

ADAMS ANDY

REED ANTHONY,
COWMAN: AN
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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An Autobiography

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CHAPTER I

IN RETROSPECT

I can truthfully say that my entire life has been spent with cattle. Even during my four years' service in the Confederate army, the greater portion was spent with the commissary department, in charge of its beef supplies. I was wounded early in the second year of the war and disabled as a soldier, but rather than remain at home I accepted a menial position under a quartermaster. Those were strenuous times. During Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania we followed in the wake of the army with over a thousand cattle, and after Gettysburg we led the retreat with double that number. Near the close of the war we frequently had no cattle to hold, and I became little more than a camp-follower.

I was born in the Shenandoah Valley, northern Virginia, May 3, 1840. My father was a thrifty planter and stockman, owned a few slaves, and as early as I can remember fed cattle every

winter for the eastern markets. Grandfather Anthony, who died before I was born, was a Scotchman who had emigrated to the Old Dominion at an early day, and acquired several large tracts of land on an affluent of the Shenandoah. On my paternal side I never knew any of my ancestors, but have good cause to believe they were adventurers. My mother's maiden name was Reed; she was of a gentle family, who were able to trace their forbears beyond the colonial days, even to the gentry of England. Generations of good birth were reflected in my mother; and across a rough and eventful life I can distinctly remember the refinement of her manners, her courtesy to guests, her kindness to child and slave.

My boyhood days were happy ones. I attended a subscription school several miles from home, riding back and forth on a pony. The studies were elementary, and though I never distinguished myself in my classes, I was always ready to race my pony, and never refused to play truant when the swimming was good. Evidently my father never intended any of his boys for a professional career, though it was an earnest hope of my mother that all of us should receive a college education. My elder brother and I early developed business instincts, buying calves and accompanying our father on his trading expeditions. Once during a vacation, when we were about twelve and ten years old, both of us crossed the mountains with him into what is now West Virginia, where he bought about two hundred young steers and drove them back to our home in the valley. I must have been

blessed with an unfailing memory; over fifty years have passed since that, my first trip from home, yet I remember it vividly—can recall conversations between my father and the sellers as they haggled over the cattle. I remember the money, gold and silver, with which to pay for the steers, was carried by my father in ordinary saddle-bags thrown across his saddle. As occasion demanded, frequently the funds were carried by a negro man of ours, and at night, when among acquaintances, the heavy saddle-bags were thrown into a corner, every one aware of their contents.

But the great event of my boyhood was a trip to Baltimore. There was no railroad at the time, and as that was our market for fat cattle, it was necessary to drive the entire way. My father had made the trip yearly since I could remember, the distance being nearly two hundred miles, and generally carrying as many as one hundred and fifty big beeves. They traveled slowly, pasturing or feeding grain on the way, in order that the cattle should arrive at the market in salable condition. One horse was allowed with the herd, and on another my father rode, far in advance, to engage pasture or feed and shelter for his men. When on the road a boy always led a gentle ox in the lead of the beeves; negro men walked on either flank, and the horseman brought up the rear. I used to envy the boy leading the ox, even though he was a darky. The negro boys on our plantation always pleaded with "Mars" John, my father, for the privilege; and when one of them had made the trip to Baltimore as a toll boy he easily outranked us younger whites. I must have made application for the position when I was

about seven years old, for it seemed an age before my request was granted. My brother, only two years older than I, had made the trip twice, and when I was twelve the great opportunity came. My father had nearly two hundred cattle to go to market that year, and the start was made one morning early in June. I can distinctly see my mother standing on the veranda of our home as I led the herd by with a big red ox, trembling with fear that at the final moment her permission might be withdrawn and that I should have to remain behind. But she never interfered with my father, who took great pains to teach his boys everything practical in the cattle business.

It took us twenty days to reach Baltimore. We always started early in the morning, allowing the beeves to graze and rest along the road, and securing good pastures for them at night. Several times it rained, making the road soft, but I stripped off my shoes and took it barefooted through the mud. The lead ox was a fine, big fellow, each horn tipped with a brass knob, and he and I set the pace, which was scarcely that of a snail. The days were long, I grew desperately hungry between meals, and the novelty of leading that ox soon lost its romance. But I was determined not to show that I was tired or hungry, and frequently, when my father was with us and offered to take me up behind him on his horse, I spurned his offer and trudged on till the end of the day. The mere driving of the beeves would have been monotonous, but the constant change of scene kept us in good spirits, and our darkies always crooned old songs when the road passed through

woodlands. After the beeves were marketed we spent a day in the city, and my father took my brother and me to the theatre. Although the world was unfolding rather rapidly for a country boy of twelve, it was with difficulty that I was made to understand that what we had witnessed on the stage was but mimicry.

The third day after reaching the city we started on our return. The proceeds from the sale of the cattle were sent home by boat. With only two horses, each of which carried double, and walking turn about, we reached home in seven days, settling all bills on the way. That year was a type of others until I was eighteen, at which age I could guess within twenty pounds of the weight of any beef on foot, and when I bought calves and yearling steers I knew just what kind of cattle they would make at maturity. In the mean time, one summer my father had gone west as far as the State of Missouri, traveling by boat to Jefferson City, and thence inland on horseback. Several of our neighbors had accompanied him, all of them buying land, my father securing four sections. I had younger brothers growing up, and the year my oldest brother attained his majority my father outfitted him with teams, wagons, and two trusty negro men, and we started for the nearest point on the Ohio River, our destination being the new lands in the West. We embarked on the first boat, drifting down the Ohio, and up the other rivers, reaching the Ultima Thule of our hopes within a month. The land was new; I liked it; we lived on venison and wild turkeys, and when once we had built a log house and opened a few fields, we were at peace with the earth.

But this happy existence was of short duration. Rumors of war reached us in our western elysium, and I turned my face homeward, as did many another son of Virginia. My brother was sensible enough to remain behind on the new farm; but with nothing to restrain me I soon found myself in St. Louis. There I met kindred spirits, eager for the coming fray, and before attaining my majority I was bearing arms and wearing the gray of the Confederacy. My regiment saw very little service during the first year of the war, as it was stationed in the western division, but early in 1862 it was engaged in numerous actions.

I shall never forget my first glimpse of the Texas cavalry. We had moved out from Corinth, under cover of darkness, to attack Grant at Pittsburg Landing. When day broke, orders were given to open out and allow the cavalry to pass ahead and reconnoitre our front. I had always felt proud of Virginian horsemanship, but those Texans were in a class by themselves. Centaur-like they sat their horses, and for our amusement, while passing at full gallop, swung from their saddles and picked up hats and handkerchiefs. There was something about the Texans that fascinated me, and that Sunday morning I resolved, if spared, to make Texas my future home. I have good cause to remember the battle of Shiloh, for during the second day I was twice wounded, yet saved from falling into the enemy's hands.

My recovery was due to youth and a splendid constitution. Within six weeks I was invalided home, and inside a few months I was assigned to the commissary department with the army

in Virginia. It was while in the latter service that I made the acquaintance of many Texans, from whom I learned a great deal about the resources of their State,—its immense herds of cattle, the cheapness of its lands, and its perpetual summer. During the last year of the war, on account of their ability to handle cattle, a number of Texans were detailed to care for the army's beef supply. From these men I received much information and a pressing invitation to accompany them home, and after the parole at Appomattox I took their address, promising to join them in the near future. On my return to the old homestead I found the place desolate, with burnt barns and fields laid waste. The Shenandoah Valley had experienced war in its dread reality, for on every hand were the charred remains of once splendid homes. I had little hope that the country would ever recover, but my father, stout-hearted as ever, had already begun anew, and after helping him that summer and fall I again drifted west to my brother's farm.

The war had developed a restless, vagabond spirit in me. I had little heart to work, was unsettled as to my future, and, to add to my other troubles, after reaching Missouri one of my wounds reopened. In the mean time my brother had married, and had a fine farm opened up. He offered me every encouragement and assistance to settle down to the life of a farmer; but I was impatient, worthless, undergoing a formative period of early manhood, even spurning the advice of father, mother, and dearest friends. If to-day, across the lapse of years, the question were asked what led me from the bondage of my discontent, it

would remain unanswered. Possibly it was the advantage of good birth; surely the prayers of a mother had always followed me, and my feet were finally led into the paths of industry. Since that day of uncertainty, grandsons have sat upon my knee, clamoring for a story about Indians, the war, or cattle trails. If I were to assign a motive for thus leaving a tangible record of my life, it would be that my posterity—not the present generation, absorbed in its greed of gain, but a more distant and a saner one—should be enabled to glean a faint idea of one of their forbears. A worthy and secondary motive is to give an idea of the old West and to preserve from oblivion a rapidly vanishing type of pioneers.

My personal appearance can be of little interest to coming generations, but rather what I felt, saw, and accomplished. It was always a matter of regret to me that I was such a poor shot with a pistol. The only two exceptions worthy of mention were mere accidents. In my boyhood's home, in Virginia, my father killed yearly a large number of hogs for the household needs as well as for supplying our slave families with bacon. The hogs usually ran in the woods, feeding and thriving on the mast, but before killing time we always baited them into the fields and finished their fattening with peas and corn. It was customary to wait until the beginning of winter, or about the second cold spell, to butcher, and at the time in question there were about fifty large hogs to kill. It was a gala event with us boys, the oldest of whom were allowed to shoot one or more with a rifle. The hogs had been tolled into a small field for the killing, and towards the close of

the day a number of them, having been wounded and requiring a second or third shot, became cross. These subsequent shots were usually delivered from a six-shooter, and in order to have it at hand in case of a miss I was intrusted with carrying the pistol. There was one heavy-tusked five-year-old stag among the hogs that year who refused to present his head for a target, and took refuge in a brier thicket. He was left until the last, when we all sallied out to make the final kill. There were two rifles, and had the chance come to my father, I think he would have killed him easily; but the opportunity came to a neighbor, who overshot, merely causing a slight wound. The next instant the stag charged at me from the cover of the thickety fence corner. Not having sense enough to take to the nearest protection, I turned and ran like a scared wolf across the field, the hog following me like a hound. My father risked a running shot, which missed its target. The darkies were yelling, "Run, chile! Run, Mars' Reed! Shoot! Shoot!" when it occurred to me that I had a pistol; and pointing it backward as I ran, I blazed away, killing the big fellow in his tracks.

The other occasion was years afterward, when I was a trail foreman at Abilene, Kansas. My herd had arrived at that market in bad condition, gaunted from almost constant stampedes at night, and I had gone into camp some distance from town to quiet and recuperate them. That day I was sending home about half my men, had taken them to the depot with our wagon, and intended hauling back a load of supplies to my camp. After seeing the

boys off I hastened about my other business, and near the middle of the afternoon started out of town. The distance to camp was nearly twenty miles, and with a heavy load, principally salt, I knew it would be after nightfall when I reached there. About five miles out of town there was a long, gradual slope to climb, and I had to give the through team their time in pulling to its summit. Near the divide was a small box house, the only one on the road if I remember rightly, and as I was nearing it, four or five dogs ran out and scared my team. I managed to hold them in the road, but they refused to quiet down, kicking, rearing, and plunging in spite of their load; and once as they jerked me forward, I noticed there was a dog or two under the wagon, nipping at their heels. There was a six-shooter lying on the seat beside me, and reaching forward I fired it downward over the end gate of the wagon. By the merest accident I hit a dog, who raised a cry, and the last I saw of him he was spinning like a top and howling like a wolf. I quieted the team as soon as possible, and as I looked back, there was a man and woman pursuing me, the latter in the lead. I had gumption enough to know that they were the owners of the dog, and whipped up the horses in the hope of getting away from them. But the grade and the load were against me, and the next thing I knew, a big, bony woman, with fire in her eye, was reaching for me. The wagon wheel warded her off, and I leaned out of her reach to the far side, yet she kept abreast of me, constantly calling for her husband to hurry up. I was pouring the whip into the horses, fearful lest she would climb into the

wagon, when the hub of the front wheel struck her on the knee, knocking her down. I was then nearing the summit of the divide, and on reaching it, I looked back and saw the big woman giving her husband the pommeling that was intended for me. She was altogether too near me yet, and I shook the lines over the horses, firing a few shots to frighten them, and we tore down the farther slope like a fire engine.

There are two events in my life that this chronicle will not fully record. One of them is my courtship and marriage, and the other my connection with a government contract with the Indian department. Otherwise my life shall be as an open book, not only for my own posterity, but that he who runs may read. It has been a matter of observation with me that a plain man like myself scarcely ever refers to his love affairs. At my time of life, now nearing my allotted span, I have little sympathy with the great mass of fiction which exploits the world-old passion. In no sense of the word am I a well-read man, yet I am conscious of the fact that during my younger days the love story interested me; but when compared with the real thing, the transcript is usually a poor one. My wife and I have now walked up and down the paths of life for over thirty-five years, and, if memory serves me right, neither one of us has ever mentioned the idea of getting a divorce. In youth we shared our crust together; children soon blessed and brightened our humble home, and to-day, surrounded by every comfort that riches can bestow, no achievement in life has given me such great pleasure, I know no music so sweet, as the prattle

of my own grandchildren. Therefore that feature of my life is sacred, and will not be disclosed in these pages.

I would omit entirely mention of the Indian contract, were it not that old friends may read this, my biography, and wonder at the omission. I have no apologies to offer for my connection with the transaction, as its true nature was concealed from me in the beginning, and a scandal would have resulted had I betrayed friends. Then again, before general amnesty was proclaimed I was debarred from bidding on the many rich government contracts for cattle because I had served in the Confederate army. Smarting under this injustice at the time the Indian contract was awarded, I question if I was thoroughly *reconstructed*. Before our disabilities were removed, we ex-Confederates could do all the work, run all the risk, turn in all the cattle in filling the outstanding contracts, but the middleman got the profits. The contract in question was a blanket one, requiring about fifty thousand cows for delivery at some twenty Indian agencies. The use of my name was all that was required of me, as I was the only cowman in the entire ring. My duty was to bid on the contract; the bonds would be furnished by my partners, of which I must have had a dozen. The proposals called for sealed bids, in the usual form, to be in the hands of the Department of the Interior before noon on a certain day, marked so and so, and to be opened at high noon a week later. The contract was a large one, the competition was ample. Several other Texas drovers besides myself had submitted bids; but they stood no show—*I had been*

furnished the figures of every competitor. The ramifications of the ring of which I was the mere figure-head can be readily imagined. I sublet the contract to the next lowest bidder, who delivered the cattle, and we got a rake-off of a clean hundred thousand dollars. Even then there was little in the transaction for me, as it required too many people to handle it, and none of them stood behind the door at the final "divvy." In a single year I have since cleared twenty times what my interest amounted to in that contract and have done honorably by my fellowmen. That was my first, last, and only connection with a transaction that would need deodorizing if one described the details.

But I have seen life, have been witness to its poetry and pathos, have drunk from the cup of sorrow and rejoiced as a strong man to run a race. I have danced all night where wealth and beauty mingled, and again under the stars on a battlefield I have helped carry a stretcher when the wails of the wounded on every hand were like the despairing cries of lost souls. I have seen an old demented man walking the streets of a city, picking up every scrap of paper and scanning it carefully to see if a certain ship had arrived at port—a ship which had been lost at sea over forty years before, and aboard of which were his wife and children. I was once under the necessity of making a payment of twenty-five thousand dollars in silver at an Indian village. There were no means of transportation, and I was forced to carry the specie in on eight pack mules. The distance was nearly two hundred miles, and as we neared the encampment we were under the necessity

of crossing a shallow river. It was summer-time, and as we halted the tired mules to loosen the lash ropes, in order to allow them to drink, a number of Indian children of both sexes, who were bathing in the river, gathered naked on either embankment in bewilderment at such strange intruders. In the innocence of these children of the wild there was no doubt inspiration for a poet; but our mission was a commercial one, and we relashed the mules and hurried into the village with the rent money.

I have never kept a diary. One might wonder that the human mind could contain such a mass of incident and experiences as has been my portion, yet I can remember the day and date of occurrences of fifty years ago. The scoldings of my father, the kind words of an indulgent mother, when not over five years of age, are vivid in my memory as I write to-day. It may seem presumptuous, but I can give the year and date of starting, arrival, and delivery of over one hundred herds of cattle which I drove over the trail as a common hand, foreman, or owner. Yet the warnings of years—the unsteady step, easily embarrassed, love of home and dread of leaving it—bid me hasten these memoirs. Even my old wounds act as a barometer in foretelling the coming of storms, as well as the change of season, from both of which I am comfortably sheltered. But as I look into the inquiring eyes of a circle of grandchildren, all anxious to know my life story, it seems to sweeten the task, and I am encouraged to go on with the work.

CHAPTER II

MY APPRENTICESHIP

During the winter of 1865-66 I corresponded with several of my old comrades in Texas. Beyond a welcome which could not be questioned, little encouragement was, with one exception, offered me among my old friends. It was a period of uncertainty throughout the South, yet a cheerful word reached me from an old soldier crony living some distance west of Fort Worth on the Brazos River. I had great confidence in my former comrade, and he held out a hope, assuring me that if I would come, in case nothing else offered, we could take his ox teams the next winter and bring in a cargo of buffalo robes. The plains to the westward of Fort Griffin, he wrote, were swarming with buffalo, and wages could be made in killing them for their hides. This caught my fancy and I was impatient to start at once; but the healing of my reopened wound was slow, and it was March before I started. My brother gave me a good horse and saddle, twenty-five dollars in gold, and I started through a country unknown to me personally. Southern Missouri had been in sympathy with the Confederacy, and whatever I needed while traveling through that section was mine for the asking. I avoided the Indian Territory until I reached Fort Smith, where I rested several days with an old comrade, who gave me instructions and routed me across the reservation of the

Choctaw Indians, and I reached Paris, Texas, without mishap.

I remember the feeling that I experienced while being ferried across Red River. That watercourse was the northern boundary of Texas, and while crossing it I realized that I was leaving home and friends and entering a country the very name of which to the outside world was a synonym for crime and outlawry. Yet some of as good men as ever it was my pleasure to know came from that State, and undaunted I held a true course for my destination. I was disappointed on seeing Fort Worth, a straggling village on the Trinity River, and, merely halting to feed my mount, passed on. I had a splendid horse and averaged thirty to forty miles a day when traveling, and early in April reached the home of my friend in Paolo Pinto County. The primitive valley of the Brazos was enchanting, and the hospitality of the Edwards ranch was typical of my own Virginia. George Edwards, my crony, was a year my junior, a native of the State, his parents having moved west from Mississippi the year after Texas won her independence from Mexico. The elder Edwards had moved to his present home some fifteen years previous, carrying with him a stock of horses and cattle, which had increased until in 1866 he was regarded as one of the substantial ranchmen in the Brazos valley. The ranch house was a stanch one, built at a time when defense was to be considered as well as comfort, and was surrounded by fine cornfields. The only drawback I could see there was that there was no market for anything, nor was there any money in the country. The consumption of such a ranch made no impression

on the increase of its herds, which grew to maturity with no demand for the surplus.

I soon became impatient to do something. George Edwards had likewise lost four years in the army, and was as restless as myself. He knew the country, but the only employment in sight for us was as teamsters with outfits, freighting government supplies to Fort Griffin. I should have jumped at the chance of driving oxen, for I was anxious to stay in the country, and suggested to George that we ride up to Griffin. But the family interposed, assuring us that there was no occasion for engaging in such menial work, and we folded our arms obediently, or rode the range under the pretense of looking after the cattle. I might as well admit right here that my anxiety to get away from the Edwards ranch was fostered by the presence of several sisters of my former comrade. Miss Gertrude was only four years my junior, a very dangerous age, and in spite of all resolutions to the contrary, I felt myself constantly slipping. Nothing but my poverty and the hopelessness of it kept me from falling desperately in love.

But a temporary relief came during the latter part of May. Reports came down the river that a firm of drovers were putting up a herd of cattle for delivery at Fort Sumner, New Mexico. Their headquarters were at Belknap, a long day's ride above, on the Brazos; and immediately, on receipt of the news, George and I saddled, and started up the river. The elder Edwards was very anxious to sell his beef-cattle and a surplus of cow-horses, and

we were commissioned to offer them to the drovers at prevailing prices. On arriving at Belknap we met the pioneer drover of Texas, Oliver Loving, of the firm of Loving & Goodnight, but were disappointed to learn that the offerings in making up the herd were treble the drover's requirements; neither was there any chance to sell horses. But an application for work met with more favor. Mr. Loving warned us of the nature of the country, the dangers to be encountered, all of which we waived, and were accordingly employed at forty dollars a month in gold. The herd was to start early in June. George Edwards returned home to report, but I was immediately put to work, as the junior member of the firm was then out receiving cattle. They had established a camp, and at the time of our employment were gathering beef steers in Loving's brand and holding the herd as it arrived, so that I was initiated into my duties at once.

I was allowed to retain my horse, provided he did his share of the work. A mule and three range horses were also allotted to me, and I was cautioned about their care. There were a number of saddle mules in the remuda, and Mr. Loving explained that the route was through a dry country, and that experience had taught him that a mule could withstand thirst longer than a horse. I was a new man in the country, and absorbed every word and idea as a sponge does water. With the exception of roping, I made a hand from the start. The outfit treated me courteously, there was no concealment of my past occupation, and I soon had the friendship of every man in the camp. It was some little time before I met

the junior partner, Charlie Goodnight, a strapping young fellow of about thirty, who had served all through the war in the frontier battalion of Texas Rangers. The Comanche Indians had been a constant menace on the western frontier of the State, and during the rebellion had allied themselves with the Federal side, and harassed the settlements along the border. It required a regiment of mounted men to patrol the frontier from Red River to the coast, as the Comanches claimed the whole western half of the State as their hunting grounds.

Early in June the herd began to assume its required numbers. George Edwards returned, and we naturally became bunkies, sharing our blankets and having the same guard on night-herd. The drovers encouraged all the men employed to bring along their firearms, and when we were ready to start the camp looked like an arsenal. I had a six-shooter, and my bunkie brought me a needle-gun from the ranch, so that I felt armed for any emergency. Each of the men had a rifle of some make or other, while a few of them had as many as four pistols,—two in their belts and two in saddle holsters. It looked to me as if this was to be a military expedition, and I began to wonder if I had not had enough war the past few years, but kept quiet. The start was made June 10, 1866, from the Brazos River, in what is now Young County, the herd numbering twenty-two hundred big beeves. A chuck-wagon, heavily loaded with supplies and drawn by six yoke of fine oxen, a remuda of eighty-five saddle horses and mules, together with seventeen men, constituted the outfit. Fort

Sumner lay to the northwest, and I was mildly surprised when the herd bore off to the southwest. This was explained by young Goodnight, who was in charge of the herd, saying that the only route then open or known was on our present course to the Pecos River, and thence up that stream to our destination.

Indian sign was noticed a few days after starting. Goodnight and Loving both read it as easily as if it had been print,—the abandoned camps, the course of arrival and departure, the number of horses, indicating who and what they were, war or hunting parties—everything apparently simple and plain as an alphabet to these plainsmen. Around the camp-fire at night the chronicle of the Comanche tribe for the last thirty years was reviewed, and their overbearing and defiant attitude towards the people of Texas was discussed, not for my benefit, as it was common history. Then for the first time I learned that the Comanches had once mounted ten thousand warriors, had frequently raided the country to the coast, carrying off horses and white children, even dictating their own terms of peace to the republic of Texas. At the last council, called for the purpose of negotiating for the return of captive white children in possession of the Comanches, the assembly had witnessed a dramatic termination. The same indignity had been offered before, and borne by the whites, too weak to resist the numbers of the Comanche tribe. In this latter instance, one of the war chiefs, in spurning the remuneration offered for the return of a certain white girl, haughtily walked into the centre of the council,

where an insult could be seen by all. His act, a disgusting one, was anticipated, as it was not the first time it had been witnessed, when one of the Texans present drew a six-shooter and killed the chief in the act. The hatchet of the Comanche was instantly dug up, and had not been buried at the time we were crossing a country claimed by him as his hunting ground.

Yet these drovers seemed to have no fear of an inferior race. We held our course without a halt, scarcely a day passing without seeing more or less fresh sign of Indians. After crossing the South Fork of the Brazos, we were attacked one morning just at dawn, the favorite hour of the Indian for a surprise. Four men were on herd with the cattle and one near by with the remuda, our night horses all securely tied to the wagon wheels. A feint attack was made on the commissary, but under the leadership of Goodnight a majority of us scrambled into our saddles and rode to the rescue of the remuda, the chief objective of the surprise. Two of the boys from the herd had joined the horse wrangler, and on our arrival all three were wickedly throwing lead at the circling Indians. The remuda was running at the time, and as we cut through between it and the savages we gave them the benefit of our rifles and six-shooter in passing. The shots turned the saddle stock back towards our camp and the mounted braves continued on their course, not willing to try issues with us, although they outnumbered us three to one. A few arrows had imbedded themselves in the ground around camp at the first assault, but once our rifles were able to distinguish an object

clearly, the Indians kept well out of reach. The cattle made a few surges, but once the remuda was safe, there was an abundance of help in holding them, and they quieted down before sunrise. The Comanches had no use for cattle, except to kill and torture them, as they preferred the flesh of the buffalo, and once our saddle stock and the contents of the wagon were denied them, they faded into the dips of the plain.

The journey was resumed without the delay of an hour. Our first brush with the noble red man served a good purpose, as we were doubly vigilant thereafter whenever there was cause to expect an attack. There was an abundance of water, as we followed up the South Fork and its tributaries, passing through Buffalo Gap, which was afterward a well-known landmark on the Texas and Montana cattle trail. Passing over the divide between the waters of the Brazos and Concho, we struck the old Butterfield stage route, running by way of Fort Concho to El Paso, Texas, on the Rio Grande. This stage road was the original Staked Plain, surveyed and located by General John Pope in 1846. The route was originally marked by stakes, until it became a thoroughfare, from which the whole of northwest Texas afterward took its name. There was a ninety-six mile dry drive between the headwaters of the Concho and Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos, and before attempting it we rested a few days. Here Indians made a second attack on us, and although as futile as the first, one of the horse wranglers received an arrow in the shoulder. In attempting to remove it the shaft separated

from the steel arrowhead, leaving the latter imbedded in the lad's shoulder. We were then one hundred and twelve miles distant from Fort Concho, the nearest point where medical relief might be expected. The drovers were alarmed for the man's welfare; it was impossible to hold the herd longer, so the young fellow volunteered to make the ride alone. He was given the best horse in the remuda, and with the falling of darkness started for Fort Concho. I had the pleasure of meeting him afterward, as happy as he was hale and hearty.

The start across the arid stretch was made at noon. Every hoof had been thoroughly watered in advance, and with the heat of summer on us it promised to be an ordeal to man and beast. But Loving had driven it before, and knew fully what was before him as we trailed out under a noonday sun. An evening halt was made for refreshing the inner man, and as soon as darkness settled over us the herd was again started. We were conscious of the presence of Indians, and deceived them by leaving our camp-fire burning, but holding our effects closely together throughout the night, the remuda even mixing with the cattle. When day broke we were fully thirty miles from our noon camp of the day before, yet with the exception of an hour's rest there was never a halt. A second day and night were spent in forging ahead, though it is doubtful if we averaged much over a mile an hour during that time. About fifteen miles out from the Pecos we were due to enter a cañon known as Castle Mountain Gap, some three or four miles long, the exit of which was in sight of the river. We were anxious to

reach the entrance of this cañon before darkness on the third day, as we could then cut the cattle into bunches, the cliffs on either side forming a lane. Our horses were as good as worthless during the third day, but the saddle mules seemed to stand grief nobly, and by dint of ceaseless effort we reached the cañon and turned the cattle loose into it. This was the turning-point in the dry drive. That night two men took half the remuda and went through to Horsehead Crossing, returning with them early the next morning, and we once more had fresh mounts. The herd had been nursed through the cañon during the night, and although it was still twelve miles to the river, I have always believed that those beeves knew that water was at hand. They walked along briskly; instead of the constant moaning, their heads were erect, bawling loud and deep. The oxen drawing the wagon held their chains taut, and the commissary moved forward as if drawn by a fresh team. There was no attempt to hold the herd compactly, and within an hour after starting on our last lap the herd was strung out three miles. The rear was finally abandoned, and when half the distance was covered, the drag cattle to the number of fully five hundred turned out of the trail and struck direct for the river. They had scented the water over five miles, and as far as control was concerned the herd was as good as abandoned, except that the water would hold them.

Horsehead Crossing was named by General Pope. There is a difference of opinion as to the origin of the name, some contending that it was due to the meanderings of the river,

forming a horse's head, and others that the surveying party was surprised by Indians and lost their stock. None of us had slept for three nights, and the feeling of relief on reaching the Pecos, shared alike by man and beast, is indescribable. Unless one has endured such a trial, only a faint idea of its hardships can be fully imagined—the long hours of patient travel at a snail's pace, enveloped by clouds of dust by day, and at night watching every shadow for a lurking savage. I have since slept many a time in the saddle, but in crossing that arid belt the one consuming desire to reach the water ahead benumbed every sense save watchfulness.

All the cattle reached the river before the middle of the afternoon, covering a front of five or six miles. The banks of the Pecos were abrupt, there being fully one hundred and twenty-five feet of deep water in the channel at the stage crossing. Entrance to the ford consisted of a wagon-way, cut through the banks, and the cattle crowded into the river above and below, there being but one exit on either side. Some miles above, the beeves had found several passageways down to the water, but in drifting up and down stream they missed these entrances on returning. A rally was made late that afternoon to rout the cattle out of the river-bed, one half the outfit going above, the remainder working around Horsehead, where the bulk of the herd had watered. I had gone upstream with Goodnight, but before we reached the upper end of the cattle fresh Indian sign was noticed. There was enough broken country along the river to shelter the redskins, but we kept in the open and cautiously examined every brake within

gunshot of an entrance to the river. We succeeded in getting all the animals out of the water before dark, with the exception of one bunch, where the exit would require the use of a mattock before the cattle could climb it, and a few head that had bogged in the quicksand below Horsehead Crossing. There was little danger of a rise in the river, the loose contingent had a dry sand-bar on which to rest, and as the Indians had no use for them there was little danger of their being molested before morning.

We fell back about a mile from the river and camped for the night. Although we were all dead for sleep, extra caution was taken to prevent a surprise, either Goodnight or Loving remaining on guard over the outfit, seeing that the men kept awake on herd and that the guards changed promptly. Charlie Goodnight owned a horse that he contended could scent an Indian five hundred yards, and I have never questioned the statement. He had used him in the Ranger service. The horse by various means would show his uneasiness in the immediate presence of Indians, and once the following summer we moved camp at midnight on account of the warnings of that same horse. We had only a remuda with us at the time, but another outfit encamped with us refused to go, and they lost half their horses from an Indian surprise the next morning and never recovered them. I remember the ridicule which was expressed at our moving camp on the warnings of a horse. "Injun-bit," "Man-afraid-of-his-horses," were some of the terms applied to us,—yet the practical plainsman knew enough to take warning from

his dumb beast. Fear, no doubt, gives horses an unusual sense of smell, and I have known them to detect the presence of a bear, on a favorable wind, at an incredible distance.

The night passed quietly, and early the next morning we rode to recover the remainder of the cattle. An effort was also made to rescue the bogged ones. On approaching the river, we found the beeves still resting quietly on the sand-bar. But we had approached them at an angle, for directly over head and across the river was a brake overgrown with thick brush, a splendid cover in which Indians might be lurking in the hope of ambushing any one who attempted to drive out the beeves. Two men were left with a single mattock to cut out and improve the exit, while the rest of us reconnoitered the thickety motte across the river. Goodnight was leery of the thicket, and suggested firing a few shots into it. We all had long-range guns, the distance from bank to bank was over two hundred yards, and a fusillade of shots was accordingly poured into the motte. To my surprise we were rewarded by seeing fully twenty Indians skulk out of the upper end of the cover. Every man raised his sights and gave them a parting volley, but a mesquite thicket, in which their horses were secreted, soon sheltered them and they fell back into the hills on the western side of the river. With the coast thus cleared, half a dozen of us rode down into the river-bed and drove out the last contingent of about three hundred cattle. Goodnight informed us that those Indians had no doubt been watching us for days, and cautioned us never to give a Comanche an advantage, advice

which I never forgot.

On our return every one of the bogged cattle had been freed except two heavy beeves. These animals were mired above the ford, in rather deep water, and it was simply impossible to release them. The drovers were anxious to cross the river that afternoon, and a final effort was made to rescue the two steers. The oxen were accordingly yoked, and, with all the chain available, were driven into the river and fastened on to the nearest one. Three mounted drivers had charge of the team, and when the word was given six yoke of cattle bowed their necks and threw their weight against the yokes; but the quicksand held the steer in spite of all their efforts. The chain was freed from it, and the oxen were brought around and made fast again, at an angle and where the footing was better for the team. Again the word was given, and as the six yoke swung round, whips and ropes were plied amid a general shouting, and the team brought out the steer, but with a broken neck. There were no regrets, and our attention was at once given to the other steer. The team circled around, every available chain was brought into use, in order to afford the oxen good footing on a straight-away pull with the position in which the beef lay bogged. The word was given for an easy pull, the oxen barely stretched their chains, and were stopped. Goodnight cautioned the drivers that unless the pull was straight ahead another neck would be broken. A second trial was made; the oxen swung and weaved, the chains fairly cried, the beef's head went under water, but the team was again checked in time to keep the steer from

drowning. After a breathing spell for oxen and victim, the call was made for a rush. A driver was placed over every yoke and the word given, and the oxen fell to their knees in the struggle, whips cracked over their backs, ropes were plied by every man in charge, and, amid a din of profanity applied to the struggling cattle, the team fell forward in a general collapse. At first it was thought the chain had parted, but as the latter came out of the water it held in its iron grasp the horns and a portion of the skull of the dying beef. Several of us rode out to the victim, whose brain lay bare, still throbbing and twitching with life. Rather than allow his remains to pollute the river, we made a last pull at an angle, and the dead beef was removed.

We bade Horsehead Crossing farewell that afternoon and camped for the night above Dagger Bend. Our route now lay to the northwest, or up the Pecos River. We were then out twenty-one days from Belknap, and although only half way to our destination, the worst of it was considered over. There was some travel up and down the Pecos valley, the route was even then known as the Chisum trail, and afterward extended as far north as Fort Logan in Colorado and other government posts in Wyoming. This cattle trace should never be confounded with the Chisholm trail, first opened by a half-breed named Jesse Chisholm, which ran from Red River Station on the northern boundary of Texas to various points in Kansas. In cutting across the bends of the Rio Pecos we secured water each day for the herd, although we were frequently under the necessity of sloping

down the banks with mattocks to let the cattle into the river. By this method it often took us three or four hours to water the herd. Until we neared Fort Sumner precaution never relaxed against an Indian surprise. Their sign was seen almost daily, but as there were weaker outfits than ours passing through we escaped any further molestation.

The methods of handling such a herd were a constant surprise to me, as well as the schooling of these plainsmen drovers. Goodnight had come to the plains when a boy of ten, and was a thorough master of their secrets. On one occasion, about midway between Horsehead Crossing and our destination, difficulty was encountered in finding an entrance to the river on account of its abrupt banks. It was late in the day, and in order to insure a quiet night with the cattle water became an urgent necessity. Our young foreman rode ahead and found a dry, sandy creek, its bed fully fifty yards wide, but no water, though the sand was damp. The herd was held back until sunset, when the cattle were turned into the creek bed and held as compactly as possible. The heavy beeves naturally walked back and forth, up and down, the sand just moist enough to aggravate them after a day's travel under a July sun. But the tramping soon agitated the sands, and within half an hour after the herd had entered the dry creek the water arose in pools, and the cattle drank to their hearts' content. As dew falls at night, moisture likewise rises in the earth, and with the twilight hour, the agitation of the sands, and the weight of the cattle, a spring was produced in the desert waste.

Fort Sumner was a six-company post and the agency of the Apaches and Navajos. These two tribes numbered over nine thousand people, and our herd was intended to supply the needs of the military post and these Indians. The contract was held by Patterson & Roberts, eligible by virtue of having cast their fortunes with the victor in "the late unpleasantness," and otherwise fine men. We reached the post on the 20th of July. There was a delay of several days before the cattle were accepted, but all passed the inspection with the exception of about one hundred head. These were cattle which had not recuperated from the dry drive. Some few were footsore or thin in flesh, but taken as a whole the delivery had every earmark of an honest one. Fortunately this remnant was sold a few days later to some Colorado men, and we were foot-loose and free. Even the oxen had gone in on the main delivery, and harnesses were accordingly bought, a light tongue fitted to the wagon, and we were ready to start homeward. Mules were substituted for the oxen, and we averaged forty miles a day returning, almost itching for an Indian attack, as we had supplied ourselves with ammunition from the post sutler. The trip had been a financial success (the government was paying ten cents a pound for beef on foot), friendly relations had been established with the holders of the award, and we hastened home to gather and drive another herd.

CHAPTER III

A SECOND TRIP TO FORT SUMNER

On the return trip we traveled mainly by night. The proceeds from the sale of the herd were in the wagon, and had this fact been known it would have been a tempting prize for either bandits or Indians. After leaving Horsehead Crossing we had the advantage of the dark of the moon, as it was a well-known fact that the Comanches usually choose moonlight nights for their marauding expeditions. Another thing in our favor, both going and returning, was the lightness of travel westward, it having almost ceased during the civil war, though in '66 it showed a slight prospect of resumption. Small bands of Indians were still abroad on horse-stealing forays, but the rich prizes of wagon trains bound for El Paso or Santa Fé no longer tempted the noble red man in force. This was favorable wind to our sail, but these plainsmen drovers predicted that, once traffic westward was resumed, the Comanche and his ally would be about the first ones to know it. The redskins were constantly passing back and forth, to and from their reservation in the Indian Territory, and news travels fast even among savages.

We reached the Brazos River early in August. As the second start was not to be made until the latter part of the following

month, a general settlement was made with the men and all reëngaged for the next trip. I received eighty dollars in gold as my portion, it being the first money I ever earned as a citizen. The past two months were a splendid experience for one going through a formative period, and I had returned feeling that I was once more a man among men. All the uncertainty as to my future had fallen from me, and I began to look forward to the day when I also might be the owner of lands and cattle. There was no good reason why I should not, as the range was as free as it was boundless. There were any quantity of wild cattle in the country awaiting an owner, and a good mount of horses, a rope, and a branding iron were all the capital required to start a brand. I knew the success which my father had made in Virginia before the war and had seen it repeated on a smaller scale by my elder brother in Missouri, but here was a country which discounted both of those in rearing cattle without expense. Under the best reasoning at my command, I had reached the promised land, and henceforth determined to cast my fortunes with Texas.

Rather than remain idle around the Loving headquarters for a month, I returned with George Edwards to his home. Altogether too cordial a welcome was extended us, but I repaid the hospitality of the ranch by relating our experiences of trail and Indian surprise. Miss Gertrude was as charming as ever, but the trip to Sumner and back had cooled my ardor and I behaved myself as an acceptable guest should. The time passed rapidly, and on the last day of the month we returned to Belknap. Active

preparations were in progress for the driving of the second herd, oxen had been secured, and a number of extra fine horses were already added to the saddle stock. The remuda had enjoyed a good month's rest and were in strong working flesh, and within a few days all the boys reported for duty. The senior member of the firm was the owner of a large number of range cattle, and it was the intention to round up and gather as many of his beeves as possible for the coming drive. We should have ample time to do this; by waiting until the latter part of the month for starting, it was believed that few Indians would be encountered, as the time was nearing for their annual buffalo hunt for robes and a supply of winter meat. This was a gala occasion with the tribes which depended on the bison for food and clothing; and as the natural hunting grounds of the Comanches and Kiowas lay south of Red River, the drovers considered that that would be an opportune time to start. The Indians would no doubt confine their operations to the first few tiers of counties in Texas, as the robes and dried meat would tax the carrying capacity of their horses returning, making it an object to kill their supplies as near their winter encampment as possible.

Some twenty days were accordingly spent in gathering beeves along the main Brazos and Clear Fork. Our herd consisted of about a thousand in the straight ranch brand, and after receiving and road-branding five hundred outside cattle we were ready to start. Sixteen men constituted our numbers, the horses were culled down until but five were left to the man, and with the

previous armament the start was made. Never before or since have I enjoyed such an outing as this was until we struck the dry drive on approaching the Pecos River. The absence of the Indians was correctly anticipated, and either their presence elsewhere, preying on the immense buffalo herds, or the drift of the seasons, had driven countless numbers of that animal across our pathway. There were days and days that we were never out of sight of the feeding myriads of these shaggy brutes, and at night they became a menace to our sleeping herd. During the day, when the cattle were strung out in trail formation, we had difficulty in keeping the two species separated, but we shelled the buffalo right and left and moved forward. Frequently, when they occupied the country ahead of us, several men rode forward and scattered them on either hand until a right of way was effected for the cattle to pass. While they remained with us we killed our daily meat from their numbers, and several of the boys secured fine robes. They were very gentle, but when occasion required could give a horse a good race, bouncing along, lacking grace in flight.

Our cook was a negro. One day as we were nearing Buffalo Gap, a number of big bulls, attracted by the covered wagon, approached the commissary, the canvas sheet of which shone like a white flag. The wagon was some distance in the rear, and as the buffalo began to approach it they would scare and circle around, but constantly coming nearer the object of their curiosity. The darky finally became alarmed for fear they would gore his oxen, and unearthed an old Creedmoor rifle which he carried in the

wagon. The gun could be heard for miles, and when the cook opened on the playful denizens of the plain, a number of us hurried back, supposing it was an Indian attack. When within a quarter-mile of the wagon and the situation became clear, we took it more leisurely, but the fusillade never ceased until we rode up and it dawned on the darky's mind that rescue was at hand. He had halted his team, and from a secure position in the front end of the wagon had shot down a dozen buffalo bulls. Pure curiosity and the blood of their comrades had kept them within easy range of the murderous Creedmoor; and the frenzied negro, supposing that his team might be attacked any moment, had mown down a circle of the innocent animals. We charged and drove away the remainder, after which we formed a guard of honor in escorting the commissary until its timid driver overtook the herd.

The last of the buffalo passed out of sight before we reached the headwaters of the Concho. In crossing the dry drive approaching the Pecos we were unusually fortunate. As before, we rested in advance of starting, and on the evening of the second day out several showers fell, cooling the atmosphere until the night was fairly chilly. The rainfall continued all the following day in a gentle mist, and with little or no suffering to man or beast early in the afternoon we entered the cañon known as Castle Mountain Gap, and the dry drive was virtually over. Horsehead Crossing was reached early the next morning, the size of the herd making it possible to hold it compactly, and thus preventing any scattering along that stream. There had been no freshets

in the river since June, and the sandy sediment had solidified, making a safe crossing for both herd and wagon. After the usual rest of a few days, the herd trailed up the Pecos with scarcely an incident worthy of mention. Early in November we halted some distance below Fort Sumner, where we were met by Mr. Loving,—who had gone on to the post in our advance,—with the report that other cattle had just been accepted, and that there was no prospect of an immediate delivery. In fact, the outlook was anything but encouraging, unless we wintered ours and had them ready for the first delivery in the spring.

The herd was accordingly turned back to Bosque Grande on the river, and we went into permanent quarters. There was a splendid winter range all along the Pecos, and we loose-herded the beeves or rode lines in holding them in the different bends of the river, some of which were natural inclosures. There was scarcely any danger of Indian molestation during the winter months, and with the exception of a few severe "northers" which swept down the valley, the cattle did comparatively well. Tents were secured at the post; corn was purchased for our saddle mules; and except during storms little or no privation was experienced during the winter in that southern climate. Wood was plentiful in the grove in which we were encamped, and a huge fireplace was built out of clay and sticks in the end of each tent, assuring us comfort against the elements.

The monotony of existence was frequently broken by the passing of trading caravans, both up and down the river. There

was a fair trade with the interior of Mexico, as well as in various settlements along the Rio Grande and towns in northern New Mexico. When other means of diversion failed we had recourse to Sumner, where a sutler's bar and gambling games flourished. But the most romantic traveler to arrive or pass during the winter was Captain Burleson, late of the Confederacy. As a sportsman the captain was a gem of the first water, carrying with him, besides a herd of nearly a thousand cattle, three race-horses, several baskets of fighting chickens, and a pack of hounds. He had a large Mexican outfit in charge of his cattle, which were in bad condition on their arrival in March, he having drifted about all winter, gambling, racing his horses, and fighting his chickens. The herd represented his winnings. As we had nothing to match, all we could offer was our hospitality. Captain Burleson went into camp below us on the river and remained our neighbor until we rounded up and broke camp in the spring. He had been as far west as El Paso during the winter, and was then drifting north in the hope of finding a market for his herd. We indulged in many hunts, and I found him the true gentleman and sportsman in every sense of the word. As I recall him now, he was a lovable vagabond, and for years afterward stories were told around Fort Sumner of his wonderful nerve as a poker player.

Early in April an opportunity occurred for a delivery of cattle to the post. Ours were the only beeves in sight, those of Captain Burleson not qualifying, and a round-up was made and the herd tendered for inspection. Only eight hundred were received, which

was quite a disappointment to the drovers, as at least ninety per cent of the tender filled every qualification. The motive in receiving the few soon became apparent, when a stranger appeared and offered to buy the remaining seven hundred at a ridiculously low figure. But the drovers had grown suspicious of the contractors and receiving agent, and, declining the offer, went back and bought the herd of Captain Burleson. Then, throwing the two contingents together, and boldly announcing their determination of driving to Colorado, they started the herd out past Fort Sumner with every field-glass in the post leveled on us. The military requirements of Sumner, for its own and Indian use, were well known to the drovers, and a scarcity of beef was certain to occur at that post before other cattle could be bargained for and arrive. My employers had evidently figured out the situation to a nicety, for during the forenoon of the second day out from the fort we were overtaken by the contractors. Of course they threw on the government inspector all the blame for the few cattle received, and offered to buy five or six hundred more out of the herd. But the shoe was on the other foot now, the drovers acting as independently as the proverbial hog on ice. The herd never halted, the contractors followed up, and when we went into camp that evening a trade was closed on one thousand steers at two dollars a head advance over those which were received but a few days before. The oxen were even reserved, and after delivering the beeves at Sumner we continued on northward with the remnant, nearly all of which were the Burleson cattle.

The latter part of April we arrived at the Colorado line. There we were halted by the authorities of that territory, under some act of quarantine against Texas cattle. We went into camp on the nearest water, expecting to prove that our little herd had wintered at Fort Sumner, and were therefore immune from quarantine, when buyers arrived from Trinidad, Colorado. The steers were a mixed lot, running from a yearling to big, rough four and five year olds, and when Goodnight returned from Sumner with a certificate, attested to by every officer of that post, showing that the cattle had wintered north of latitude 34, a trade was closed at once, even the oxen going in at the phenomenal figures of one hundred and fifty dollars a yoke. We delivered the herd near Trinidad, going into that town to outfit before returning. The necessary alterations were made to the wagon, mules were harnessed in, and we started home in gala spirits. In a little over thirty days my employers had more than doubled their money on the Burleson cattle and were naturally jubilant.

The proceeds of the Trinidad sale were carried in the wagon returning, though we had not as yet collected for the second delivery at Sumner. The songs of the birds mixed with our own as we traveled homeward, and the freshness of early summer on the primitive land, as it rolled away in dips and swells, made the trip a delightful outing. Fort Sumner was reached within a week, where we halted a day and then started on, having in the wagon a trifle over fifty thousand dollars in gold and silver. At Sumner two men made application to accompany us back to

Texas, and as they were well armed and mounted, and numbers were an advantage, they were made welcome. Our winter camp at Bosque Grande was passed with but a single glance as we dropped down the Pecos valley at the rate of forty miles a day. Little or no travel was encountered en route, nor was there any sign of Indians until the afternoon of our reaching Horsehead Crossing. While passing Dagger Bend, four miles above the ford, Goodnight and a number of us boys were riding several hundred yards in advance of the wagon, telling stories of old sweethearts. The road made a sudden bend around some sand-hills, and the advance guard had passed out of sight of the rear, when a fresh Indian trail was cut; and as we reined in our mounts to examine the sign, we were fired on. The rifle-shots, followed by a flight of arrows, passed over us, and we took to shelter like flushed quail. I was riding a good saddle horse and bolted off on the opposite side of the road from the shooting; but in the scattering which ensued a number of mules took down the road. One of the two men picked up at the post was a German, whose mule stampeded after his mates, and who received a galling fire from the concealed Indians, the rest of us turning to the nearest shelter. With the exception of this one man, all of us circled back through the mesquite brush and reached the wagon, which had halted. Meanwhile the shooting had attracted the men behind, who charged through the sand-dunes, flanking the Indians, who immediately decamped. Security of the remuda and wagon was a first consideration, and danger of an ambush prevented our men

from following up the redskins. Order was soon restored, when we proceeded, and shortly met the young German coming back up the road, who merely remarked on meeting us, "Dem Injuns shot at me."

The Indians had evidently not been expecting us. From where they turned out and where the attack was made we back-trailed them in the road for nearly a mile. They had simply heard us coming, and, supposing that the advance guard was all there was in the party, had made the attack and were in turn themselves surprised at our numbers. But the warning was henceforth heeded, and on reaching the crossing more Indian sign was detected. Several large parties had evidently crossed the river that morning, and were no doubt at that moment watching us from the surrounding hills. The cañon of Castle Mountain Gap was well adapted for an Indian ambush; and as it was only twelve miles from the ford to its mouth, we halted within a short distance of the entrance, as if encamping for the night. All the horses under saddle were picketed fully a quarter mile from the wagon,—easy marks for poor Lo,—and the remuda was allowed to wander at will, an air of perfect carelessness prevailing in the camp. From the sign which we had seen that day, there was little doubt but there were in the neighborhood of five hundred Indians in the immediate vicinity of Horsehead Crossing, and we did everything we could to create the impression that we were tender-feet. But with the falling of darkness every horse was brought in and we harnessed up and started, leaving the

fire burning to identify our supposed camp. The drovers gave our darky cook instructions, in case of an attack while passing through the Gap, never to halt his team, but push ahead for the plain. About one third of us took the immediate lead of the wagon, the remuda following closely, and the remainder of the men bringing up the rear. The moon was on the wane and would not rise until nearly midnight, and for the first few miles, or until we entered the cañon, there was scarce a sound to disturb the stillness of the night. The sandy road even muffled the noise of the wagon and the tramping of horses; but once we entered that rocky cañon, the rattling of our commissary seemed to summon every Comanche and his ally to come and rob us. There was never a halt, the reverberations of our caravan seeming to reëcho through the Gap, resounding forward and back, until our progress must have been audible at Horsehead Crossing. But the expected never happens, and within an hour we reached the summit of the plain, where the country was open and clear and an attack could have been easily repelled. Four fresh mules had been harnessed in for the night, and striking a free gait, we put twenty miles of that arid stretch behind us before the moon rose. A short halt was made after midnight, for a change of teams and saddle horses, and then we continued our hurried travel until near dawn.

Some indistinct objects in our front caused us to halt. It looked like a caravan, and we hailed it without reply. Several of us dismounted and crept forward, but the only sign of life was a dull, buzzing sound which seemed to issue from an outfit of

parked wagons. The report was laid before the two drovers, who advised that we await the dawn, which was then breaking, as it was possible that the caravan had been captured and robbed by Indians. A number of us circled around to the farther side, and as we again approached the wagons in the uncertain light we hailed again and received in reply a shot, which cut off the upper lobe of one of the boys' ears. We hugged the ground for some little time, until the presence of our outfit was discovered by the lone guardian of the caravan, who welcomed us. He apologized, saying that on awakening he supposed we were Indians, not having heard our previous challenge, and fired on us under the impulse of the moment. He was a well-known trader by the name of "Honey" Allen, and was then on his way to El Paso, having pulled out on the dry stretch about twenty-five miles and sent his oxen back to water. His present cargo consisted of pecans, honey, and a large number of colonies of live bees, the latter having done the buzzing on our first reconnoitre. At his destination, so he informed us, the pecans were worth fifty cents a quart, the honey a dollar a pound, and the bees one hundred dollars a hive. After repairing the damaged ear, we hurried on, finding Allen's oxen lying around the water on our arrival. I met him several years afterward in Denver, Colorado, dressed to kill, barbered, and highly perfumed. He had just sold eighteen hundred two-year-old steers and had twenty-five thousand dollars in the bank. "Son, let me tell you something," said he, as we were taking a drink together; "that Pecos country was a dangerous region to

pick up an honest living in. I'm going back to God's country,—back where there ain't no Injuns."

Yet Allen died in Texas. There was a charm in the frontier that held men captive. I always promised myself to return to Virginia to spend the declining years of my life, but the fulfillment never came. I can now realize how idle was the expectation, having seen others make the attempt and fail. I recall the experience of an old cowman, laboring under a similar delusion, who, after nearly half a century in the Southwest, concluded to return to the scenes of his boyhood. He had made a substantial fortune in cattle, and had fought his way through the vicissitudes of the frontier until success crowned his efforts. A large family had in the mean time grown up around him, and under the pretense of giving his children the advantages of an older and established community he sold his holdings and moved back to his native borough. Within six months he returned to the straggling village which he had left on the plains, bringing the family with him. Shortly afterwards I met him, and anxiously inquired the cause of his return. "Well, Reed," said he, "I can't make you understand near as well as though you had tried it yourself. You see I was a stranger in my native town. The people were all right, I reckon, but I found out that it was me who had changed. I tried to be sociable with them, but honest, Reed, I just couldn't stand it in a country where no one ever asked you to take a drink."

A week was spent in crossing the country between the Concho and Brazos rivers. Not a day passed but Indian trails were cut, all

heading southward, and on a branch of the Clear Fork we nearly ran afoul of an encampment of forty teepees and lean-tos, with several hundred horses in sight. But we never varied our course a fraction, passing within a quarter mile of their camp, apparently indifferent as to whether they showed fight or allowed us to pass in peace. Our bluff had the desired effect; but we made it an object to reach Fort Griffin near midnight before camping. The Comanche and his ally were great respecters, not only of their own physical welfare, but of the Henri and Spencer rifle with which the white man killed the buffalo at the distance of twice the flight of an arrow. When every advantage was in his favor—ambush and surprise—Lo was a warrior bold; otherwise he used discretion.

CHAPTER IV

A FATAL TRIP

Before leaving Fort Sumner an agreement had been entered into between my employers and the contractors for a third herd. The delivery was set for the first week in September, and twenty-five hundred beeves were agreed upon, with a liberal leeway above and below that number in case of accident en route. Accordingly, on our return to Loving's ranch active preparations were begun for the next drive. Extra horses were purchased, several new guns of the most modern make were secured, and the gathering of cattle in Loving's brand began at once, continuing for six weeks. We combed the hills and valleys along the main Brazos, and then started west up the Clear Fork, carrying the beeves with us while gathering. The range was in prime condition, the cattle were fat and indolent, and with the exception of Indian rumors there was not a cloud in the sky.

Our last camp was made a few miles above Fort Griffin. Military protection was not expected, yet our proximity to that post was considered a security from Indian interference, as at times not over half the outfit were with the herd. We had nearly completed our numbers when, one morning early in July, the redskins struck our camp with the violence of a cyclone. The attack occurred, as usual, about half an hour before dawn, and,

to add to the difficulty of the situation, the cattle stampeded with the first shot fired. I was on last guard at the time, and conscious that it was an Indian attack I unslung a new Sharp's rifle and tore away in the lead of the herd. With the rumbling of over two thousand running cattle in my ears, hearing was out of the question, while my sense of sight was rendered useless by the darkness of the morning hour. Yet I had some very distinct visions; not from the herd of frenzied beeves, thundering at my heels, but every shade and shadow in the darkness looked like a pursuing Comanche. Once I leveled my rifle at a shadow, but hesitated, when a flash from a six-shooter revealed the object to be one of our own men. I knew there were four of us with the herd when it stampeded, but if the rest were as badly bewildered as I was, it was dangerous even to approach them. But I had a king's horse under me and trusted my life to him, and he led the run until breaking dawn revealed our identity to each other.

The presence of two other men with the running herd was then discovered. We were fully five miles from camp, and giving our attention to the running cattle we soon turned the lead. The main body of the herd was strung back for a mile, but we fell on the leaders right and left, and soon had them headed back for camp. In the mean time, and with the breaking of day, our trail had been taken up by both drovers and half a dozen men, who overtook us shortly after sun-up. A count was made and we had every hoof. A determined fight had occurred over the remuda and commissary, and three of the Indians' ponies had

been killed, while some thirty arrows had found lodgment in our wagon. There were no casualties in the cow outfit, and if any occurred among the redskins, the wounded or killed were carried away by their comrades before daybreak. All agreed that there were fully one hundred warriors in the attacking party, and as we slowly drifted the cattle back to camp doubt was expressed by the drovers whether it was advisable to drive the herd to its destination in midsummer with the Comanches out on their old hunting grounds.

A report of the attack was sent into Griffin that morning, and a company of cavalry took up the Indian trail, followed it until evening, and returned to the post during the night. Approaching a government station was generally looked upon as an audacious act of the redskins, but the contempt of the Comanche and his ally for citizen and soldier alike was well known on the Texas frontier and excited little comment. Several years later, in broad daylight, they raided the town of Weatherford, untied every horse from the hitching racks, and defiantly rode away with their spoil. But the prevailing spirits in our camp were not the kind to yield to an inferior race, and, true to their obligation to the contractors, they pushed forward preparations to start the herd. Within a week our numbers were completed, two extra men were secured, and on the morning of July 14, 1867, we trailed out up the Clear Fork with a few over twenty-six hundred big beeves. It was the same old route to the southwest, there was a decided lack of enthusiasm over the start, yet never a word of discouragement

escaped the lips of men or employers. I have never been a superstitious man, have never had a premonition of impending danger, always rather felt an enthusiasm in my undertakings, yet that morning when the flag over Fort Griffin faded from our view, I believe there was not a man in the outfit but realized that our journey would be disputed by Indians.

Nor had we long to wait. Near the juncture of Elm Creek with the main Clear Fork we were again attacked at the usual hour in the morning. The camp was the best available, and yet not a good one for defense, as the ground was broken by shallow draws and dry washes. There were about one hundred yards of clear space on three sides of the camp, while on the exposed side, and thirty yards distant, was a slight depression of several feet. Fortunately we had a moment's warning, by several horses snorting and pawing the ground, which caused Goodnight to quietly awake the men sleeping near him, who in turn were arousing the others, when a flight of arrows buried themselves in the ground around us and the war-whoop of the Comanche sounded. Ever cautious, we had studied the situation on encamping, and had tied our horses, cavalry fashion, to a heavy rope stretched from the protected side of the wagon to a high stake driven for the purpose. With the attack the majority of the men flung themselves into their saddles and started to the rescue of the remuda, while three others and myself, detailed in anticipation, ran for the ravine and dropped into it about forty yards above the wagon. We could easily hear the exultations of

the redskins just below us in the shallow gorge, and an enfilade fire was poured into them at short range. Two guns were cutting the grass from underneath the wagon, and, knowing the Indians had crept up the depression on foot, we began a rapid fire from our carbines and six-shooters, which created the impression of a dozen rifles on their flank, and they took to their heels in a headlong rout.

Once the firing ceased, we hailed our men under the wagon and returned to it. Three men were with the commissary, one of whom was a mere boy, who was wounded in the head from an arrow during the first moment of the attack, and was then raving piteously from his sufferings. The darky cook, who was one of the defenders of the wagon, was consoling the boy, so with a parting word of encouragement we swung into our saddles and rode in the direction of dim firing up the creek. The cattle were out of hearing, but the random shooting directed our course, and halting several times, we were finally piloted to the scene of activity. Our hail was met by a shout of welcome, and the next moment we dashed in among our own and reported the repulse of the Indians from the wagon. The remuda was dashing about, hither and yon, a mob of howling savages were circling about, barely within gunshot, while our men rode cautiously, checking and turning the frenzied saddle horses, and never missing a chance of judiciously throwing a little lead. There was no sign of daybreak, and, fearful for the safety of our commissary, we threw a cordon around the remuda and started for camp.

Although there must have been over one hundred Indians in the general attack, we were still masters of the situation, though they followed us until the wagon was reached and the horses secured in a rope corral. A number of us again sought the protection of the ravine, and scattering above and below, we got in some telling shots at short range, when the redskins gave up the struggle and decamped. As they bore off westward on the main Clear Fork their hilarious shoutings could be distinctly heard for miles on the stillness of the morning air.

An inventory of the camp was taken at dawn. The wounded lad received the first attention. The arrowhead had buried itself below and behind the ear, but nippers were applied and the steel point was extracted. The cook washed the wound thoroughly and applied a poultice of meal, which afforded almost instant relief. While horses were being saddled to follow the cattle, I cast my eye over the camp and counted over two hundred arrows within a radius of fifty yards. Two had found lodgment in the bear-skin on which I slept. Dozens were imbedded in the running-gear and box of the wagon, while the stationary flashes from the muzzle of the cook's Creedmoor had concentrated an unusual number of arrows in and around his citadel. The darky had exercised caution and corded the six ox-yokes against the front wheel of the wagon in such a manner as to form a barrier, using the spaces between the spokes as port-holes. As he never varied his position under the wagon, the Indians had aimed at his flash, and during the rather brief fight twenty arrows had buried themselves in that

barricade of ox-yokes.

The trail of the beeves was taken at dawn. This made the fifth stampede of the herd since we started, a very unfortunate thing, for stampeding easily becomes a mania with range cattle. The steers had left the bed-ground in an easterly direction, but finding that they were not pursued, the men had gradually turned them to the right, and at daybreak the herd was near Elm Creek, where it was checked. We rode the circle in a free gallop, the prairie being cut into dust and the trail as easy to follow as a highway. As the herd happened to land on our course, after the usual count the commissary was sent for, and it and the remuda were brought up. With the exception of wearing hobbles, the oxen were always given their freedom at night. This morning one of them was found in a dying condition from an arrow in his stomach. A humane shot had relieved the poor beast, and his mate trailed up to the herd, tied behind the wagon with a rope. There were several odd oxen among the cattle and the vacancy was easily filled. If I am lacking in compassion for my red brother, the lack has been heightened by his fiendish atrocities to dumb animals. I have been witness to the ruin of several wagon trains captured by Indians, have seen their ashes and irons, and even charred human remains, and was scarce moved to pity because of the completeness of the hellish work. Death is merciful and humane when compared to the hamstringing of oxen, gouging out their eyes, severing their ears, cutting deep slashes from shoulder to hip, and leaving the innocent victim to a lingering death. And

when dumb animals are thus mutilated in every conceivable form of torment, as if for the amusement of the imps of the evil one, my compassion for poor Lo ceases.

It was impossible to send the wounded boy back to the settlements, so a comfortable bunk was made for him in the wagon. Late in the evening we resumed our journey, expecting to drive all night, as it was good starlight. Fair progress was made, but towards morning a rainstorm struck us, and the cattle again stampeded. In all my outdoor experience I never saw such pitchy darkness as accompanied that storm; although galloping across a prairie in a blustering rainfall, it required no strain of the imagination to see hills and mountains and forests on every hand. Fourteen men were with the herd, yet it was impossible to work in unison, and when day broke we had less than half the cattle. The lead had been maintained, but in drifting at random with the storm several contingents of beeves had cut off from the main body, supposedly from the rear. When the sun rose, men were dispatched in pairs and trios, the trail of the missing steers was picked up, and by ten o'clock every hoof was in hand or accounted for. I came in with the last contingent and found the camp in an uproar over the supposed desertion of one of the hands. Yankee Bill, a sixteen-year-old boy, and another man were left in charge of the herd when the rest of us struck out to hunt the missing cattle. An hour after sunrise the boy was seen to ride deliberately away from his charge, without cause or excuse, and had not returned. Desertion was the general

supposition. Had he not been mounted on one of the firm's horses the offense might have been overlooked. But the delivery of the herd depended on the saddle stock, and two men were sent on his trail. The rain had freshened the ground, and after trailing the horse for fifteen miles the boy was overtaken while following cattle tracks towards the herd. He had simply fallen asleep in the saddle, and the horse had wandered away. Yankee Bill had made the trip to Sumner with us the fall before, and stood well with his employers, so the incident was forgiven and forgotten.

From Elm Creek to the beginning of the dry drive was one continual struggle with stampeding cattle or warding off Indians. In spite of careful handling, the herd became spoiled, and would run from the howl of a wolf or the snort of a horse. The dark hour before dawn was usually the crucial period, and until the arid belt was reached all hands were aroused at two o'clock in the morning. The start was timed so as to reach the dry drive during the full of the moon, and although it was a test of endurance for man and beast, there was relief in the desert waste—from the lurking savage—which recompensed for its severity. Three sleepless nights were borne without a murmur, and on our reaching Horsehead Crossing and watering the cattle they were turned back on the mesa and freed for the time being. The presence of Indian sign around the ford was the reason for turning loose, but at the round-up the next morning the experiment proved a costly one, as three hundred and sixty-three beeves were missing. The cattle were nervous and feverish through suffering

from thirst, and had they been bedded closely, stampeding would have resulted, the foreman choosing the least of two alternatives in scattering the herd. That night we slept the sleep of exhausted men, and the next morning even awaited the sun on the cattle before throwing them together, giving the Indian thieves full ten hours the start. The stealing of cattle by the Comanches was something unusual, and there was just reason for believing that the present theft was instigated by renegade Mexicans, allies in the war of '36. Three distinct trails left the range around the Crossing, all heading south, each accompanied by fully fifty horsemen. One contingent crossed the Pecos at an Indian trail about twenty-five miles below Horsehead, another still below, while the third continued on down the left bank of the river. Yankee Bill and "Mocho" Wilson, a one-armed man, followed the latter trail, sighting them late in the evening, but keeping well in the open. When the Comanches had satisfied themselves that but two men were following them, small bands of warriors dropped out under cover of the broken country and attempted to gain the rear of our men. Wilson was an old plainsman, and once he saw the hopelessness of recovering the cattle, he and Yankee Bill began a cautious retreat. During the night and when opposite the ford where the first contingent of beeves crossed, they were waylaid, while returning, by the wily redskins. The nickering of a pony warned them of the presence of the enemy, and circling wide, they avoided an ambush, though pursued by the stealthy Comanches. Wilson was mounted on a good horse, while Yankee

Bill rode a mule, and so closely were they pursued, that on reaching the first broken ground Bill turned into a coulee, while Mocho bore off on an angle, firing his six-shooter to attract the enemy after him. Yankee Bill told us afterward how he held the muzzle of his mule for an hour on dismounting, to keep the rascal from bawling after the departing horse. Wilson reached camp after midnight and reported the hopelessness of the situation; but morning came, and with it no Yankee Bill in camp. Half a dozen of us started in search of him, under the leadership of the one-armed plainsman, and an hour afterward Bill was met riding leisurely up the river. When rebuked by his comrade for not coming in under cover of darkness, he retorted, "Hell, man, I wasn't going to run my mule to death just because there were a few Comanches in the country!"

In trailing the missing cattle the day previous, I had accompanied Mr. Loving to the second Indian crossing. The country opposite the ford was broken and brushy, the trail was five or six hours old, and, fearing an ambush, the drover refused to follow them farther. With the return of Yankee Bill safe and sound to camp, all hope of recovering the beeves was abandoned, and we crossed the Pecos and turned up that river. An effort was now made to quiet the herd and bring it back to a normal condition, in order to fit it for delivery. With Indian raids, frenzy in stampeding, and an unavoidable dry drive, the cattle had gaunted like rails. But with an abundance of water and by merely grazing the remainder of the distance, it was believed that the

beeves would recover their old form and be ready for inspection at the end of the month of August. Indian sign was still plentiful, but in smaller bands, and with an unceasing vigilance we wormed our way up the Pecos valley.

When within a day's ride of the post, Mr. Loving took Wilson with him and started in to Fort Sumner. The heat of August on the herd had made recovery slow, but if a two weeks' postponement could be agreed on, it was believed the beeves would qualify. The circumstances were unavoidable; the government had been lenient before; so, hopeful of accomplishing his mission, the senior member of the firm set out on his way. The two men left camp at daybreak, cautioned by Goodnight to cross the river by a well-known trail, keeping in the open, even though it was farther, as a matter of safety. They were well mounted for the trip, and no further concern was given to their welfare until the second morning, when Loving's horse came into camp, whinnying for his mates. There were blood-stains on the saddle, and the story of a man who was cautious for others and careless of himself was easily understood. Conjecture was rife. The presence of the horse admitted of several interpretations. An Indian ambush was the most probable, and a number of men were detailed to ferret out the mystery. We were then seventy miles below Sumner, and with orders to return to the herd at night six of us immediately started. The searching party was divided into squads, one on either side of the Pecos River, but no results were obtained from the first day's hunt. The

herd had moved up fifteen miles during the day, and the next morning the search was resumed, the work beginning where it had ceased the evening before. Late that afternoon and from the east bank, as Goodnight and I were scanning the opposite side of the river, a lone man, almost naked, emerged from a cave across the channel and above us. Had it not been for his missing arm it is doubtful if we should have recognized him, for he seemed demented. We rode opposite and hailed, when he skulked back into his refuge; but we were satisfied that it was Wilson. The other searchers were signaled to, and finding an entrance into the river, we swam it and rode up to the cave. A shout of welcome greeted us, and the next instant Wilson staggered out of the cavern, his eyes filled with tears.

He was in a horrible physical condition, and bewildered. We were an hour getting his story. They had been ambushed by Indians and ran for the brakes of the river, but were compelled to abandon their horses, one of which was captured, the other escaping. Loving was wounded twice, in the wrist and the side, but from the cover gained they had stood off the savages until darkness fell. During the night Loving, unable to walk, believed that he was going to die, and begged Wilson to make his escape, and if possible return to the herd. After making his employer as comfortable as possible, Wilson buried his own rifle, pistols, and knife, and started on his return to the herd. Being one-armed, he had discarded his boots and nearly all his clothing to assist him in swimming the river, which he had done any number of

times, traveling by night and hiding during the day. When found in the cave, his feet were badly swollen, compelling him to travel in the river-bed to protect them from sandburs and thorns. He was taken up behind one of the boys on a horse, and we returned to camp.

Wilson firmly believed that Loving was dead, and described the scene of the fight so clearly that any one familiar with the river would have no difficulty in locating the exact spot. But the next morning as we were nearing the place we met an ambulance in the road, the driver of which reported that Loving had been brought into Sumner by a freight outfit. On receipt of this information Goodnight hurried on to the post, while the rest of us looked over the scene, recovered the buried guns of Wilson, and returned to the herd. Subsequently we learned that the next morning after Wilson left Loving had crawled to the river for a drink, and, looking upstream, saw some one a mile or more distant watering a team. By firing his pistol he attracted attention to himself and so was rescued, the Indians having decamped during the night. To his partner, Mr. Loving corroborated Wilson's story, and rejoiced to know that his comrade had also escaped. Everything that medical science could do was done by the post surgeons for the veteran cowman, but after lingering twenty-one days he died. Wilson and the wounded boy both recovered, the cattle were delivered in two installments, and early in October we started homeward, carrying the embalmed remains of the pioneer drover in a light

conveyance. The trip was uneventful, the traveling was done principally by night, and on the arrival at Loving's frontier home, six hundred miles from Fort Sumner, his remains were laid at rest with Masonic honors.

Over thirty years afterward a claim was made against the government for the cattle lost at Horsehead Crossing. Wilson and I were witnesses before the commissioner sent to take evidence in the case. The hearing was held at a federal court, and after it was over, Wilson, while drinking, accused me of suspecting him of deserting his employer,—a suspicion I had, in fact, entertained at the time we discovered him at the cave. I had never breathed it to a living man, yet it was the truth, slumbering for a generation before finding expression.

CHAPTER V

SUMMER OF '68

The death of Mr. Loving ended my employment in driving cattle to Fort Sumner. The junior member of the firm was anxious to continue the trade then established, but the absence of any protection against the Indians, either state or federal, was hopeless. Texas was suffering from the internal troubles of Reconstruction, the paternal government had small concern for the welfare of a State recently in arms against the Union, and there was little or no hope for protection of life or property under existing conditions. The outfit was accordingly paid off, and I returned with George Edwards to his father's ranch. The past eighteen months had given me a strenuous schooling, but I had emerged on my feet, feeling that once more I was entitled to a place among men. The risk that had been incurred by the drovers acted like a physical stimulant, the outdoor life had hardened me like iron, and I came out of the crucible bright with the hope of youth and buoyant with health and strength.

Meanwhile there had sprung up a small trade in cattle with the North. Baxter Springs and Abilene, both in Kansas, were beginning to be mentioned as possible markets, light drives having gone to those points during the present and previous summers. The elder Edwards had been investigating the new

outlet, and on the return of George and myself was rather enthusiastic over the prospects of a market. No Indian trouble had been experienced on the northern route, and although demand generally was unsatisfactory, the faith of drovers in the future was unshaken. A railroad had recently reached Abilene, stockyards had been built for the accommodation of shippers during the summer of 1861, while a firm of shrewd, far-seeing Yankees made great pretensions of having established a market and meeting-point for buyers and sellers of Texas cattle. The promoters of the scheme had a contract with the railroad, whereby they were to receive a bonus on all cattle shipped from that point, and the Texas drovers were offered every inducement to make Abilene their destination in the future. The unfriendliness of other States against Texas cattle, caused by the ravages of fever imparted by southern to domestic animals, had resulted in quarantine being enforced against all stock from the South. Matters were in an unsettled condition, and less than one per cent of the State's holdings of cattle had found an outside market during the year 1867, though ranchmen in general were hopeful.

I spent the remainder of the month of October at the Edwards ranch. We had returned in time for the fall branding, and George and I both made acceptable hands at the work. I had mastered the art of handling a rope, and while we usually corralled everything, scarcely a day passed but occasion occurred to rope wild cattle out of the brush. Anxiety to learn soon made me an expert, and

before the month ended I had caught and branded for myself over one hundred mavericks. Cattle were so worthless that no one went to the trouble to brand completely; the crumbs were acceptable to me, and, since no one else cared for them and I did, the flotsam and jetsam of the range fell to my brand. Had I been ambitious, double that number could have been easily secured, but we never went off the home range in gathering calves to brand. All the hands on the Edwards ranch, darkies and Mexicans, were constantly throwing into the corrals and pointing out unclaimed cattle, while I threw and indelibly ran the figures "44" on their sides. I was partial to heifers, and when one was sighted there was no brush so thick or animal so wild that it was not "fish" to my rope. In many instances a cow of unknown brand was still followed by her two-year-old, yearling, and present calf. Under the customs of the country, any unbranded animal, one year old or over, was a maverick, and the property of any one who cared to brand the unclaimed stray. Thousands of cattle thus lived to old age, multiplied and increased, died and became food for worms, unowned.

The branding over, I soon grew impatient to be doing something. There would be no movement in cattle before the following spring, and a winter of idleness was not to my liking. Buffalo hunting had lost its charm with me, the contentious savages were jealous of any intrusion on their old hunting grounds, and, having met them on numerous occasions during the past eighteen months, I had no further desire to cultivate their

acquaintance. I still owned my horse, now acclimated, and had money in my purse, and one morning I announced my intention of visiting my other comrades in Texas. Protests were made against my going, and as an incentive to have me remain, the elder Edwards offered to outfit George and me the following spring with a herd of cattle and start us to Kansas. I was anxious for employment, but assuring my host that he could count on my services, I still pleaded my anxiety to see other portions of the State and renew old acquaintances. The herd could not possibly start before the middle of April, so telling my friends that I would be on hand to help gather the cattle, I saddled my horse and took leave of the hospitable ranch.

After a week of hard riding I reached the home of a former comrade on the Colorado River below Austin. A hearty welcome awaited me, but the apparent poverty of the family made my visit rather a brief one. Continuing eastward, my next stop was in Washington County, one of the oldest settled communities in the State. The blight of Reconstruction seemed to have settled over the people like a pall, the frontier having escaped it. But having reached my destination, I was determined to make the best of it. At the house of my next comrade I felt a little more at home, he having married since his return and being naturally of a cheerful disposition. For a year previous to the surrender he and I had wrangled beef for the Confederacy and had been stanch cronies. We had also been in considerable mischief together; and his wife seemed to know me by reputation as well as I knew her

husband. Before the wire edge wore off my visit I was as free with the couple as though they had been my own brother and sister. The fact was all too visible that they were struggling with poverty, though lightened by cheerfulness, and to remain long a guest would have been an imposition; accordingly I began to skirmish for something to do—anything, it mattered not what. The only work in sight was with a carpet-bag dredging company, improving the lower Brazos River, under a contract from the Reconstruction government of the State. My old crony pleaded with me to have nothing to do with the job, offering to share his last crust with me; but then he had not had all the animosities of the war roughed out of him, and I had. I would work for a Federal as soon as any one else, provided he paid me the promised wage, and, giving rein to my impulse, I made application at the dredging headquarters and was put in charge of a squad of negroes.

I was to have sixty dollars a month and board. The company operated a commissary store, a regular "pluck-me" concern, and I shortly understood the incentive in offering me such good wages. All employees were encouraged and expected to draw their pay in supplies, which were sold at treble their actual value from the commissary. I had been raised among negroes, knew how to humor and handle them, the work was easy, and I drifted along with all my faculties alert. Before long I saw that the improvement of the river was the least of the company's concern, the employment of a large number of men being the chief motive, so long as they drew their wages in supplies. True,

we scattered a few lodgments of driftwood; with the aid of a flat-bottomed scow we windlassed up and cut out a number of old snags, felled trees into the river to prevent erosion of its banks, and we built a large number of wind-dams to straighten or change the channel. It seemed to be a blanket contract,—a reward to the faithful,—and permitted of any number of extras which might be charged for at any figures the contractors saw fit to make. At the end of the first month I naturally looked for my wages. Various excuses were made, but I was cordially invited to draw anything needed from the commissary.

A second month passed, during which time the only currency current was in the form of land certificates. The Commonwealth of Texas, on her admission into the Union, retained the control of her lands, over half the entire area of the State being unclaimed at the close of the civil war. The carpet-bag government, then in the saddle, was prodigal to its favorites in bonuses of land to any and all kinds of public improvement. Certificates were issued in the form of scrip calling for sections of the public domain of six hundred and forty acres each, and were current at from three to five cents an acre. The owner of one or more could locate on any of the unoccupied lands of the present State by merely surveying and recording his selection at the county seat. The scrip was bandied about, no one caring for it, and on the termination of my second month I was offered four sections for my services up to date, provided I would remain longer in the company's employ. I knew the value of land in the older States, in fact, already had my

eye on some splendid valleys on the Clear Fork, and accepted the offered certificates. The idea found a firm lodgment in my mind, and I traded one of my six-shooters even for a section of scrip, and won several more in card games. I had learned to play poker in the army,—knew the rudiments of the game at least,—and before the middle of March I was the possessor of certificates calling for thirty sections of land. As the time was drawing near for my return to Palo Pinto County, I severed my connection with the dredging company and returned to the home of my old comrade. I had left my horse with him, and under the pretense of paying for feeding the animal well for the return trip, had slipped my crony a small gold piece several times during the winter. He ridiculed me over my land scrip, but I was satisfied, and after spending a day with the couple I started on my return.

Evidences of spring were to be seen on every hand. My ride northward was a race with the season, but I outrode the coming grass, the budding trees, the first flowers, and the mating birds, and reached the Edwards ranch on the last day of March. Any number of cattle had already been tendered in making up the herd, over half the saddle horses necessary were in hand or promised, and they were only awaiting my return. I had no idea what the requirements of the Kansas market were, and no one else seemed to know, but it was finally decided to drive a mixed herd of twenty-five hundred by way of experiment. The promoters of the Abilene market had flooded Texas with advertising matter during the winter, urging that only choice

cattle should be driven, yet the information was of little value where local customs classified all live stock. A beef was a beef, whether he weighed eight or twelve hundred pounds, a cow was a cow when over three years old, and so on to the end of the chapter. From a purely selfish motive of wanting strong cattle for the trip, I suggested that nothing under three-year-olds should be used in making up the herd, a preference to be given matured beeves. George Edwards also favored the idea, and as our experience in trailing cattle carried some little weight, orders were given to gather nothing that had not age, flesh, and strength for the journey.

I was to have fifty dollars a month and furnish my own mount. Horses were cheap, but I wanted good ones, and after skirmishing about I secured four to my liking in return for one hundred dollars in gold. I still had some money left from my wages in driving cattle to Fort Sumner, and I began looking about for oxen in which to invest the remainder. Having little, I must be very careful and make my investment in something staple; and remembering the fine prices current in Colorado the spring before for work cattle, I offered to supply the oxen for the commissary. My proposal was accepted, and accordingly I began making inquiry for wagon stock. Finally I heard of a freight outfit in the adjoining county east, the owner of which had died the winter before, the administrator offering his effects for sale. I lost no time in seeing the oxen and hunting up their custodian, who proved to be a frontier surveyor at the county seat. There were

two teams of six yoke each, fine cattle, and I had hopes of being able to buy six or eight oxen. But the surveyor insisted on selling both teams, offering to credit me on any balance if I could give him security. I had never mentioned my land scrip to any one, and wishing to see if it had any value, I produced and tendered the certificates to the surveyor. He looked them over, made a computation, and informed me that they were worth in his county about five cents an acre, or nearly one thousand dollars. He also offered to accept them as security, assuring me that he could use some of them in locating lands for settlers. But it was not my idea to sell the land scrip, and a trade was easily effected on the twenty-four oxen, yokes, and chains, I paying what money I could spare and leaving the certificates for security on the balance. As I look back over an eventful life, I remember no special time in which I felt quite as rich as the evening that I drove into the Edwards ranch with twelve yoke of oxen chained together in one team. The darkies and Mexicans gathered about, even the family, to admire the big fellows, and I remember a thrill which shivered through me as Miss Gertrude passed down the column, kindly patting each near ox as though she felt a personal interest in my possessions.

We waited for good grass before beginning the gathering. Half a dozen round-ups on the home range would be all that was necessary in completing the numbers allotted to the Edwards ranch. Three other cowmen were going to turn in a thousand head and furnish and mount a man each, there being no occasion to

road-brand, as every one knew the ranch, brands which would go to make up the herd. An outfit of twelve men was considered sufficient, as it was an open prairie country and through civilized tribes between Texas and Kansas. All the darkies and Mexicans from the home ranch who could be spared were to be taken along, making it necessary to hire only three outside men. The drive was looked upon as an experiment, there being no outlay of money, even the meal and bacon which went into the commissary being supplied from the Edwards household. The country contributed the horses and cattle, and if the project paid out, well and good; if not there was small loss, as they were worth nothing at home. The 20th of April was set for starting. Three days' work on the home range and we had two thousand cattle under herd, consisting of dry or barren cows and steers three years old or over, fully half the latter being heavy beeves. We culled back and trimmed our allotment down to sixteen hundred, and when the outside contingents were thrown in we had a few over twenty-eight hundred cattle in the herd. A Mexican was placed in charge of the remuda, a darky, with three yoke of oxen, looked after the commissary, and with ten mounted men around the herd we started.

Five and six horses were allotted to the man, each one had one or two six-shooters, while half a dozen rifles of different makes were carried in the wagon. The herd moved northward by easy marches, open country being followed until we reached Red River, where we had the misfortune to lose George Edwards

from sickness. He was the foreman from whom all took orders. While crossing into the Chickasaw Nation it was necessary to swim the cattle. We cut them into small bunches, and in fording and refording a whole afternoon was spent in the water. Towards evening our foreman was rendered useless from a chill, followed by fever during the night. The next morning he was worse, and as it was necessary to move the herd out to open country, Edwards took an old negro with him and went back to a ranch on the Texas side. Several days afterward the darky overtook us with the word that his master would be unable to accompany the cattle, and that I was to take the herd through to Abilene. The negro remained with us, and at the first opportunity I picked up another man. Within a week we encountered a country trail, bearing slightly northwest, over which herds had recently passed. This trace led us into another, which followed up the south side of the Washita River, and two weeks after reaching the Nation we entered what afterward became famous as the Chisholm trail. The Chickasaw was one of the civilized tribes; its members had intermarried with the whites until their identity as Indians was almost lost. They owned fine homes and farms in the Washita valley, were hospitable to strangers, and where the aboriginal blood was properly diluted the women were strikingly beautiful. In this same valley, fifteen years afterward, I saw a herd of one thousand and seven head of corn-fed cattle. The grain was delivered at feed-lots at ten cents a bushel, and the beeves had then been on full feed for nine months. There were no railroads

in the country and the only outlet for the surplus corn was to feed it to cattle and drive them to some shipping-point in Kansas.

Compared with the route to Fort Sumner, the northern one was a paradise. No day passed but there was an abundance of water, while the grass simply carpeted the country. We merely soldiered along, crossing what was then one of the No-man's lands and the Cherokee Outlet, never sighting another herd until after entering Kansas. We amused ourselves like urchins out for a holiday, the country was full of all kinds of game, and our darky cook was kept busy frying venison and roasting turkeys. A calf was born on the trail, the mother of which was quite gentle, and we broke her for a milk cow, while "Bull," the youngster, became a great pet. A cow-skin was slung under the wagon for carrying wood and heavy cooking utensils, and the calf was given a berth in the hammock until he was able to follow. But when Bull became older he hung around the wagon like a dog, preferring the company of the outfit to that of his own mother. He soon learned to eat cold biscuit and corn-pone, and would hang around at meal-time, ready for the scraps. We always had to notice where the calf lay down to sleep, as he was a black rascal, and the men were liable to stumble over him while changing guards during the night. He never could be prevailed on to walk with his mother, but followed the wagon or rode in his hammock, and was always happy as a lark when the recipient of the outfit's attentions. We sometimes secured as much as two gallons of milk a day from the cow, but it was pitiful to watch her futile efforts at coaxing

her offspring away from the wagon.

We passed to the west of the town of Wichita and reached our destination early in June. There I found several letters awaiting me, with instructions to dispose of the herd or to report what was the prospect of effecting a sale. We camped about five miles from Abilene, and before I could post myself on cattle values half a dozen buyers had looked the herd over. Men were in the market anxious for beef cattle with which to fill army and Indian contracts, feeders from Eastern States, shippers and speculators galore, cowmen looking for she stuff with which to start new ranches, while scarcely a day passed but inquiry was made by settlers for oxen with which to break prairie. A dozen herds had arrived ahead of us, the market had fairly opened, and, once I got the drift of current prices, I was as busy as a farmer getting ready to cut his buckwheat. Every yoke of oxen was sold within a week, one ranchman took all the cows, an army contractor took one thousand of the largest beeves, feeders from Iowa took the younger steers, and within six weeks after arriving I did not have a hoof left. In the mean time I kept an account of each sale, brands and numbers, in order to render a statement to the owners of the cattle. As fast as the money was received I sent it home by drafts, except the proceeds from the oxen, which was a private matter. I bought and sold two whole remudas of horses on speculation, clearing fifteen of the best ones and three hundred dollars on the transactions.

The facilities for handling cattle at Abilene were not

completed until late in the season of '67, yet twenty-five thousand cattle found a market there that summer and fall. The drive of the present year would triple that number, and every one seemed pleased with future prospects. The town took on an air of frontier prosperity; saloons and gambling and dance halls multiplied, and every legitimate line of business flourished like a green bay tree. I made the acquaintance of every drover and was generally looked upon as an extra good salesman, the secret being in our cattle, which were choice. For instance, Northern buyers could see three dollars a head difference in three-year-old steers, but with the average Texan the age classified them all alike. My boyhood knowledge of cattle had taught me the difference, but in range dealing it was impossible to apply the principle. I made many warm friends among both buyers and drovers, bringing them together and effecting sales, and it was really a matter of regret that I had to leave before the season was over. I loved the atmosphere of dicker and traffic, had made one of the largest sales of the season with our beeves, and was leaving, firm in the conviction that I had overlooked no feature of the market of future value.

After selling the oxen we broke some of our saddle stock to harness, altered the wagon tongue for horses, and started across the country for home, taking our full remuda with us. Where I had gone up the trail with five horses, I was going back with twenty; some of the oxen I had sold at treble their original cost, while none of them failed to double my money—on credit.

Taking it all in all, I had never seen such good times and made money as easily. On the back track we followed the trail, but instead of going down the Washita as we had come, we followed the Chisholm trail to the Texas boundary, crossing at what was afterward known as Red River Station. From there home was an easy matter, and after an absence of four months and five days the outfit rode into the Edwards ranch with a flourish.

CHAPTER VI

SOWING WILD OATS

The results from driving cattle north were a surprise to every one. My employers were delighted with their experiment, the general expense of handling the herd not exceeding fifty cents a head. The enterprise had netted over fifty-two thousand dollars, the saddle horses had returned in good condition, while due credit was given me in the general management. From my sale accounts I made out a statement, and once my expenses were approved it was an easy matter to apportion each owner his just dues in the season's drive. This over I was free to go my way. The only incident of moment in the final settlement was the waggish contention of one of the owners, who expressed amazement that I ever remitted any funds or returned, roguishly admitting that no one expected it. Then suddenly, pretending to have discovered the governing motive, he summoned Miss Gertrude, and embarrassed her with a profusion of thanks, averring that she alone had saved him from a loss of four hundred beeves.

The next move was to redeem my land scrip. The surveyor was anxious to buy a portion of it, but I was too rich to part with even a single section. During our conversation, however, it developed that he held his commission from the State, and when I mentioned my intention of locating land, he made application to

do the surveying. The fact that I expected to make my locations in another county made no difference to a free-lance official, and accordingly we came to an agreement. The apple of my eye was a valley on the Clear Fork, above its juncture with the main Brazos, and from maps in the surveyor's office I was able to point out the locality where I expected to make my locations. He proved an obliging official and gave me all the routine details, and an appointment was made with him to report a week later at the Edwards ranch. A wagon and cook would be necessary, chain carriers and flagmen must be taken along, and I began skirmishing about for an outfit. The three hired men who had been up the trail with me were still in the country, and I engaged them and secured a cook. George Edwards loaned me a wagon and two yoke of oxen, even going along himself for company. The commissary was outfitted for a month's stay, and a day in advance of the expected arrival of the surveyor the outfit was started up the Brazos. Each of the men had one or more private horses, and taking all of mine along, we had a remuda of thirty odd saddle horses. George and I remained behind, and on the arrival of the surveyor we rode by way of Palo Pinto, the county seat, to which all unorganized territory to the west was attached for legal purposes. Our chief motive in passing the town was to see if there were any lands located near the juncture of the Clear Fork with the mother stream, and thus secure an established corner from which to begin our survey. But the records showed no land taken up around the confluence of these watercourses,

making it necessary to establish a corner.

Under the old customs, handed down from the Spanish to the Texans, corners were always established from natural landmarks. The union of creeks arid rivers, mounds, lagoons, outcropping of rock, in fact anything unchangeable and established by nature, were used as a point of commencement. In the locating of Spanish land grants a century and a half previous, sand-dunes were frequently used, and when these old concessions became of value and were surveyed, some of the corners had shifted a mile or more by the action of the wind and seasons on the sand-hills. Accordingly, on overtaking our outfit we headed for the juncture of the Brazos and Clear Fork, reaching our destination the second day. The first thing was to establish a corner or commencement point. Some heavy timber grew around the confluence, so, selecting an old patriarch pin oak between the two streams, we notched the tree and ran a line to low water at the juncture of the two rivers. Other witness trees were established and notched, lines were run at angles to the banks of either stream, and a hole was dug two feet deep between the roots of the pin oak, a stake set therein, and the excavation filled with charcoal and covered. A legal corner or commencement point was thus established; but as the land that I coveted lay some distance up the Clear Fork, it was necessary first to run due south six miles and establish a corner, and thence run west the same distance and locate another one.

The thirty sections of land scrip would entitle me to a block

of ground five by six miles in extent, and I concluded to locate the bulk of it on the south side of the Clear Fork. A permanent camp was now established, the actual work of locating the land requiring about ten days, when the surveyor and Edwards set out on their return. They were to touch at the county seat, record the established corners and file my locations, leaving the other boys and me behind. It was my intention to build a corral and possibly a cabin on the land, having no idea that we would remain more than a few weeks longer. Timber was plentiful, and, selecting a site well out on the prairie, we began the corral. It was no easy task; palisades were cut twelve feet long and out of durable woods, and the gate-posts were fourteen inches in diameter at the small end, requiring both yoke of oxen to draw them to the chosen site. The latter were cut two feet longer than the palisades, the extra length being inserted in the ground, giving them a stability to carry the bars with which the gateway was closed. Ten days were spent in cutting and drawing timber, some of the larger palisades being split in two so as to enable five men to load them on the wagon. The digging of the narrow trench, five feet deep, in which the palisades were set upright, was a sore trial; but the ground was sandy, and by dint of perseverance it was accomplished. Instead of a few weeks, over a month was spent on the corral, but when it was finished it would hold a thousand stampeding cattle through the stormiest night that ever blew.

After finishing the corral we hunted a week. The country was alive with game of all kinds, even an occasional buffalo, while

wild and unbranded cattle were seen daily. None of the men seemed anxious to leave the valley, but the commissary had to be replenished, so two of us made the trip to Belknap with a pack horse, returning the next day with meal, sugar, and coffee. A cabin was begun and completed in ten days, a crude but stable affair, with clapboard roof, clay floor, and ample fireplace. It was now late in September, and as the usual branding season was at hand, cow-hunting outfits might be expected to pass down the valley. The advantage of corrals would naturally make my place headquarters for cowmen, and we accordingly settled down until the branding season was over. But the abundance of mavericks and wild cattle was so tempting that we had three hundred under herd when the first cow-hunting outfits arrived. At one lake on what is now known as South Prairie, in a single moonlight night, we roped and tied down forty head, the next morning finding thirty of them unbranded and therefore unowned. All tame cattle would naturally water in the daytime, and anything coming in at night fell a victim to our ropes. A wooden toggle was fastened with rawhide to its neck, so it would trail between its forelegs, to prevent running, when the wild maverick was freed and allowed to enter the herd. After a week or ten days, if an animal showed any disposition to quiet down, it was again thrown, branded, and the toggle removed. We corralled the little herd every night, adding to it daily, scouting far and wide for unowned or wild cattle. But when other outfits came up or down the valley of the Clear Fork we joined forces with them, tendering our corrals for

branding purposes, our rake-off being the mavericks and eligible strays. Many a fine quarter of beef was left at our cabin by passing ranchmen, and when the gathering ended we had a few over five hundred cattle for our time and trouble.

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