the most rudimentary elements of hospitality.

"You look cold," said Donald. "Set nearer to the fire, man, and let this put a bit of warmth in your veins. You'll need it before you get over the bay. It's bitter cold on the ice to-day. Now for the Berwick news! Has Jean Maclean made up with her man yet? And is it true that Sandy Macdonald is to marry Kate Ferguson? 'Twill be a match, now! Sure, and with her red hair, Sandy will not be like to lose his bride past finding."

Berwick was Donald's boyhood home, and Neil had plenty of news for him concerning friends and kin. At first he talked little and cautiously, as was his wont, while Donald bantered and joked, but presently the whisky, which neither spared, began to tell on the different temperaments. Donald's volatile spirits evaporated, and the Scotch element of his nature came uppermost. He grew cautious and watchful, talked less, but made shrewder remarks. The Highlander, on the contrary, lost his reserve, and became more and more confidential. At last, after being shrewdly manipulated by Donald, Neil Campbell confessed that he meant to put his fate to the test that very night. He was going over the bay to ask Nancy Sherman to marry him. If she consented, then Donald and the rest should see a wedding such as the colony had never yet seen.

Donald rose abruptly, and went to the window, leaving Neil to sip his grog and gaze smilingly into the fire with the air of a man very well satisfied with himself. As for Donald, he was for the moment non-plussed. This was worse than he had expected. He had never dreamed that Neil would dare bring matters to a crisis yet. But there was no time to be lost if he meant to get ahead of his rival. In his heart Donald hoped that Nancy Sherman cared for him. What else could those modestly bestowed favors and shy looks, such as she gave to no other, mean? Yet he might be mistaken. She might like Neil best, after all; and whether or no, the first man there stood the better chance. Donald knew very well that Nancy's father favored Neil Campbell, as being the richer man in worldly goods. If Neil asked Nancy to marry him when he, Donald, had not yet spoken, Elias Sherman would have the most to say in the

matter, and Nancy would never dream of disputing her father's command. Donald looked far out over the bay, and realized that his chance of winning Nancy depended on his crossing that white expanse before Neil did. How could it be managed? A twinkle came into Donald's eye. All was fair in love and war, and Nancy was well worth the trial. He went back to the table, and sat down. "Have some more, man, have some more," he said, persuasively. "'Twill keep the life in you in the teeth of that wind. Help yourself. There's a plenty more where that came from."

"Is it going over the bay the night that yourself will be doing?" asked Neil, as he obeyed.

Donald shook his head. "I had thought of it," he owned, "but it looks a wee like a storm, and my sleigh is at the blacksmith's to be shod. If I went, it must be on Black Dan's back, and he'd like a canter over the ice in a snow-storm as little as I. His own fireside is by far the best place for a man to be to-night, Campbell."

Neil nodded drowsily. His potations, after his long, cold drive, were beginning to have their effect. Donald, with laughter in his deep-set eyes, watched his friend, and persuaded him again and again to have yet another "tasting." When Neil's head at last fell heavily on his arm, Donald arose with the smile of a man who has won in a doubtful game. Neil Campbell was sound asleep, and would remain so for some time. How long? was the question. It might be for hours, and it might be for only a few minutes; but half an hour's start would be enough. For the rest, it would depend on Nancy. But there was no time to lose.

Donald flung on his stout homespun overcoat, pulled his fur cap warmly over his ears, and wrapped a knitted muffler of hand-spun yarn around his neck. Then he caught his mitts and riding-whip from the nail over the fireplace, and strode to the door with a parting glance at the reclining figure of his unconscious friend. "May your sleep be long and sweet, man," he laughed, softly. "As for the waking, 'twill be betwixt you and me." With an amused smile, he untied Neil's horse, climbed into Neil's sleigh, and tucked Neil's buffalo-robe comfortably around him.

"When he wakes, Black Dan will carry him as well as he would have carried me," thought the schemer; "but if the snow comes after sunset it's little we'll see of either over the bay to-night. Now, Bess, old girl, do your bonniest. There's more than you know hangs on your speed. If the Campbell awakes too soon, Black Dan could show you a pair of clean heels for all of your good start. On, my girl!"

Brown Bess, one of the best mares in the county, sprang forward over the ice like a deer. The sun was nearing its setting. The gleaming white expanse of the bay, gemmed here and there with wooded, purple islets, and rimmed in by dark violet coasts, glittered like the breast of a fair woman decked with jewels. Above, the

curdled gray rolls of cloud flushed faintly pink, but the north and east were gray with the presage of night and storm.

Donald thought of none of these things, nor of the rare spiritual beauty of the wastes about him. As he urged Brown Bess forward, with now and then a glance behind to see if Black Dan were yet following, he thought only of what he should say to Nancy Sherman, and of what her answer would be.

The Shermans were a family of United Empire Loyalists who had come to Canada at the close of the American War of Independence. They never spoke of their former fortunes, but it was the general opinion that they had once been wealthy. However that might be, they were poor enough now, and life was even a harder struggle for them than it was for the Scotch immigrants who had already obtained a footing on the Canadian soil.

Elias Sherman was a genial, friendly soul, and his wife was a pale, proud woman who had once been beautiful, and was dignified and gracious yet. When they came to the little maritime colony, they brought two children with them. These two children, Nancy and Betty, grew up amid many hardships and privations; but as they blossomed out into young womanhood they were widely famed for their beauty, and lovers from the best and wealthiest of the colonial families came a-wooing to the little cottage on the bay-shore, and thought themselves richly repaid if they won a smile or a kind glance from the "beautiful Sherman girls." Beautiful and stately they were, indeed, with a grace and charm of manner that triumphed over mean attire and rough surroundings. A hundred years ago Nancy and Betty Sherman, now sleeping forgotten in mossy, grass-grown graves on a hill that slopes down to the moaning St. Lawrence Gulf, had the pick of five counties to their hands. Not one of the blue-eyed, fresh-faced Scotch and English lassies, the Jeans and Kates and Margarets, could for a moment compare with them. They were envied bitterly enough, no doubt, and caused many a long-forgotten heartache. Yet the fault was not theirs—they made no effort to win or retain the homage offered them. The boldest lover never boasted of favors received. A kindly word or a gracious smile was all that any ever won, and was esteemed enough. Even Donald Fraser could but own to himself that Nancy was as likely to say "no" as "yes." She had said it calmly and sweetly to better men. Well, he would face the question bravely—and if he were refused—"Neil will have the laugh on me then. Sure, and he's sleeping well. And the snow is coming soon. There'll be a bonny swirl on the bay ere long. I hope no harm will come to the lad if he starts to cross. When he wakes he'll be in such a fine Highland temper that he'll never stop to think of danger. Well, Bess, my girl, here we are at last. Now, Donald Fraser, pluck up heart, and play the man. Remember you're a

Scotchman, with a dash of old Ireland to boot, and never flinch because a slip of a lass looks scornful at you out of the bonniest dark blue eyes on earth.”

In spite of his bold words, however, Donald’s heart was thumping furiously when he drove into the farmyard. Nancy was there, milking a cow by the stable-door, but she stood up when she saw him coming, grasping her pail with one hand, and holding the other out to him in the gracious, untroubled way for which she was noted. Haloed by the sunset light that was flinging its rosy splendors over all the wide white wastes around them, the girl was so beautiful that Donald’s courage failed him almost completely. Was it not the wildest presumption to hope that this exquisite creature could care for him or would come to be the mistress of his little house—she, who was fit for a king’s halls? In all the humility of a true lover he stood before her, and Nancy, looking into his bonny face, understood with woman’s instinct why he had come. A color and light that was not of the sunset crept into her face and eyes. She did not withdraw her hand from his grasp, but she turned her face aside and bent her head.

Donald knew that he must make the most of this unexpected chance. He might not see Nancy alone again before Neil came. Claspings both of his hands over the slender one he held, he said, breathlessly, “Nan, lass, I love you. You may think ’tis a hasty wooing, but that’s a story I can tell you later, maybe. I know well I’m not worthy of you, but if true love could make a man worthy there’d be none before me. Will you have me, Nan?”

Nancy’s head in its crimson shawl drooped lower still. For a moment Donald endured an agony of suspense. Then he heard her answer—oh, such a low, sweet answer—and he knew that she was won!

The snow was beginning to fall when they walked together to the house. Donald looked over the bay, misty white in the gathering gloom, and laughed light-heartedly. “I must tell you that story, my lass,” he said, catching Nancy’s look of wonder, “and you’ll see what a trick I played on my best friend to win you.”

And tell it he did, with such inimitable drollery and such emphasized brogue that Nancy could but laugh as heartily as he did. She was not proof against the humor of the situation even amid the sweeter romance of it.

When morning broke, the storm was over, and Donald knew that vengeance must be on his track. Not wishing to make the Sherman house the scene of a quarrel, he resolved to get away before Neil came, and he persuaded Nancy to drive with him to the county town, some ten miles away, for a “calie.” As he brought Neil’s sleigh up to the door, he saw a black speck far out on the bay, and laughed. “Black Dan goes well, but he’ll not be quick enough,” he said, as he helped Nancy

in.

Half an hour later Neil Campbell, with a blackly bent brow and a fire in his blue eyes that was woe to see, dismounted from his smoking horse at the Shermans' door, and strode into the kitchen. Had Donald Fraser been there, the comedy might shortly have been turned into a tragedy, for there was blood-fury in Campbell's heart and eyes. But the wily rival was far away, and the kitchen was empty. Neil stood and chafed at the door until Mrs. Sherman came down the rude stairs from the loft above. At sight of Campbell she started in surprise, for though many a wooer came to her house they did not usually come so early in the day, but she came forward to meet him in a gracious manner.

"Good-morning, Mr. Campbell. 'Tis a fair day after the storm, but a cold. Come nearer to the fire."

Neil felt his blind fury ebbing away before this woman of the queenlike presence and pale, sorrowful face, so little in keeping with the rude, low room. Mrs. Sherman always imposed a sense of deference upon the person to whom she spoke. Neil could not bring himself to demand of her where Donald Fraser or Nancy was. Yet he must say something. "Where is Betty the morning?" he asked, trying to speak calmly although his voice shook.

On being told that she had gone to the well for a pail of water, he went out, vowing that he would discover from her the whereabouts of his false friend.

Betty Sherman saw him coming across the snow, and stood up erectly beside the well with a smile on her face. Her lips parted, and her breath fluttered over them quickly. She put up her slender brown hands, and nervously caught the crimson fringes of her knitted shawl together under her chin, while into her eyes leaped a strange light of fear and passion, and some undefined emotion that strove to conquer the other two.

As far as feature and bearing went, Nancy and Betty Sherman looked marvelously alike. Yet so different were they in coloring, and more than all, in expression, that they were scarcely held to resemble each other. The hair that lay in skeins of silken fairness on Nancy's white forehead rippled off from Betty's in locks as richly brown as October nuts. The misty purple of Nan's eyes was so dark and deep in Betty's as to be almost black; and while Nancy was oftener pale than not, a dusky red always glowed in Betty's cheeks, and deepened to scarlet in the curves of a very sweet, very scornful mouth. As for their expression, Nancy's was always gracious and charming, while Betty's was mocking and maddening.

Though Betty had many lovers, they were afraid of her. Her tongue was a sharp and unsparing one, and she satirized them to their faces. Woe betide the rash youth

with a squint or a stutter who came courting Betty Sherman! And even those who had no defect of person or manner fared little better. Yet come they did, for there was that about the girl that held a man though she treated him as the dust under her feet.

When Neil Campbell had first come to the cottage on the bay-shore it had been Betty whom he came to see. In those days he had thought Nan by far the less bonny. But Betty, always cruel to her suitors, was doubly so to Neil. She mimicked his Highland accent, mocked at his Highland ways, and laughed at his shyness as "Highland pride." Neil, believing his suit hopeless, left the scornful maid to her own devices, and was gradually drawn into the train of Nancy's lovers, soon to become the most devoted of them. Thenceforth Betty had treated him with unvarying indifference, although generally she was as merciless to Nancy's lovers as to her own. Neil felt that his humiliation would be doubly bitter from Betty's probable railing, but in his passionate anger—an anger that quite overmastered the sting of baffled love—he did not care what she might say.

"Good-morning, Mr. Campbell," said Betty's silver-clear voice as he came up to her. "It's early abroad you are. And on Black Dan, no less! Was I mistaken in thinking that Donald Fraser said that his favorite horse should never be backed by any man but him? But doubtless a fair exchange is no robbery, and Brown Bess goes well and fleetly."

"Where is Donald Fraser?" said Neil, thickly. "It is him I am seeking, and it is him I will be finding. Where is he, Betty Sherman?"

"Donald Fraser is far enough away by this," said Betty, lightly. "He is a prudent fellow, that Donald, and has some quickness of wit under that sandy thatch of his. He came here last night at sunset with a horse and sleigh not his own or lately gotten, and he asked Nan in the stable-yard to marry him. Did a man ask me to marry him while I was at the cow's side with my milking-pail in my hand, 'tis a cold answer he'd get for his pains. But Nan was ever o'er-fond of Donald, and 'tis kindly she must have answered him, for they sat late together last night, and 'twas a bonny story that Nan wakened me to hear when she came to bed—the story of a braw lover who let his secret out when the whisky was abune the wit, and then fell asleep while his rival was away to woo and win his lass. Did you ever hear a like story, Mr. Campbell?"

Neil clenched his fists. "Oh, yes," he said, fiercely, "it is laughing at me over the country-side that Donald Fraser will be doing, and telling that story! But when I meet him it is not laughing he will be doing! Oh, no! There will be another story to tell!"

"What will you do to him?" cried Betty, in alarm. "Don't meddle with the man.

Now, what a state to be in because a slip of a good-looking lass prefers sandy hair and gray eyes to Highland black and blue! You have not the spirit of a wren, Neil Campbell. Were I you, I would show Donald Fraser that I could woo and win a maid as speedily as any Lowlander of them all, that would I! There's many a girl would say 'yes' gladly for your asking. I know one myself, as bonny as Nan if folks say true, who would think herself a proud and happy woman if you looked kindly on her, and would love you as well as Nan loves her Donald—aye, and ten times better!"

Betty's face went crimson, and her eyes faltered down to the pail at her feet.

"And who may it be, Betty?" asked Neil after a brief silence.

Betty did not answer in words. She came a step nearer, and put one hand on Neil's shoulder, with her head still drooping, but looking up at him with her eyes, and an expression, half defiant, half yielding, wholly captivating, that answered as plainly as words.

Neil took the two cold hands in his. "If this be so, lass," he said, gently, "why did you mock at me so when I came first?"

"What simpletons men are," pouted Betty. "Why, 'twas because I liked you best, to be sure!"

Then she suddenly sprang away from him with flushing cheeks and clouded eyes. "Oh, what must you think of me?" she cried. "Bold—unmaidenly—that is what you will call me, and truly. But when I saw you coming—and I had loved you so long! 'What,' thought I, 'to lose all for want of one little bold word!' 'Twas hard to speak, but I have spoken it, and now you will despise me."

She clasped her hands, and stood meekly before him with her face hanging on her breast. Neil came nearer, and drew her into his arms.

"Thank you for that word," he said, simply. "Betty, it was you that I liked best at first, and if you will marry me it is a good husband I will try to make you, and a proud and happy man I'll be."

Betty looked up at him with eyes where tenderness and mischief were mingled. "Then maybe Donald Fraser will not do so much laughing, after all," she said. "Look you, Neil. Leave me to manage this. When Nan comes back I'll say to her, 'Nan, is Donald so very sure that Neil Campbell said your name when he told of his errand? 'Tis a mistake your Lowlander has made, sister.' And then I will tell her how you came this morning and asked me to marry you, though 'twas I that did the asking, was it not? But I'll not tell her that."

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *A Pioneer Wooing* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]