

ADAMS ANDY

CATTLE BRANDS: A
COLLECTION OF
WESTERN CAMP-FIRE
STORIES

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of Western Camp-Fire Stories**

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I DRIFTING NORTH

It was a wet, bad year on the Old Western Trail. From Red River north and all along was herd after herd waterbound by high water in the rivers. Our outfit lay over nearly a week on the South Canadian, but we were not alone, for there were five other herds waiting for the river to go down. This river had tumbled over her banks for several days, and the driftwood that was coming down would have made it dangerous swimming for cattle.

We were expected to arrive in Dodge early in June, but when we reached the North Fork of the Canadian, we were two weeks behind time.

Old George Carter, the owner of the herd, was growing very impatient about us, for he had had no word from us after we had crossed Red River at Doan's crossing. Other cowmen lying around Dodge, who had herds on the trail, could hear nothing from their men, but in their experience and confidence in their outfits guessed the cause—it was water. Our surprise when we came opposite Camp Supply to have Carter and a stranger ride out to meet us was not to be measured. They had got impatient waiting, and had taken the mail buckboard to Supply, making inquiries along the route for the *Hat* herd, which had not passed up the trail, so they were assured. Carter was so impatient that he could not wait, as he had a prospective buyer on his hands, and the delay in the appearing of the herd was very annoying to him. Old George was as tickled as a little boy to meet us all.

The cattle were looking as fine as silk. The lay-overs had rested them. The horses were in good trim, considering the amount of wet weather we had had. Here and there was a nigger brand, but these saddle galls were unavoidable when using wet blankets. The cattle were twos and threes. We had left western Texas with a few over thirty-two hundred head and were none shy. We could have counted out more, but on some of them the Hat brand had possibly faded out. We went into a cosy camp early in the evening. Everything needful was at hand, wood, water, and grass. Cowmen in those days prided themselves on their outfits, and Carter was a trifle gone on his men.

With the cattle on hand, drinking was out of the question, so the only way to show us any regard was to bring us a box of cigars. He must have brought those cigars from Texas, for they were wrapped in a copy of the Fort Worth "Gazette." It was a month old and full of news. Every man in the outfit read and reread it. There were several train robberies reported in it, but that was common in those days. They had nominated for Governor "The Little Cavalryman," Sol Ross, and this paper estimated that his majority would be at least two hundred thousand. We were all anxious to get home in time to vote for him.

Theodore Baughman was foreman of our outfit. Baugh was a typical trail-boss. He had learned to take things as they came, play the cards as they fell, and not fret himself about little things that could not be helped. If we had been a month behind he would never have thought to explain the why or wherefore to old man Carter. Several years after this, when he was scouting for the army, he rode up to a herd over on the Chisholm trail and asked one of the tail men: "Son, have you seen anything of about three hundred nigger soldiers?" "No," said the cowboy. "Well," said Baugh, "I've lost about that many."

That night around camp the smoke was curling upward from those cigars in clouds. When supper was over and the guards arranged for the night, story-telling was in order. This cattle-buyer

with us lived in Kansas City and gave us several good ones. He told us of an attempted robbery of a bank which had occurred a few days before in a western town. As a prelude to the tale, he gave us the history of the robbers.

"Cow Springs, Kansas," said he, "earned the reputation honestly of being a hard cow-town. When it became the terminus of one of the many eastern trails, it was at its worst. The death-rate amongst its city marshals—always due to a six-shooter in the hands of some man who never hesitated to use it—made the office not over desirable. The office was vacated so frequently in this manner that at last no local man could be found who would have it. Then the city fathers sent to Texas for a man who had the reputation of being a killer. He kept his record a vivid green by shooting first and asking questions afterward.

"Well, the first few months he filled the office of marshal he killed two white men and an Indian, and had the people thoroughly buffaloed. When the cattle season had ended and winter came on, the little town grew tame and listless. There was no man to dare him to shoot, and he longed for other worlds to conquer. He had won his way into public confidence with his little gun. But this confidence reposed in him was misplaced, for he proved his own double both in morals and courage.

"To show you the limit of the confidence he enjoyed: the treasurer of the Cherokee Strip Cattle Association paid rent money to that tribe, at their capital, fifty thousand dollars quarterly. The capital is not located on any railroad; so the funds in currency were taken in regularly by the treasurer, and turned over to the tribal authorities. This trip was always made with secrecy, and the marshal was taken along as a trusted guard. It was an extremely dangerous trip to make, as it was through a country infested with robbers and the capital at least a hundred miles from the railroad. Strange no one ever attempted to rob the stage or private conveyance, though this sum was taken in regularly for several years. The average robber was careful of his person, and could not be induced to make a target of himself for any money consideration, where there was danger of a gun in the hands of a man that would shoot rapidly and carelessly.

"Before the herds began to reach as far north, the marshal and his deputy gave some excuse and disappeared for a few days, which was quite common and caused no comment. One fine morning the good people of the town where the robbery was attempted were thrown into an uproar by shooting in their bank, just at the opening hour. The robbers were none other than our trusted marshal, his deputy, and a cow-puncher who had been led into the deal. When they ordered the officials of the bank to stand in a row with hands up, they were nonplused at their refusal to comply. The attacked party unearthed ugly looking guns and opened fire on the hold-ups instead.

"This proved bad policy, for when the smoke cleared away the cashier, a very popular man, was found dead, while an assistant was dangerously wounded. The shooting, however, had aroused the town to the situation, and men were seen running to and fro with guns. This unexpected refusal and the consequent shooting spoiled the plans of the robbers, so that they abandoned the robbery and ran to their horses.

"After mounting they parleyed with each other a moment and seemed bewildered as to which way they should ride, finally riding south toward what seemed a broken country. Very few minutes elapsed before every man who could find a horse was joining the posse that was forming to pursue them. Before they were out of sight the posse had started after them. They were well mounted and as determined a set of men as were ever called upon to meet a similar emergency. They had the decided advantage of the robbers, as their horses were fresh, and the men knew every foot of the country.

"The broken country to which the hold-ups headed was a delusion as far as safety was concerned. They were never for a moment out of sight of the pursuers, and this broken country ended in a deep coulee. When the posse saw them enter this they knew that their capture was only a matter of time. Nature seemed against the robbers, for as they entered the coulee their horses bogged down in a springy rivulet, and they were so hard pressed that they hastily dismounted, and sought shelter in some shrubbery that grew about. The pursuing party, now swollen to quite a number, had spread

out and by this time surrounded the men. They were seen to take shelter in a clump of wild plum brush, and the posse closed in on them. Seeing the numbers against them, they came out on demand and surrendered. Neither the posse nor themselves knew at this time that the shooting in the bank had killed the cashier. Less than an hour's time had elapsed between the shooting and the capture. When the posse reached town on their return, they learned of the death of the cashier, and the identity of the prisoners was soon established by citizens who knew the marshal and his deputy. The latter admitted their identity.

"That afternoon they were photographed, and later in the day were given a chance to write to any friends to whom they wished to say good-by. The cow-puncher was the only one who availed himself of the opportunity. He wrote to his parents. He was the only one of the trio who had the nerve to write, and seemed the only one who realized the enormity of his crime, and that he would never see the sun of another day.

"As darkness settled over the town, the mob assembled. There was no demonstration. The men were taken quietly out and hanged. At the final moment there was a remarkable variety of nerve shown. The marshal and deputy were limp, unable to stand on their feet. With piteous appeals and tears they pleaded for mercy, something they themselves had never shown their own victims. The boy who had that day written his parents his last letter met his fate with Indian stoicism. He cursed the crouching figures of his partners for enticing him into this crime, and begged them not to die like curs, but to meet bravely the fate which he admitted they all deserved. Several of the men in the mob came forward and shook hands with him, and with no appeal to man or his Maker, he was swung into the great Unknown at the end of a rope. Such nerve is seldom met in life, and those that are supposed to have it, when they come face to face with their end, are found lacking that quality. It is a common anomaly in life that the bad man with his record often shows the white feather when he meets his fate at the hands of an outraged community."

We all took a friendly liking to the cattle-buyer. He was an interesting talker. While he was a city man, he mixed with us with a certain freedom and abandon that was easy and natural. We all regretted it the next day when he and the old man left us.

"I've heard my father tell about those Cherokees," said Port Cole. "They used to live in Georgia, those Indians. They must have been honest people, for my father told us boys at home, that once in the old State while the Cherokees lived there, his father hired one of their tribe to guide him over the mountains. There was a pass through the mountains that was used and known only to these Indians. It would take six weeks to go and come, and to attend to the business in view. My father was a small boy at the time, and says that his father hired the guide for the entire trip for forty dollars in gold. One condition was that the money was to be paid in advance. The morning was set for the start, and my grandfather took my father along on the trip.

"Before starting from the Indian's cabin my grandfather took out his purse and paid the Indian four ten-dollar gold pieces. The Indian walked over to the corner of the cabin, and in the presence of other Indians laid this gold, in plain sight of all, on the end of a log that projected where they cross outside, and got on his horse to be gone six weeks. They made the trip on time, and my father said his first thought, on their return to the Indian village, was to see if the money was untouched. It was. You couldn't risk white folks that way."

"Oh, I don't know," said one of the boys. "Suppose you save your wages this summer and try it next year when we start up the trail, just to see how it will work."

"Well, if it's just the same to you," replied Port, lighting a fresh cigar, "I'll not try, for I'm well enough satisfied as to how it would turn out, without testing it."

"Isn't it strange," said Bat Shaw, "that if you trust a man or put confidence in him he won't betray you. Now, that marshal—one month he was guarding money at the risk of his life, and the next was losing his life trying to rob some one. I remember a similar case down on the Rio Grande. It was during the boom in sheep a few years ago, when every one got crazy over sheep.

"A couple of Americans came down on the river to buy sheep. They brought their money with them. It was before the time of any railroads. The man they deposited their money with had lived amongst these Mexicans till he had forgotten where he did belong, though he was a Yankee. These sheep-buyers asked their banker to get them a man who spoke Spanish and knew the country, as a guide. The banker sent and got a man that he could trust. He was a swarthy-looking native whose appearance would not recommend him anywhere. He was accepted, and they set out to be gone over a month.

"They bought a band of sheep, and it was necessary to pay for them at a point some forty miles further up the river. There had been some robbing along the river, and these men felt uneasy about carrying the money to this place to pay for the sheep. The banker came to the rescue by advising them to send the money by the Mexican, who could take it through in a single night. No one would ever suspect him of ever having a dollar on his person. It looked risky, but the banker who knew the nature of the native urged it as the better way, assuring them that the Mexican was perfectly trustworthy. The peon was brought in, the situation was explained to him, and he was ordered to be in readiness at nightfall to start on his errand.

"He carried the money over forty miles that night, and delivered it safely in the morning to the proper parties. This act of his aroused the admiration of these sheep men beyond a point of safety. They paid for the sheep, were gone for a few months, sold out their flocks to good advantage, and came back to buy more. This second time they did not take the precaution to have the banker hire the man, but did so themselves, intending to deposit their money with a different house farther up the river. They confided to him that they had quite a sum of money with them, and that they would deposit it with the same merchant to whom he had carried the money before. The first night they camped the Mexican murdered them both, took the money, and crossed into Mexico. He hid their bodies, and it was months before they were missed, and a year before their bones were found. He had plenty of time to go to the ends of the earth before his crime would be discovered.

"Now that Mexican would never think of betraying the banker, his old friend and patron, his *muy bueno amigo*. There were obligations that he could not think of breaking with the banker; but these fool sheep men, supposing it was simple honesty, paid the penalty of their confidence with their lives. Now, when he rode over this same road alone, a few months before, with over five thousand dollars in money belonging to these same men, all he would need to have done was to ride across the river. When there were no obligations binding, he was willing to add murder to robbery. Some folks say that Mexicans are good people; it is the climate, possibly, but they can always be depended on to assay high in treachery."

"What guard are you going to put me on to-night?" inquired old man Carter of Baugh.

"This outfit," said Baugh, in reply, "don't allow any tenderfoot around the cattle,—at night, at least. You'd better play you're company; somebody that's come. If you're so very anxious to do something, the cook may let you rustle wood or carry water. We'll fix you up a bed after a little, and see that you get into it where you can sleep and be harmless.

"Colonel," added Baugh, "why is it that you never tell that experience you had once amongst the greasers?"

"Well, there was nothing funny in it to me," said Carter, "and they say I never tell it twice alike."

"Why, certainly, tell us," said the cattle-buyer. "I've never heard it. Don't throw off to-night."

"It was a good many years ago," began old man George, "but the incident is very clear in my mind. I was working for a month's wages then myself. We were driving cattle out of Mexico. The people I was working for contracted for a herd down in Chihuahua, about four hundred miles south of El Paso. We sent in our own outfit, wagon, horses, and men, two weeks before. I was kept behind to take in the funds to pay for the cattle. The day before I started, my people drew out of the bank twenty-eight thousand dollars, mostly large bills. They wired ahead and engaged a rig to take me from the station where I left the railroad to the ranch, something like ninety miles.

"I remember I bought a new mole-skin suit, which was very popular about then. I had nothing but a small hand-bag, and it contained only a six-shooter. I bought a book to read on the train and on the road out, called 'Other People's Money.' The title caught my fancy, and it was very interesting. It was written by a Frenchman,—full of love and thrilling situations. I had the money belted on me securely, and started out with flying colors. The railroad runs through a dreary country, not worth a second look, so I read my new book. When I arrived at the station I found the conveyance awaiting me. The plan was to drive halfway, and stay over night at a certain hacienda.

"The driver insisted on starting at once, telling me that we could reach the Hacienda Grande by ten o'clock that night, which would be half my journey. We had a double-seated buckboard and covered the country rapidly. There were two Mexicans on the front seat, while I had the rear one all to myself. Once on the road I interested myself in 'Other People's Money,' almost forgetful of the fact that at that very time I had enough of other people's money on my person to set all the bandits in Mexico on my trail. There was nothing of incident that evening, until an hour before sundown. We reached a small ranchito, where we spent an hour changing horses, had coffee and a rather light lunch.

"Before leaving I noticed a Pinto horse hitched to a tree some distance in the rear of the house, and as we were expecting to buy a number of horses, I walked back and looked this one carefully over. He was very peculiarly color-marked in the mane. I inquired for his owner, but they told me that he was not about at present. It was growing dusk when we started out again. The evening was warm and sultry and threatening rain. We had been on our way about an hour when I realized we had left the main road and were bumping along on a by-road. I asked the driver his reason for this, and he explained that it was a cut-off, and that by taking it we would save three miles and half an hour's time. As a further reason he expressed his opinion that we would have rain that night, and that he was anxious to reach the hacienda in good time. I encouraged him to drive faster, which he did. Within another hour I noticed we were going down a dry arroyo, with mesquite brush on both sides of the road, which was little better than a trail. My suspicions were never aroused sufficiently to open the little hand-bag and belt on the six-shooter. I was dreaming along when we came to a sudden stop before what seemed a deserted jacal. The Mexicans mumbled something to each other over some disappointment, when the driver said to me:—

"'Here's where we stay all night. This is the hacienda.' They both got out and insisted on my getting out, but I refused to do so. I reached down and picked up my little grip and was in the act of opening it, when one of them grabbed my arm and jerked me out of the seat to the ground. I realized then for the first time that I was in for it in earnest. I never knew before that I could put up such a fine defense, for inside a minute I had them both blinded in their own blood. I gathered up rocks and had them flying when I heard a clatter of hoofs coming down the arroyo like a squadron of cavalry. They were so close on to me that I took to the brush, without hat, coat, or pistol. Men that pack a gun all their lives never have it when they need it; that was exactly my fix. Darkness was in my favor, but I had no more idea where I was or which way I was going than a baby. One thing sure, I was trying to get away from there as fast as I could. The night was terribly dark, and about ten o'clock it began to rain a deluge. I kept going all night, but must have been circling.

"Towards morning I came to an arroyo which was running full of water. My idea was to get that between me and the scene of my trouble, so I took off my boots to wade it. When about one third way across, I either stepped off a bluff bank or into a well, for I went under and dropped the boots. When I came to the surface I made a few strokes swimming and landed in a clump of mesquite brush, to which I clung, got on my feet, and waded out to the opposite bank more scared than hurt. Right there I lay until daybreak.

"The thing that I remember best now was the peculiar odor of the wet mole-skin. If there had been a strolling artist about looking for a picture of Despair, I certainly would have filled the bill. The sleeves were torn out of my shirt, and my face and arms were scratched and bleeding from the thorns of the mesquite. No one who could have seen me then would ever have dreamed that I was a

walking depository of 'Other People's Money.' When it got good daylight I started out and kept the shelter of the brush to hide me. After nearly an hour's travel, I came out on a divide, and about a mile off I saw what looked like a jacal. Directly I noticed a smoke arise, and I knew then it was a habitation. My appearance was not what I desired, but I approached it.

"In answer to my knock at the door a woman opened it about two inches and seemed to be more interested in examination of my anatomy than in listening to my troubles. After I had made an earnest sincere talk she asked me, 'No estay loco tu?' I assured her that I was perfectly sane, and that all I needed was food and clothing, for which I would pay her well. It must have been my appearance that aroused her sympathy, for she admitted me and fed me.

"The woman had a little girl of probably ten years of age. This little girl brought me water to wash myself, while the mother prepared me something to eat. I was so anxious to pay these people that I found a five-dollar gold piece in one of my pockets and gave it to the little girl, who in turn gave it to her mother. While I was drinking the coffee and eating my breakfast, the woman saw me looking at a picture of the Virgin Mary which was hanging on the adobe wall opposite me. She asked me if I was a Catholic, which I admitted. Then she brought out a shirt and offered it to me.

"Suddenly the barking of a dog attracted her to the door. She returned breathless, and said in good Spanish: 'For God's sake, run! Fly! Don't let my husband and brother catch you here, for they are coming home.' She thrust the shirt into my hand and pointed out the direction in which I should go. From a concealed point of the brush I saw two men ride up to the jacal and dismount. One of them was riding the Pinto horse I had seen the day before.

"I kept the brush for an hour or so, and finally came out on the mesa. Here I found a flock of sheep and a pastore. From this shepherd I learned that I was about ten miles from the main road. He took the sandals from his own feet and fastened them on mine, gave me directions, and about night I reached the hacienda, where I was kindly received and cared for. This rancho sent after officers and had the country scoured for the robbers. I was detained nearly a week, to see if I could identify my drivers, without result. They even brought in the owner of the Pinto horse, and no doubt husband of the woman who saved my life.

"After a week's time I joined our own outfit, and I never heard a language that sounded so sweet as the English of my own tongue. I would have gone back and testified against the owner of the spotted horse if it hadn't been for a woman and a little girl who depended on him, robber that he was."

"Now, girls," said Baugh, addressing Carter and the stranger, "I've made you a bed out of the wagon-sheet, and rustled a few blankets from the boys. You'll find the bed under the wagon-tongue, and we've stretched a fly over it to keep the dew off you, besides adding privacy to your apartments. So you can turn in when you run out of stories or get sleepy."

"Haven't you got one for us?" inquired the cattle-buyer of Baugh.

"This is no time to throw off, or refuse to be sociable."

"Well, now, that bank robbery that you were telling the boys about," said Baugh, as he bit the tip from a fresh cigar, "reminds me of a hold-up that I was in up in the San Juan mining country in Colorado. We had driven into that mining camp a small bunch of beef and had sold them to fine advantage. The outfit had gone back, and I remained behind to collect for the cattle, expecting to take the stage and overtake the outfit down on the river. I had neglected to book my passage in advance, so when the stage was ready to start I had to content myself with a seat on top. I don't remember the amount of money I had. It was the proceeds of something like one hundred and fifty beeves, in a small bag along of some old clothes. There wasn't a cent of it mine, still I was supposed to look after it.

"The driver answered to the name of South-Paw, drove six horses, and we had a jolly crowd on top. Near midnight we were swinging along, and as we rounded a turn in the road, we noticed a flickering light ahead some distance which looked like the embers of a camp-fire. As we came nearly opposite the light, the leaders shied at some object in the road in front of them. South-Paw uncurled his whip, and was in the act of pouring the leather into them, when that light was uncovered

as big as the head-light of an engine. An empty five-gallon oil-can had been cut in half and used as a reflector, throwing full light into the road sufficient to cover the entire coach. Then came a round of orders which meant business. 'Shoot them leaders if they cross that obstruction!' 'Kill any one that gets off on the opposite side!' 'Driver, move up a few feet farther!' 'A few feet farther, please.' 'That'll do; thank you, sir.' 'Now, every son-of-a-horse-thief, get out on this side of the coach, please, and be quick about it!'

"The man giving these orders stood a few feet behind the lamp and out of sight, but the muzzle of a Winchester was plainly visible and seemed to cover every man on the stage. It is needless to say that we obeyed, got down in the full glare of the light, and lined up with our backs to the robber, hands in the air. There was a heavily veiled woman on the stage, whom he begged to hold the light for him, assuring her that he never robbed a woman. This veiled person disappeared at the time, and was supposed to have been a confederate. When the light was held for him, he drew a black cap over each one of us, searching everybody for weapons. Then he proceeded to rob us, and at last went through the mail. It took him over an hour to do the job; he seemed in no hurry.

"It was not known what he got out of the mail, but the passengers yielded about nine hundred revenue to him, while there was three times that amount on top the coach in my grip, wrapped in a dirty flannel shirt. When he disappeared we were the cheapest lot of men imaginable. It was amusing to hear the excuses, threats, and the like; but the fact remained the same, that a dozen of us had been robbed by a lone highwayman. I felt good over it, as the money in the grip had been overlooked.

"Well, we cleared out the obstruction in the road, and got aboard the coach once more. About four o'clock in the morning we arrived at our destination, only two hours late. In the hotel office where the stage stopped was the very man who had robbed us. He had got in an hour ahead of us, and was a very much interested listener to the incident as retold. There was an early train out of town that morning, and at a place where they stopped for breakfast he sat at the table with several drummers who were in the hold-up, a most attentive listener.

"He was captured the same day. He had hired a horse out of a livery stable the day before, to ride out to look at a ranch he thought of buying. The liveryman noticed that he limped slightly. He had collided with lead in Texas, as was learned afterward. The horse which had been hired to the ranch-buyer of the day before was returned to the corral of the livery barn at an unknown hour during the night, and suspicion settled on the lame man. When he got off the train at Pueblo, he walked into the arms of officers. The limp had marked him clearly.

"In a grip which he carried were a number of sacks, which he supposed contained gold dust, but held only taulk on its way to assayers in Denver. These he had gotten out of the express the night before, supposing they were valuable. We were all detained as witnesses. He was tried for robbing the mails, and was the coolest man in the court room. He was a tall, awkward-looking fellow, light complexioned, with a mild blue eye. His voice, when not disguised, would mark him amongst a thousand men. It was peculiarly mild and soft, and would lure a babe from its mother's arms.

"At the trial he never tried to hide his past, and you couldn't help liking the fellow for his frank answers.

"'Were you ever charged with any crime before?' asked the prosecution.

'If so, when and where?'

"'Yes,' said the prisoner, 'in Texas, for robbing the mails in '77.'

"'What was the result?' continued the prosecution.

"'They sent me over the road for ninety-nine years.'

"'Then how does it come that you are at liberty?' quizzed the attorney.

"'Well, you see the President of the United States at that time was a warm personal friend of mine, though we had drifted apart somewhat. When he learned that the Federal authorities had interfered with my liberties, he pardoned me out instantly.'

"'What did you do then?' asked the attorney.

"Well, I went back to Texas, and was attending to my own business, when I got into a little trouble and had to kill a man. Lawyers down there won't do anything for you without you have money, and as I didn't have any for them, I came up to this country to try and make an honest dollar.'

"He went over the road a second time, and wasn't in the Federal prison a year before he was released through influence. Prison walls were never made to hold as cool a rascal as he was. Have you a match?"

* * * * *

It was an ideal night. Millions of stars flecked the sky overhead. No one seemed willing to sleep. We had heard the evening gun and the trumpets sounding tattoo over at the fort, but their warnings of the closing day were not for us. The guards changed, the cattle sleeping like babes in a trundle-bed. Finally one by one the boys sought their blankets, while sleep and night wrapped these children of the plains in her arms.

II

SEIGERMAN'S PER CENT

Towards the wind-up of the Cherokee Strip Cattle Association it became hard to ride a chuck-line in winter. Some of the cattle companies on the range, whose headquarters were far removed from the scene of active operations, saw fit to give orders that the common custom of feeding all comers and letting them wear their own welcome out must be stopped. This was hard on those that kept open house the year round. There was always a surplus of men on the range in the winter. Sometimes there might be ten men at a camp, and only two on the pay-roll. These extra men were called "chuck-line riders." Probably eight months in the year they all had employment. At many camps they were welcome, as they would turn to and help do anything that was wanted done.

After a hard freeze it would be necessary to cut the ice, so that the cattle could water. A reasonable number of guests were no drawback at a time like this, as the chuck-line men would be the most active in opening the ice with axes. The cattle belonging to those who kept open house never got so far away that some one didn't recognize the brand and turn them back towards their own pasture. It was possible to cast bread upon the waters, even on the range.

The new order of things was received with many protests. Late in the fall three worthies of the range formed a combine, and laid careful plans of action, in case they should get let out of a winter's job. "I've been on the range a good while," said Baugh, the leader of this trio, "but hereafter I'll not ride my horses down, turning back the brand of any hidebound cattle company."

"That won't save you from getting hit with a cheque for your time when the snow begins to drift," commented Stubb.

"When we make our grand tour of the State this winter," remarked Arab Ab, "we'll get that cheque of Baugh's cashed, together with our own. One thing sure, we won't fret about it; still we might think that riding a chuck-line would beat footing it in a granger country, broke."

"Oh, we won't go broke," said Baugh, who was the leader in the idea that they would go to Kansas for the winter, and come back in the spring when men are wanted.

So when the beef season had ended, the calves had all been branded up and everything made snug for the winter, the foreman said to the boys at breakfast one morning, "Well, lads, I've kept you on the pay-roll as long as there has been anything to do, but this morning I'll have to give you your time. These recent orders of mine are sweeping, for they cut me down to one man, and we are to do our own cooking. I'm sorry that any of you that care to can't spend the winter with us. It's there that my orders are very distasteful to me, for I know what it is to ride a chuck-line myself. You all know that it's no waste of affection by this company that keeps even two of us on the pay-roll."

While the foreman was looking up accounts and making out the time of each, Baugh asked him, "When is the wagon going in after the winter's supplies?"

"In a day or two," answered the foreman. "Why?"

"Why, Stubby, Arab, and myself want to leave our saddles and private horses here with you until spring. We're going up in the State for the winter, and will wait and go in with the wagon."

"That will be all right," said the foreman. "You'll find things right side up when you come after them, and a job if I can give it to you."

"Don't you think it's poor policy," asked Stubb of the foreman, as the latter handed him his time, "to refuse the men a roof and the bite they eat in winter?"

"You may ask that question at headquarters, when you get your time cheque cashed. I've learned not to think contrary to my employers; not in the mouth of winter, anyhow."

"Oh, we don't care," said Baugh; "we're going to take in the State for a change of scenery. We'll have a good time and plenty of fun on the side."

The first snow-squall of the season came that night, and the wagon could not go in for several days. When the weather moderated the three bade the foreman a hearty good-by and boarded the wagon for town, forty miles away. This little village was a supply point for the range country to the south, and lacked that diversity of entertainment that the trio desired. So to a larger town westward, a county seat, they hastened by rail. This hamlet they took in by sections. There were the games running to suit their tastes, the variety theatre with its painted girls, and handbills announced that on the 24th of December and Christmas Day there would be horse races. To do justice to all this melted their money fast.

Their gay round of pleasure had no check until the last day of the races. Heretofore they had held their own in the games, and the first day of the races they had even picked several winners. But grief was in store for Baugh the leader, Baugh the brains of the trio. He had named the winners so easily the day before, that now his confidence knew no bounds. His opinion was supreme on a running horse, though he cautioned the others not to risk their judgment—in fact, they had better follow him. "I'm going to back that sorrel gelding, that won yesterday in the free-for-all to-day," said he to Stubb and Arab, "and if you boys go in with me, we'll make a killing."

"You can lose your money on a horse race too quick to suit me," replied Stubb. "I prefer to stick to poker; but you go ahead and win all you can, for spring is a long ways off yet."

"My observation of you as a poker player, my dear Stubby, is that you generally play the first hand to win and all the rest to get even."

They used up considerable time scoring for the free-for-all running race Christmas Day, during which delay Baugh not only got all his money bet, but his watch and a new overcoat. The race went off with the usual dash, when there were no more bets in sight; and when it ended Baugh buttoned up the top button of his coat, pulled his hat down over his eyes, and walked back from the race track in a meditative state of mind, to meet Stubb and Arab Ab.

"When I gamble and lose I never howl," said Baugh to his friends, "but I do love a run for my money, though I didn't have any more chance to-day than a rabbit. I'll take my hat off to the man that got it, however, and charge it up to my tuition account."

"You big chump, you! if you hadn't bet your overcoat it wouldn't be so bad. What possessed you to bet it?" asked Stubb, half reprovingly.

"Oh, hell, I'll not need it. It's not going to be a very cold winter, nohow," replied Baugh, as he threw up one eye toward the warm sun. "We need exercise. Let's walk back to town. Now, this is a little unexpected, but what have I got you boy's for, if you can't help a friend in trouble. There's one good thing—I've got my board paid three weeks in advance; paid it this morning out of yesterday's winnings. Lucky, ain't I?"

"Yes, you're powerful lucky. You're alive, ain't you?" said Stubb, rubbing salt into his wounds.

"Now, my dear Stubby, don't get gay with the leading lady; you may get in a bad box some day and need me."

This turn of affairs was looked upon by Stubb and Arab as quite a joke on their leader. But it was no warning to them, and they continued to play their favorite games, Stubb at poker, while Arab gave his attention to monte. Things ran along for a few weeks in this manner, Baugh never wanting for a dollar or the necessary liquors that cheer the despondent. Finally they were forced to take an inventory of their cash and similar assets. The result was suggestive that they would have to return to the chuck-line, or unearth some other resource. The condition of their finances lacked little of the red-ink line.

Baugh, who had been silent during this pow-wow, finally said, "My board will have to be provided for in a few days, but I have an idea, struck it to-day, and if she works, we'll pull through to grass like four time winners."

"What is it?" asked the other two, in a chorus.

"There's a little German on a back street here, who owns a bar-room with a hotel attached. He has a mania to run for office; in fact, there's several candidates announced already. Now, the convention don't meet until May, which is in our favor. If my game succeeds, we will be back at work before that time. That will let us out easy."

As their finances were on a parity with Baugh's, the others were willing to undertake anything that looked likely to tide them over the winter. "Leave things to me," said Baugh. "I'll send a friend around to sound our German, and see what office he thinks he'd like to have."

The information sought developed the fact that it was the office of sheriff that he wanted. When the name was furnished, the leader of this scheme wrote it on a card—Seigerman, Louie Seigerman,—not trusting to memory. Baugh now reduced their finances further for a shave, while he meditated how he would launch his scheme. An hour afterwards, he walked up to the bar, and asked, "Is Mr. Seigerman in?"

"Dot ish my name, sir," said the man behind the bar.

"Could I see you privately for a few minutes?" asked Baugh, who himself could speak German, though his tongue did not indicate it.

"In von moment," said Seigerman, as he laid off his white apron and called an assistant to take his place. He then led the way to a back room, used for a storehouse. "Now, mine frendt, vat ish id?" inquired Louie, when they were alone.

"My name is Baughman," said he, as he shook Louie's hand with a hearty grip. "I work for the Continental Cattle Company, who own a range in the strip adjoining the county line below here. My people have suffered in silence from several bands of cattle thieves who have headquarters in this county. Heretofore we have never taken any interest in the local politics of this community. But this year we propose to assert ourselves, and try to elect a sheriff who will do his sworn duty, and run out of this county these rustling cattle thieves. Mr. Seigerman, it would surprise you did I give you the figures in round numbers of the cattle that my company have lost by these brand-burning rascals who infest this section.

"Now to business, as you are a business man. I have come to ask you to consent to your name being presented to the county convention, which meets in May, as a candidate for the office of sheriff of this county."

As Louie scratched his head and was meditating on his reply, Baughman continued: "Now, we know that you are a busy man, and have given this matter no previous thought, so we do not insist on an immediate reply. But think it over, and let me impress on your mind that if you consent to make the race, you will have the support of every cattle-man in the country. Not only their influence and support, but in a selfish interest will their purses be at your command to help elect you. This request of mine is not only the mature conclusion of my people, but we have consulted others interested, and the opinion seems unanimous that you are the man to make the race for this important office."

"Mr. Baughman, vill you not haf one drink mit me?" said Seigerman, as he led the way towards the bar.

"If you will kindly excuse me, Mr. Seigerman, I never like to indulge while attending to business matters. I'll join you in a cigar, however, for acquaintance' sake."

When the cigars were lighted Baugh observed, "Why, do you keep hotel? If I had known it, I would have put up with you, but my bill is paid in advance at my hotel until Saturday. If you can give me a good room by then, I'll come up and stop with you."

"You can haf any room in mine house, Mr. Baughman," said Seigerman.

As Baugh was about to leave he once more impressed on Louie the nature of his call. "Now, Mr. Seigerman," said Baughman, using the German language during the parting conversation, "let me have your answer at the earliest possible moment, for we want to begin an active canvass at once. This is a large county, and to enlist our friends in your behalf no time should be lost." With a profusion of "Leben Sie wohls" and well wishes for each other, the "Zweibund" parted.

Stubb and Arab were waiting on a corner for Baugh. When he returned he withheld his report until they had retreated to the privacy of their own room. Once secure, he said to both: "If you would like to know what an active, resourceful brain is, put your ear to my head," tapping his temple with his finger, "and listen to mine throb and purr. Everything is working like silk. I'm going around to board with him Saturday. I want you to go over with me to-morrow, Stubby, and give him a big game about what a general uprising there is amongst the cowmen for an efficient man for the office of sheriff, and make it strong. I gave him my last whirl to-day in German. Oh, he'll run all right; and we want to convey the impression that we can rally the cattle interests to his support. Put up a good grievance, mind you! You can both know that I begged strong when I took this cigar in preference to a drink."

"It's certainly a bad state of affairs we've come to when you refuse whiskey. Don't you think so, Stubby?" said Arab, addressing the one and appealing to the other. "You never refused no drink, Baugh, you know you didn't," said Stubb reproachfully.

"Oh, you little sawed-off burnt-offering, you can't see the policy that we must use in handling this matter. This is a delicate play, that can't be managed roughshod on horseback. It has food, shelter, and drink in it for us all, but they must be kept in the background. The main play now is to convince Mr. Seigerman that he has a call to serve his country in the office of sheriff. Bear down heavy on the emergency clause. Then make him think that no other name but Louie Seigerman will satisfy the public clamor. Now, my dear Stubby, I know that you are a gifted and accomplished liar, and for that reason I insist that you work your brain and tongue in this matter. Keep your own motive in the background and bring his to the front. That's the idea. Now, can you play your part?"

"Well, as I have until to-morrow to think it over, I'll try," said Stubb.

The next afternoon Baugh and Stubb sauntered into Louie's place, and received a very cordial welcome at the hands of the proprietor. Baugh introduced Stubb as a friend of his whom he had met in town that day, and who, being also interested in cattle, he thought might be able to offer some practical suggestions. Their polite refusal to indulge in a social glass with the proprietor almost hurt his feelings.

"Let us retire to the rear room for a few moments of conversation, if you have the leisure," said Baugh.

Once secure in the back room, Stubb opened his talk. "As my friend Mr. Baughman has said, I'm local manager of the Ohio Cattle Company operating in the Strip. I'm spending considerable time in your town at present, as I'm overseeing the wintering of something like a hundred saddle horses and two hundred and fifty of our thoroughbred bulls. We worked our saddle stock so late last fall, that on my advice the superintendent sent them into the State to be corn-fed for the winter. The bulls were too valuable to be risked on the range. We had over fifty stolen last season, that cost us over three hundred dollars a head. I had a letter this morning from our superintendent, asking me to unite with what seems to be a general movement to suppress this high-handed stealing that has run riot in this county in the past. Mr. Baughman has probably acquainted you with the general sentiment in cattle circles regarding what should be done. I wish to assure you further that my people stand ready to use their best endeavors to nominate a candidate who will pledge himself to stamp out this disgraceful brand-burning and cattle-rustling. The little protection shown the livestock interests in this western country has actually driven capital out of one of the best paying industries in the West. But it is our own fault. We take no interest in local politics. Any one is good enough for sheriff with us. But this year there seems to be an awakening. It may be a selfish interest that prompts this uprising; I think it is. But that is the surest hope in politics for us. The cattle-men's pockets have been touched, their interests have been endangered. Mr. Seigerman, I feel confident that if you will enter the race for this office, it will be a walk-away for you. Now consider the matter fully, and I might add that there is a brighter future for you politically than you possibly can see. I wish I had brought our superintendent's letter with me for you to read.

"He openly hints that if we elect a sheriff in this county this fall who makes an efficient officer, he will be strictly in line for the office of United States Marshal of western Kansas and all the Indian Territory. You see, Mr. Seigerman, in our company we have as stock-holders three congressmen and one United States senator. I have seen it in the papers myself, and it is a common remark Down East, so I'm told, that the weather is chilly when an Ohio man gets left. Now with these men of our company interested in you, there would be no refusing them the appointment. Why, it would give you the naming of fifty deputies—good easy money in every one of them. You could sit back in a well-appointed government office and enjoy the comforts of life. Now, Mr. Seigerman, we will see you often, but let me suggest that your acceptance be as soon as possible, for if you positively decline to enter the race, we must look in some other quarter for an available man." Leaving these remarks for Seigerman's reflections, he walked out of the room.

As Seigerman started to follow, Baugh tapped him on the shoulder to wait, as he had something to say to him. Baugh now confirmed everything said, using the German language. He added, "Now, my friend Stubb is too modest to admit who his people really are, but the Ohio Cattle Company is practically the Standard Oil Company, but they don't want it known. It's a confidence that I'm placing in you, and request you not to repeat it. Still, you know what a syndicate they are and the influence they carry. That very little man who has been talking to you has better backing than any cow-boss in the West. He's a safe, conservative fellow to listen to."

When they had rejoined Stubb in the bar-room, Baugh said to Seigerman, "Don't you think you can give us your answer by Friday next, so your name can be announced in the papers, and an active canvass begun without further loss of time?"

"Shentlemens, I'll dry do," said Louie, "but you will not dake a drink mit me once again, aind it?"

"No, thank you, Mr. Seigerman," replied Stubb.

"He gave me a very fine cigar yesterday; you'll like them if you try one," said Baugh to Stubb. "Let it be a cigar to-day, Mr. Seigerman."

As Baugh struck a match to light his cigar, he said to Stubb, "I'm coming up to stop with Mr. Seigerman to-morrow. Why don't you join us?"

"I would be very much bleased to haf you mine guest," said Louie, every inch the host.

"This is a very home-like looking place," remarked Stubb. "I may come up; I'll come around Sunday and take dinner with you, anyhow."

"Do, blease," urged Louie.

There was a great deal to be said, and it required two languages to express it all, but finally the "Dreibund" parted. The next day Baugh moved into his new quarters, and the day following Stubb was so pleased with his Sunday dinner that he changed at once.

"I'm expecting a man from Kansas City to-morrow," said Baugh to Louie on Sunday morning, "who will know the sentiment existing in cattle circles in that city. He'll be in on the morning train."

Stubb, in the mean time, had coached Arab as to what he should say. As Baugh and he had covered the same ground, it was thought best to have Arab Ab the heeler, the man who could deliver the vote to order.

So Monday morning after the train was in, the original trio entered, and Arab was introduced. The back room was once more used as a council chamber where the "Fierbund" held an important session.

"I didn't think there was so much interest being taken," began Arab Ab, "until my attention was called to it yesterday by the president and secretary of our company in Kansas City. I want to tell you that the cattle interests in that city are aroused. Why, our secretary showed me the figures from his books; and in the 'Tin Cup' brand alone we shipped out three hundred and twelve beeves short, out of twenty-nine hundred and ninety-six bought two years ago. My employers, Mr. Seigerman, are practical cowmen, and they know that those steers never left the range without help. Nothing but lead

or Texas fever can kill a beef. We haven't had a case of fever on our range for years, nor a winter in five years that would kill an old cow. Why, our president told me if something wasn't done they would have to abandon this country and go where they could get protection. His final orders were to do what I could to get an eligible man as a candidate, which, I'm glad to hear from my friends here, we have hopes of doing. Then when the election comes off, we must drop everything and get every man to claim a residence in this county and vote him here. I'll admit that I'm no good as a wire-puller, but when it comes to getting out the voters, there's where you will find me as solid as a bridge abutment.

"Why, Mr. Seigerman, when I was skinning mules for Creech & Lee, contractors on the Rock Island, one fall, they gave me my orders, which was to get every man on the works ready to ballot. I lined them up and voted them like running cattle through a branding-chute to put on a tally-mark or vent a brand. There were a hundred and seventy-five of those dagoes from the rock-cut; I handled them like dipping sheep for the scab. My friends here can tell you how I managed voting the bonds at a little town east of here. I had my orders from the same people I'm working for now, to get out the cow-puncher element in the Strip for the bonds. The bosses simply told me that what they wanted was a competing line of railroad. And as they didn't expect to pay the obligations, only authorize them,—the next generation could attend to the paying of them,—we got out a full vote. Well, we ran in from four to five hundred men from the Strip, and out of over seven hundred ballots cast, only one against the bonds. We hunted the town all over to find the man that voted against us; we wanted to hang him! The only trouble I had was to make the boys think it was a straight up Democratic play, as they were nearly all originally from Texas. Now, my friends here have told me that they are urging you to accept the nomination for sheriff. I can only add that in case you consent, my people stand ready to give their every energy to this coming campaign. As far as funds are concerned to prosecute the election of an acceptable sheriff to the cattle interests, we would simply be flooded with it. It would be impossible to use one half of what would be forced on us. One thing I can say positively, Mr. Seigerman: they wouldn't permit you to contribute one cent to the expense of your election. Cattle-men are big-hearted fellows—they are friends worth having, Mr. Seigerman."

Louie drew a long breath, and it seemed that a load had been lifted from his mind by these last remarks of Arab's.

"How many men are there in the Strip?" asked Arab of the others.

"On all three divisions of the last round-up there were something like two thousand," replied Baugh. "And this county adjoins the Cattle Country for sixty miles on the north," said Arab, still continuing his musing, "or one third of the Strip. Well, gentlemen," he went on, waking out of his mental reverie and striking the table with his fist, "if there's that many men in the country below, I'll agree to vote one half of them in this county this fall."

"Hold on a minute, aren't you a trifle high on your estimate?" asked Stubb, the conservative, protestingly.

"Not a man too high. Give them a week's lay-off, with plenty to drink at this end of the string, and every man will come in for fifty miles either way. The time we voted the bonds won't be a marker to this election."

"He's not far wrong," said Baugh to Stubb. "Give the rascals a chance for a holiday like that, and they will come from the south line of the Strip."

"That's right, Mr. Seigerman," said Arab. "They'll come from the west and south to a man, and as far east as the middle of the next county. I tell you they will be a thousand strong and a unit in voting. Watch my smoke on results!"

"Well," said Stubb, slowly and deliberately, "I think it's high time we had Mr. Seigerman's consent to make the race. This counting of our forces and the sinews of war is good enough in advance; but I must insist on an answer from Mr. Seigerman. Will you become our candidate?"

"Shentlemens, how can I refuse to be one sheriff? The cattle-mens must be protec. I accep."

The trio now arose, and with a round of oaths that would have made the captain of a pirate ship green with envy swore Seigerman had taken a step he would never regret. After the hearty congratulation on his acceptance, they reseated themselves, when Louie, in his gratitude, insisted that on pleasant occasions like this he should be permitted to offer some refreshments of a liquid nature.

"I never like to indulge at a bar," said Stubb. "The people whom I work for are very particular regarding the habits of their trusted men."

"It might be permissible on occasions like this to break certain established rules," suggested Baugh, "besides, Mr. Seigerman can bring it in here, where we will be unobserved."

"Very well, then," said Stubb, "I waive my objections for sociability's sake."

When Louie had retired for this purpose, Baugh arose to his full dignity and six foot three, and said to the other two, bowing, "Your uncle, my dears, will never allow you to come to want. Pin your faith to the old man. Why, we'll wallow in the fat of the land until the grass comes again, gentle Annie. Gentlemen, if you are gentlemen, which I doubt like hell, salute the victor!" The refreshment was brought in, and before the session adjourned, they had lowered the contents of a black bottle of private stock by several fingers.

The announcement of the candidacy of Mr. Louis Seigerman in the next week's paper (by aid of the accompanying fiver which went with the "copy") encouraged the editor, that others might follow, to write a short, favorable editorial. The article spoke of Mr. Seigerman as a leading citizen, who would fill the office with credit to himself and the community. The trio read this short editorial to Louie daily for the first week. All three were now putting their feet under the table with great regularity, and doing justice to the vintage on invitation. The back room became a private office for the central committee of four. They were able political managers. The campaign was beginning to be active, but no adverse reports were allowed to reach the candidate's ears. He actually had no opposition, so the reports came in to the central committee.

It was even necessary to send out Arab Ab to points on the railroad to get the sentiments of this and that community, which were always favorable. Funds for these trips were forced on them by the candidate. The thought of presenting a board bill to such devoted friends never entered mine host's mind. Thus several months passed.

The warm sun and green blades of grass suggested springtime. The boys had played the rôle as long as they cared to. It had served the purpose that was intended. But they must not hurt the feelings of Seigerman, or let the cause of their zeal become known to their benefactor and candidate for sheriff. One day report came in of some defection and a rival candidate in the eastern part of the county. All hands volunteered to go out. Funds were furnished, which the central committee assured their host would be refunded whenever they could get in touch with headquarters, or could see some prominent cowman.

At the end of a week Mr. Seigerman received a letter. The excuses offered at the rich man's feast were discounted by pressing orders. One had gone to Texas to receive a herd of cattle, instead of a few oxen, one had been summoned to Kansas City, one to Ohio. The letter concluded with the assurance that Mr. Seigerman need have no fear but that he would be the next sheriff.

The same night that the letter was received by mine host, this tale was retold at a cow-camp in the Strip by the trio. The hard winter was over.

At the county convention in May, Seigerman's name was presented. On each of three ballots he received one lone vote. When the news reached the boys in the Strip, they dubbed this one vote "Seigerman's Per Cent," meaning the worst of anything, and that expression became a byword on the range, from Brownsville, Texas, to the Milk River in Montana.

III

"BAD MEDICINE"

The evening before the Cherokee Strip was thrown open for settlement, a number of old timers met in the little town of Hennessey, Oklahoma.

On the next day the Strip would pass from us and our employers, the cowmen. Some of the boys had spent from five to fifteen years on this range. But we realized that we had come to the parting of the ways.

This was not the first time that the government had taken a hand in cattle matters. Some of us in former days had moved cattle at the command of negro soldiers, with wintry winds howling an accompaniment.

The cowman was never a government favorite. If the Indian wards of the nation had a few million acres of idle land, "Let it lie idle," said the guardian. Some of these civilized tribes maintained a fine system of public schools from the rental of unoccupied lands. Nations, like men, revive the fable of the dog and the ox. But the guardian was supreme—the cowman went. This was not unexpected to most of us. Still, this country was a home to us. It mattered little if our names were on the payroll or not, it clothed and fed us.

We were seated around a table in the rear of a saloon talking of the morrow. The place was run by a former cowboy. It therefore became a rendezvous for the craft. Most of us had made up our minds to quit cattle for good and take claims.

"Before I take a claim," said Tom Roll, "I'll go to Minnesota and peon myself to some Swede farmer for my keep the balance of my life. Making hay and plowing fire guards the last few years have given me all the taste of farming that I want. I'm going to Montana in the spring."

"Why don't you go this winter? Is your underwear too light?" asked Ace Gee. "Now, I'm going to make a farewell play," continued Ace. "I'm going to take a claim, and before I file on it, sell my rights, go back to old Van Zandt County, Texas, this winter, rear up my feet, and tell it to them scarey. That's where all my folks live."

"Well, for a winter's stake," chimed in Joe Box, "Ace's scheme is all right. We can get five hundred dollars out of a claim for simply staking it, and we know some good ones. That sized roll ought to winter a man with modest tastes."

"You didn't know that I just came from Montana, did you, Tom?" asked Ace. "I can tell you more about that country than you want to know. I've been up the trail this year; delivered our cattle on the Yellowstone, where the outfit I worked for has a northern range. When I remember this summer's work, I sometimes think that I will burn my saddle and never turn or look a cow in the face again, nor ride anything but a plow mule and that bareback."

"The people I was working for have a range in Tom Green County, Texas, and another one in Montana. They send their young steers north to mature—good idea, too!—but they are not cowmen like the ones we know. They made their money in the East in a patent medicine—got scads of it, too. But that's no argument that they know anything about a cow. They have a board of directors—it is one of those cattle companies. Looks like they started in the cattle business to give their income a healthy outlet from the medicine branch. They operate on similar principles as those soap factory people did here in the Strip a few years ago. About the time they learn the business they go broke and retire."

"Our boss this summer was some relation to the wife of some of the medicine people Down East. As they had no use for him back there, they sent him out to the ranch, where he would be useful."

"We started north with the grass. Had thirty-three hundred head of twos and threes, with a fair string of saddle stock. They run the same brand on both ranges—the broken arrow. You never saw a cow-boss have so much trouble; a married woman wasn't a circumstance to him, fretting and

sweating continually. This was his first trip over the trail, but the boys were a big improvement on the boss, as we had a good outfit of men along. My idea of a good cow-boss is a man that doesn't boss any; just hires a first-class outfit of men, and then there is no bossing to do.

"We had to keep well to the west getting out of Texas; kept to the west of Buffalo Gap. From there to Tepee City is a dry, barren country. To get water for a herd the size of ours was some trouble. This new medicine man got badly worried several times. He used his draft book freely, buying water for the cattle while crossing this stretch of desert; the natives all through there considered him the softest snap they had met in years. Several times we were without water for the stock two whole days. That makes cattle hard to hold at night. They want to get up and prow—it makes them feverish, and then's when they are ripe for a stampede. We had several bobles crossing that strip of country; nothing bad, just jump and run a mile or so, and then mill until daylight. Then our boss would get great action on himself and ride a horse until the animal would give out—sick, he called it. After the first little run we had, it took him half the next day to count them; then he couldn't believe his own figures.

"A Val Verde County lad who counted with him said they were all right—not a hoof shy. But the medicine man's opinion was the reverse. At this the Val Verde boy got on the prod slightly, and expressed himself, saying, 'Why don't you have two of the other boys count them? You can't come within a hundred of me, or yourself either, for that matter. I can pick out two men, and if they differ five head, it'll be a surprise to me. The way the boys have brought the cattle by us, any man that can't count this herd and not have his own figures differ more than a hundred had better quit riding, get himself some sandals, and a job herding sheep. Let me give you this pointer: if you are not anxious to have last night's fun over again, you'd better quit counting and get this herd full of grass and water before night, or you will be cattle shy as sure as hell's hot.'

"'When I ask you for an opinion,' answered the foreman, somewhat indignant, 'such remarks will be in order. Until then you may keep your remarks to yourself.'

"'That will suit me all right, old sport,' retorted Val Verde; 'and when you want any one to help you count your fat cattle, get some of the other boys—one that'll let you doubt his count as you have mine, and if he admires you for it, cut my wages in two.'

"After the two had been sparring with each other some little time, another of the boys ventured the advice that it would be easy to count the animals as they came out of the water; so the order went forward to let them hit the trail for the first water. We made a fine stream, watering early in the afternoon. As they grazed out from the creek we fed them through between two of the boys. The count showed no cattle short. In fact, the Val Verde boy's count was confirmed. It was then that our medicine man played his cards wrong. He still insisted that we were cattle out, thus queering himself with his men. He was gradually getting into a lone minority, though he didn't have sense enough to realize it. He would even fight with and curse his horses to impress us with his authority. Very little attention was paid to him after this, and as grass and water improved right along nothing of interest happened.

"While crossing 'No-Man's-Land' a month later,—I was on herd myself at the time, a bright moonlight night,—they jumped like a cat shot with No. 8's, and quit the bed-ground instant. There were three of us on guard at the time, and before the other boys could get out of their blankets and into their saddles the herd had gotten well under headway. Even when the others came to our assistance, it took us some time to quiet them down. As this scare came during last guard, daylight was on us before they had quit milling, and we were three miles from the wagon. As we drifted them back towards camp, for fear that something might have gotten away, most of the boys scoured the country for miles about, but without reward. When all had returned to camp, had breakfasted, and changed horses, the counting act was ordered by Mr. Medicine. Our foreman naturally felt that he would have to take a hand in this count, evidently forgetting his last experience in that line. He was surprised, when he asked one of the boys to help him, by receiving a flat refusal.

"'Why won't you count with me?' he demanded.

"Because you don't possess common cow sense enough, nor is the crude material in you to make a cow-hand. You found fault with the men the last count we had, and I don't propose to please you by giving you a chance to find fault with me. That's why I won't count with you."

"Don't you know, sir, that I'm in authority here?" retorted the foreman.

"Well, if you are, no one seems to respect your authority, as you're pleased to call it, and I don't know of any reason why I should. You have plenty of men here who can count them correctly. I'll count them with any man in the outfit but yourself."

"Our company sent me as their representative with this herd," replied the foreman, "while you have the insolence to disregard my orders. I'll discharge you the first moment I can get a man to take your place."

"Oh, that'll be all right," answered the lad, as the foreman rode away. He then tackled me, but I acted foolish, 'fessing up that I couldn't count a hundred. Finally he rode around to a quiet little fellow, with pox-marks on his face, who always rode on the point, kept his horses fatter than anybody, rode a San José saddle, and was called Californy. The boss asked him to help him count the herd.

"Now look here, boss," said Californy, "I'll pick one of the boys to help me, and we'll count the cattle to within a few head. Won't that satisfy you?"

"No, sir, it won't. What's got into you boys?" questioned the foreman.

"There's nothing the matter with the boys, but the cattle business has gone to the dogs when a valuable herd like this will be trusted to cross a country for two thousand miles in the hands of a man like yourself. You have men that will pull you through if you'll only let them," said the point-rider, his voice mild and kind as though he were speaking to a child.

"You're just like the rest of them!" roared the boss. "Want to act contrary! Now let me say to you that you'll help me to count these cattle or I'll discharge, unhorse, and leave you afoot here in this country! I'll make an example of you as a warning to others."

"It's strange that I should be signaled out as an object of your wrath and displeasure," said Californy. "Besides, if I were you, I wouldn't make any examples as you were thinking of doing. When you talk of making an example of me as a warning to others," said the pox-marked lad, as he reached over, taking the reins of the foreman's horse firmly in his hand, "you're a simpering idiot for entertaining the idea, and a cowardly bluffer for mentioning it. When you talk of unhorsing and leaving me here afoot in a country a thousand miles from nowhere, you don't know what that means, but there's no danger of your doing it. I feel easy on that point. But I'm sorry to see you make such a fool of yourself. Now, you may think for a moment that I'm afraid of that ivory-handled gun you wear, but I'm not. Men wear them on the range, not so much to emphasize their demands with, as you might think. If it were me, I'd throw it in the wagon; it may get you into trouble. One thing certain, if you ever so much as lay your hand on it, when you are making threats as you have done to-day, I'll build a fire in your face that you can read the San Francisco "Examiner" by at midnight. You'll have to revise your ideas a trifle; in fact, change your tactics. You're off your reservation bigger than a wolf, when you try to run things by force. There's lots better ways. Don't try and make talk stick for actions, nor use any prelude to the real play you wish to make. Unroll your little game with the real thing. You can't throw alkaline dust in my eyes and tell me it's snowing. I'm sorry to have to tell you all this, though I have noticed that you needed it for a long time."

"As he released his grip on the bridle reins, he continued, 'Now ride back to the wagon, throw off that gun, tell some of the boys to take a man and count these cattle, and it will be done better than if you helped.'

"Must I continue to listen to these insults on every hand?" hissed the medicine man, livid with rage.

"First remove the cause before you apply the remedy; that's in your line," answered Californy. "Besides, what are you going to do about it? You don't seem to be gifted with enough cow-sense to

even use a modified amount of policy in your every-day affairs,' said he, as he rode away to avoid hearing his answer.

"Several of us, who were near enough to hear this dressing-down of the boss at Californy's hands, rode up to offer our congratulations, when we noticed that old Bad Medicine had gotten a stand on one of the boys called 'Pink.' After leaving him, he continued his ride towards the wagon. Pink soon joined us, a broad smile playing over his homely florid countenance.

"Some of you boys must have given him a heavy dose for so early in the morning,' said Pink, 'for he ordered me to have the cattle counted, and report to him at the wagon. Acted like he didn't aim to do the trick himself. Now, as I'm foreman,' continued Pink, 'I want you two point-men to go up to the first little rise of ground, and we'll put the cattle through between you. I want a close count, understand. You're working under a boss now that will shove you through hell itself. So if you miss them over a hundred, I'll speak to the management, and see if I can't have your wages raised, or have you made a foreman or something with big wages and nothing to do.'

"The point-men smiled at Pink's orders, and one asked, 'Are you ready now?'

"All set,' responded Pink. 'Let the fiddlers cut loose.'

"Well, we lined them up and got them strung out in shape to count, and our point-men picking out a favorite rise, we lined them through between our counters. We fed them through, and as regularly as a watch you could hear Californy call out to his pardner 'tally!' Alternately they would sing out this check on the even hundred head, slipping a knot on their tally string to keep the hundreds. It took a full half hour to put them through, and when the rear guard of crips and dogies passed this impromptu review, we all waited patiently for the verdict. Our counters rode together, and Californy, leaning over on the pommel of his saddle, said to his pardner, 'What you got?'

"Thirty-three six,' was the answer.

"Why, you can't count a little bit,' said Californy. 'I got thirty-three seven. How does the count suit you, boss?'

"Easy suited, gents,' said Pink. 'But I'm surprised to find such good men with a common cow herd. I must try and have you appointed by the government on this commission that's to investigate Texas fever. You're altogether too accomplished for such a common calling as claims you at present.'

"Turning to the rest of us, he said, 'Throw your cattle on the trail, you vulgar peons, while I ride back to order forward my wagon and saddle stock. By rights, I ought to have one of those centre fire cigars to smoke, to set off my authority properly on this occasion.'

"He jogged back to the wagon and satisfied the dethroned medicine man that the cattle were there to a hoof. We soon saw the saddle horses following, and an hour afterward Pink and the foreman rode by us, big as fat cattle-buyers from Kansas City, not even knowing any one, so absorbed in their conversation were they; rode on by and up the trail, looking out for grass and water.

"It was over two weeks afterward when Pink said to us, 'When we strike the Santa Fé Railway, I may advise my man to take a needed rest for a few weeks in some of the mountain resorts. I hope you all noticed how worried he looks, and, to my judgment, he seems to be losing flesh. I don't like to suggest anything, but the day before we reach the railroad, I think a day's curlew shooting in the sand hills along the Arkansas River might please his highness. In case he'll go with me, if I don't lose him, I'll never come back to this herd. It won't hurt him any to sleep out one night with the dry cattle.'

"Sure enough, the day before we crossed that road, somewhere near the Colorado state line, Pink and Bad Medicine left camp early in the morning for a curlew hunt in the sand hills. Fortunately it was a foggy morning, and within half an hour the two were out of sight of camp and herd. As Pink had outlined the plans, everything was understood. We were encamped on a nice stream, and instead of trailing along with the herd, lay over for that day. Night came and our hunters failed to return, and the next morning we trailed forward towards the Arkansas River. Just as we went into camp at noon, two horsemen loomed up in sight coming down the trail from above. Every rascal of us knew

who they were, and when the two rode up, Pink grew very angry and demanded to know why we had failed to reach the river the day before.

"The horse wrangler, a fellow named Joe George, had been properly coached, and stepping forward, volunteered this excuse: 'You all didn't know it when you left camp yesterday morning that we were out the wagon team and nearly half the saddle horses. Well, we were. And what's more, less than a mile below on the creek was an abandoned Indian camp. I wasn't going to be left behind with the cook to look for the missing stock, and told the *segundo* so. We divided into squads of three or four men each and went out and looked up the horses, but it was after six o'clock before we trailed them down and got the missing animals. If anybody thinks I'm going to stay behind to look for missing stock in a country full of lurking Indians—well, they simply don't know me.'

"The scheme worked all right. On reaching the railroad the next morning, Bad Medicine authorized Pink to take the herd to Ogalalla on the Platte, while he took a train for Denver. Around the camp-fire that night, Pink gave us his experience in losing Mr. Medicine. 'Oh, I lost him late enough in the day so he couldn't reach any shelter for the night,' said Pink. 'At noon, when the sun was straight overhead, I sounded him as to directions and found that he didn't know straight up or east from west. After giving him the slip, I kept an eye on him among the sand hills, at the distance of a mile or so, until he gave up and unsaddled at dusk. The next morning when I overtook him, I pretended to be trailing him up, and I threw enough joy into my rapture over finding him, that he never doubted my sincerity.'

"On reaching Ogalalla, a man from Montana put in an appearance in company with poor old Medicine, and as they did business strictly with Pink, we were left out of the grave and owly council of medicine men. Well, the upshot of the whole matter was that Pink was put in charge of the herd, and a better foreman I never worked under. We reached the company's Yellowstone range early in the fall, counted over and bade our dogies good-by, and rode into headquarters. That night I talked with the regular men on the ranch, and it was there that I found out that a first-class cowhand could get in four months' haying in the summer and the same feeding it out in the winter. But don't you forget it, she's a cow country all right. I always was such a poor hand afoot that I passed up that country, and here I am a 'boomer.'"

"Well, boom if you want," said Tom Roll, "but do you all remember what the governor of North Carolina said to the governor of South Carolina?"

"It is quite a long time between drinks," remarked Joe, rising, "but I didn't want to interrupt Ace."

As we lined up at the bar, Ace held up a glass two thirds full, and looking at it in a meditative mood, remarked: "Isn't it funny how little of this stuff it takes to make a fellow feel rich! Why, four bits' worth under his belt, and the President of the United States can't hire him."

As we strolled out into the street, Joe inquired, "Ace, where will I see you after supper?"

"You will see me, not only after supper, but all during supper, sitting right beside you."

IV A WINTER ROUND-UP

An hour before daybreak one Christmas morning in the Cherokee Strip, six hundred horses were under saddle awaiting the dawn. It was a clear, frosty morning that bespoke an equally clear day for the wolf *rodeo*. Every cow-camp within striking distance of the Walnut Grove, on the Salt Fork of the Cimarron, was a scene of activity, taxing to the utmost its hospitality to man and horse. There had been a hearty response to the invitation to attend the circle drive-hunt of this well-known shelter of several bands of gray wolves. The cowmen had suffered so severely in time past from this enemy of cattle that the Cherokee Strip Cattle Association had that year offered a bounty of twenty dollars for wolf scalps.

The lay of the land was extremely favorable. The Walnut Grove was a thickety covert on the north first bottom of the Cimarron, and possibly two miles wide by three long. Across the river, and extending several miles above and below this grove, was the salt plain—an alkali desert which no wild animal, ruminant or carnivorous, would attempt to cross, instinct having warned it of its danger. At the termination of the grove proper, down the river or to the eastward, was a sand dune bottom of several miles, covered by wild plum brush, terminating in a perfect horseshoe a thousand acres in extent, the entrance of which was about a mile wide. After passing the grove, this plum-brush country could be covered by men on horseback, though the chaparral undergrowth of the grove made the use of horses impracticable. The Cimarron River, which surrounds this horseshoe on all sides but the entrance, was probably two hundred yards wide at an average winter stage, deep enough to swim a horse, and cold and rolling.

Across the river, opposite this horseshoe, was a cut-bank twenty feet high in places, with only an occasional cattle trail leading down to the water. This cut-bank formed the second bottom on that side, and the alkaline plain—the first bottom—ended a mile or more up the river. It was an ideal situation for a drive-hunt, and legend, corroborated by evidences, said that the Cherokees, when they used this outlet as a hunting-ground after their enforced emigration from Georgia, had held numerous circle hunts over the same ground after buffalo, deer, and elk.

The rendezvous was to be at ten o'clock on Encampment Butte, a plateau overlooking the entire hunting-field and visible for miles. An hour before the appointed time the clans began to gather. All the camps within twenty-five miles, and which were entertaining participants of the hunt, put in a prompt appearance. Word was received early that morning that a contingent from the Eagle Chief would be there, and begged that the start be delayed till their arrival. A number of old cowmen were present, and to them was delegated the duty of appointing the officers of the day. Bill Miller, a foreman on the Coldwater Pool, an adjoining range, was appointed as first captain. There were also several captains over divisions, and an acting captain placed over every ten men, who would be held accountable for any disorder allowed along the line under his special charge.

The question of forbidding the promiscuous carrying of firearms met with decided opposition. There was an element of danger, it was true, but to deprive any of the boys of arms on what promised an exciting day's sport was contrary to their creed and occupation; besides, their judicious use would be an essential and valuable assistance. To deny one the right and permit another, would have been to divide their forces against a common enemy; so in the interests of harmony it was finally concluded to assign an acting captain over every ten men. "I'll be perfectly responsible for any of my men," said Reese, a red-headed Welsh cowman from over on Black Bear. "Let's just turn our wild selves loose, and those wolves won't stand any more show than a coon in a bear dance."

"It would be fine satisfaction to be shot by a responsible man like you or any of your outfit," replied Hollycott, superintendent of the "LX." "I hope another Christmas Day to help eat a plum

pudding on the banks of the Dee, and I don't want to be carrying any of your stray lead in my carcass either. Did you hear me?"

"Yes; we're going to have egg-nog at our camp to-night. Come down."

The boys were being told off in squads of ten, when a suppressed shout of welcome arose, as a cavalcade of horsemen was sighted coming over the divide several miles distant. Before the men were allotted and their captains appointed, the last expected squad had arrived, their horses frosty and sweaty. They were all well known west end Strippers, numbering fifty-four men and having ridden from the Eagle Chief, thirty-five miles, starting two hours before daybreak.

With the arrival of this detachment, Miller gave his orders for the day. Tom Cave was given two hundred men and sent to the upper end of the grove, where they were to dismount, form in a half circle skirmish-line covering the width of the thicket, and commence the drive down the river. Their saddle horses were to be cut into two bunches and driven down on either side of the grove, and to be in readiness for the men when they emerged from the chaparral, four of the oldest men being detailed as horse wranglers. Reese was sent with a hundred and fifty men to left flank the grove, deploying his men as far back as the second bottom, and close his line as the drive moved forward. Billy Edwards was sent with twenty picked men down the river five miles to the old beef ford at the ripples. His instructions were to cross and scatter his men from the ending of the salt plain to the horseshoe, and to concentrate them around it at the termination of the drive. He was allowed the best ropers and a number of shotguns, to be stationed at the cattle trails leading down to the water at the river's bend. The remainder, about two hundred and fifty men under Lynch, formed a long scattering line from the left entrance of the horseshoe, extending back until it met the advancing line of Reese's pickets.

With the river on one side and this cordon of foot and horsemen on the other, it seemed that nothing could possibly escape. The location of the quarry was almost assured. This chaparral had been the breeding refuge of wolves ever since the Cimarron was a cattle country. Every rider on that range for the past ten years knew it to be the rendezvous of El Lobo, while the ravages of his nightly raids were in evidence for forty miles in every direction. It was a common sight, early in the morning during the winter months, to see twenty and upward in a band, leisurely returning to their retreat, logy and insolent after a night's raid. To make doubly sure that they would be at home to callers, the promoters of this drive gathered a number of worthless lump-jawed cattle two days in advance, and driving them to the edge of the grove, shot one occasionally along its borders, thus, to be hoped, spreading the last feast of the wolves.

* * * * *

By half past ten, Encampment Butte was deserted with the exception of a few old cowmen, two ladies, wife and sister of a popular cowman, and the captain, who from this point of vantage surveyed the field with a glass. Usually a languid and indifferent man, Miller had so set his heart on making this drive a success that this morning he appeared alert and aggressive as he rode forward and back across the plateau of the Butte. The dull, heavy reports of several shotguns caused him to wheel his horse and cover the beef ford with his glass, and a moment later Edwards and his squad were seen with the naked eye to scale the bank and strike up the river at a gallop. It was known that the ford was saddle-skirt deep, and some few of the men were strangers to it; but with that passed safely he felt easier, though his blood coursed quicker. It lacked but a few minutes to eleven, and Cave and his detachment of beaters were due to move on the stroke of the hour. They had been given one hundred rounds of six-shooter ammunition to the man and were expected to use it. Edwards and his cavalcade were approaching the horseshoe, the cordon seemed perfect, though scattering, when the first faint sound of the beaters was heard, and the next moment the barking of two hundred six-shooters was reëchoing up and down the valley of the Salt Fork.

The drive-hunt was on; the long yell passed from the upper end of the grove to the mouth of the horseshoe and back, punctuated with an occasional shot by irrepressibles. The mounts of the day were the pick of over five thousand cow-horses, and corn-fed for winter use, in the pink of condition and as impatient for the coming fray as their riders.

Everything was moving like clockwork. Miller forsook the Butte and rode to the upper end of the grove; the beaters were making slow but steady progress, while the saddled loose horses would be at hand for their riders without any loss of time. Before the beaters were one third over the ground, a buck and doe came out about halfway down the grove, sighted the horsemen, and turned back for shelter. Once more the long yell went down the line. Game had been sighted. When about one half the grove had been beat, a flock of wild turkeys came out at the lower end, and taking flight, sailed over the line. Pandemonium broke out. Good resolutions of an hour's existence were converted into paving material in the excitement of the moment, as every carbine or six-shooter in or out of range rained its leaden hail at the flying covey. One fine bird was accidentally winged, and half a dozen men broke from the line to run it down, one of whom was Reese himself. The line was not dangerously broken nor did harm result, and on their return Miller was present and addressed this query to Reese: "Who is the captain of this flank line?"

"He'll weigh twenty pounds," said Reese, ignoring the question and holding the gobbler up for inspection.

"If you were a vealy tow-headed kid, I'd have something to say to you, but you're old enough to be my father, and that silences me. But try and remember that this is a wolf hunt, and that there are enough wolves in that brush this minute to kill ten thousand dollars' worth of cattle this winter and spring, and some of them will be your own. That turkey might eat a few grasshoppers, but you're cowman enough to know that a wolf just loves to kill a cow while she's calving."

This lecture was interrupted by a long cheer coming up the line from below, and Miller galloped away to ascertain its cause. He met Lynch coming up, who reported that several wolves had been sighted, while at the lower end of the line some of the boys had been trying their guns up and down the river to see how far they would carry. What caused the recent shouting was only a few fool cowboys spurting their horses in short races. He further expressed the opinion that the line would hold, and at the close with the cordon thickened, everything would be forced into the pocket. Miller rode back down the line with him until he met a man from his own camp, and the two changing horses, he hurried back to oversee personally the mounting of the beaters when the grove had been passed.

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