



"JIM THE COWBOY, SLIGHTLY LEANING FORWARD IN HIS TEXAN SADDLE, WITH HIS WIDE HAT-BRIM FLAPPING BACK, TWISTED AND TURNED HIS FOAM-FLECKED STEED THROUGH THE PRESS OF SEMI-WILD CATTLE."

A TENDERFOOT" IN TEXAS.

Written and Illustrated by STANLEY L. WOOD.



AFTER leaving Kansas city and shaking hands with the man in the pointed shoes and the assistant state marshal—a gentleman with a pleasant manner and a big revolver, whose “seeing me off” suggested in a comic manner that I was being shown out of the State by armed force—after leaving Kansas city, I say, life rapidly became made up of a series of reverberations and railroad joltings, twenty minutes’ stoppages for refreshments, dining-car experiences, of falling to sleep to the accompaniment of arguments on free silver versus gold, of railroad-book agents, and alas! of dust and cinders galore.

Hours slipped by along with the receding landscape until one lost all account of time. All I knew was Texas and cowboy life lay before me, and that the immediate cigar was good.

However, the best of things—cigars even—must end at last. So, late one evening, when dining-cars had lost their charm and a longing to stretch one’s legs had become a wild craving, the train rolled up to what appeared in the semi-darkness to be a collection of cigar-boxes lying around on a desert. May Texas forgive me, but this was a town; nay, a city!

I alighted on the platform of the wooden station among a crowd of hats, under which were men. I think this is a better definition than a crowd of men in large hats, because the general effect anyhow was—hat first, man afterwards.

No one greeted me; the man I had hoped to meet was not there. And the train left.

I asked one of the hats for him.

“Fightin’ fire!” was the reply.

Had he said “Fightin’ fire-water” it would have been the same to me. He was not there, but miles away, as I afterwards learned, far out on the cattle ranges with his full muster of cowboys, trying every means known to cope with the terrible onrush of the ranchman’s great enemy—a prairie fire.

I found out there was an hotel, so-called; and a sun-burnt youth with high-heeled shoes and a cowboy hat having taken my bag, I followed him in the darkness through

the sand for a few yards or so to the hotel—a two-storied wood affair. That hotel! Well, there, as I’m not going to write up “Hotels of Texas Cattle Towns,” I will not say much about it. Was it rough? There are various degrees of roughness the world over; but looking back now, it seems to me I had many good times there, and memory returns with very pleasant recollections of the inmates. The free, big-hatted, long-legged cattle-men, with their great friendly hearts and large nature; the host or “boss,” the Chinese cook, the ex-cowboy waiter, and all of you—you’ll never be forgotten by the Englishman you treated so well.

Everyone I discovered who ate at the hotel, or “loafed” (apparently without any aim in life save to lounge into the nearest saloon or bar) along the one short street of this prairie town, was, or had been at some time in his life, connected with cattle. Picturesque cowboys on their still more picturesque ponies dashed into the town to pull up with a jerk at the saloon doors, or else cantered lightly down the street. Brown-faced men sat before the stores, with chairs tipped back and cigars in their teeth, discussing the one all-important subject—Cattle. At every meal the price, the breed, and the condition of Texas stock was discussed; and I hadn’t been fifteen minutes in the town before I was asked if I was out there to buy cattle.

When I denied the soft impeachment and appeared in my true colours as an artist, I was at first apparently regarded as a mild form of lunatic, and then endured as a played-out notion from the effete East, not to be reckoned with such a genius as the local wagon and sign painter. Still the inhabitants treated me well, and one morning I learnt that the man I wanted was “in town.”

This was a ranch manager, and when I met him and stated to him that I wished to play at cowboy for a few weeks, I honestly think he regarded me as an escaped idiot. There was no trace of mirth in his sallow face as he inquired if I possessed a gun (i.e. a revolver), also a saddle. My few belongings being stowed into his two-horse buggy (by the way, my belongings consisted in the main of a sketch-book, a flannel shirt, tobacco, cigars, a pair of socks, and a bottle of whisky), we started across the prairie for the home ranch.

That forty-mile drive across those sun-dried prairies, with the warm pure wind blowing in great gusts and the white dust whirling past, was a ride not likely to be easily forgotten. Jack-rabbits rose at times from



"Indian"

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nearly under the horses' feet, and "loped" a few yards away, crouching under the mosquito bushes. Prairie dogs sat up on their haunches and with nose in the air regarded us from their raised burrows. Away in the distance the mirage played tricks with the sand-dotted plain, and fooled one into the notion of cool lakes and groves of trees; and ever and anon a bunch of antelopes rushed along (always out of range), or a skulking coyote wolf shamled like a vagabond away to the low sand-hills. Many-coloured lizards raced us on the dusty track, and locusts flashed by with much to-do and fuss. Were I a poet I would like to burst into song over those great wild prairies; but as I am not I'll stick to plain facts.

By two o'clock we had reached "home"—a wooden building with a veranda running round it, and a tame deer doing the same thing. A sun-tanned gentleman in a silk shirt (albeit the worse for wear and dirt), and with his legs encased in long kid boots finished off with solid silver spurs, grinned us a welcome by exhibiting the finest set of white teeth I have ever seen.

This was the under foreman or "wagon boss." Big, strong, and brown, quiet and gentle as a woman, but with nerves and muscles like steel, I shall always retain a memory of Jim as I saw him one day pressing his horse at full speed through the

immense herd of cattle to "cut out" a certain steer that was wanted. Well, we went in to dinner, and there it was left to me to introduce myself. I informed the twelve brown men of muscle and sinew that I was S. L. Wood, lived in London, and was the greenest kind of a "tenderfoot" (or greenhorn), and would they please pass the steak.

With a good deal of jovial profanity and grins they told me who they were, or rather one of the cowboys called out to me their various names and nicknames in much the same manner that they cut out cattle and stamp a brand on them.

"That's Red Jack, 'cause he's got red hair!" "That's the Kid, 'cause he's biggest!" "That's Indian, 'cause he's like one!" And so on.

My informant also went on to state that this "outfit" wasn't much on etiquette, and if I wanted anything I was to howl. Being carefully brought up, I replied that if I saw what I wanted I'd yell for it and I wouldn't be happy till I got it; and ere we had fairly started on the rough but clean food with appetites well sharpened with the prairie air, we were all on the best of terms with jokes and unrestrained laughter.

On either side of a long rough table was placed an ordinary school bench, on which we sat, and of food there was plenty, beef being the staple article, and we had it in various forms. Jugs of milk, hot bread, and stewed "canned goods" constituted the rest of the meal.

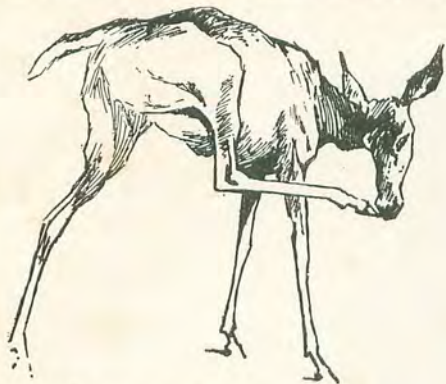
That afternoon I "loafed" on the porch in the shadow, chatting to Jim the wagon boss, and trying to sketch Billy, the tame deer and universal pet of the ranch. Away out over hundreds and hundreds of acres of wild rolling



"BILLY."

prairie the pitiless afternoon sun beat down, and even the lizards seemed to pant under the shade of the "skete" bushes. Jim's eyes would close for a minute, and from the interior of the house I heard the manager snoring like a foghorn. Billy, the deer,

became so friendly that he started licking my face (not an unmixed blessing by any means), but soon he too dozed in the grateful



"BILLY" MAKES BOTH ENDS MEET.

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shadow of the porch. It seemed to me, lazily puffing at a well-seasoned pipe, and without the formality of a white shirt or boots that had to be blacked, that London was indeed very, very far off, and that "Dr. Nikola" and the WINDSOR MAGAZINE must have, as regards illustrations, passed through somebody else's life and certainly never entered into that of the sun-tanned tramp smoking a pipe on a Texas ranch house porch.

Well, I fear I should have become an aerial architect, and heaven only knows how many stories I should have added to my castle had not two little dots appeared on the horizon. Approaching and at last arriving in good view, they turned out to be a rider with a spare horse. Now this was an incident at last! It was an afternoon caller come to stop as long as he pleased.

The clink, clink of crockery within the house and the lengthening of the shadows on the plains announced the coming of the evening meal—a repetition of the former in every respect saving the presence of the stranger who, in the intervals between apparently trying to swallow his knife, jerked out items of what appeared to be interesting news. He had seen three dead steers in pasture No. 4. Billy Howland was sick in town; the doctor guessed he'd peg out. Jack Somebody else had gone down to El Paso on a "tare," and got put in prison at Juarez by the Mexican authorities, which my newly-made friends considered absurd of the said Jack to allow, "seeing as how he allers carried a gun."

"Wal, must be goin'," the stranger at

length remarked; and with a drawled out "So long" he mounted and rode away.

That evening the boys, after milking the few cows set apart for that purpose, lay around on the grass, each puffing a cigar (which I had brought as peace offerings), and spoke of the morrow's work, and joked until the spirit moved them to seek their blankets and cowboy dreamland.

Now, *à propos* of the afternoon caller, you must know that in Texas it is the good frontier custom never to turn the stranger from the door, unless of course he takes an undue liking to the householder's property, when he runs a risk of taking with him a conical leaden souvenir. But "hospitality" is a great word in Texas all through the State, and no mere idle word at that, but a thing to be lived up to. This particular ranch-house has as its owner a millionaire, and is considered with its female cook, four bed-



"RED JACK."

rooms, and a back yard of 350,000 acres, "way up" in the social scale, as ranches go.

Perhaps therefore it is not surprising if a weary herdsman, on his way across the plains,



Stanley L. Wood
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A BUCKING BRONCHO.

sensible of the fact that they make good biscuits here, "drops in to tea" more than is really necessary. But then hot biscuits and butter, with coffee and steak, are always preferable to stale bread and alkali water *neaf*.

"Dog on them pesky loafers, anyhow!" would exclaim the leather-faced lady who did the cooking, and who, by the way, was related to Red Jack. "Every son of a gun of a cow-puncher who's within twenty miles o' this yere ranch has got to kem a-ridin' in to supper. All mighty fine, but this ain't no *ho-tel*. Guess I'll hang out a sign and jist charge 'em two bits (twenty-five cents) for a meal, anyhow. Most on 'em got the appetite o' a coyote too," and she would gaze out with wrath in her eye over the distant ranges, possibly looking out for the next hungry caller.

Poor soul! Hers was no "picnic" of a life, as they say out West. Yet although she was ugly and dried up to the consistency of tanned buckskin, and passed her days in frying meat and making biscuit, she did her duty well away out there in that great lone land, and she was good to this tenderfoot too.

She had a girl with her—at least, I think it was a girl—built like a boy of fourteen, but with girl's hair and an old face and steady, unflinching gray eyes, like most Western people. She—we will call her she—inquired of me once in all sincerity if Italy was in London; and one Sunday, without being asked, proceeded to read me, with many hitches and spelling of words, a cheerful poem of a drunkard's death, and all his children starving and his invalid wife going raving mad.

But to return. That first evening Red Jack, acting as chambermaid, took me into the house, and after removing five Winchester rifles from a bed, spread a couple of blankets on it, wished me good-night, and strolled away to his own rest, the moonlight touching his immense clinking spurs as he walked.

I must tell you that the room in which I was left had a blanket hanging in front of each window, consequently it was pretty dark. I forget just what it was I wanted from my valise, after laying awake an hour or so, but I *thought* I knew where the bag was, and started for it. Of course I couldn't find it, and ere I was fully aware of it I found myself in total darkness, far from home, in a strange ranch-house, wading about in a tangle of ropes and cartridge-belts, and hit-

ting my bare toes against rifle-stocks, or treading on their cold barrels, with a jump that brought wild thoughts of rattlesnakes up before me.

"Tenderfoot," forsooth! Why, after five minutes, during which I danced and shuffled about over loose cartridges, and old spurs (which are sharp), belts, lassoes, and guns, my feet *were* tender, and I groped and limped back to my blanket bed—without having found the said bag by the way—muttering many strange words I had picked up on my way West. When I awoke next morning, of course I found nothing like the number of rifles and ropes I had allowed for during the night, but one is apt to make miscalculations at times.

After our five o'clock breakfast next morning we all trooped down to the corral. This was a large, fenced-in enclosure, in which already a score or more of semi-wild horses were moving, having been "rounded up" and driven in half an hour or so previous.

And then began what to me is always a sight to live for—cowboys catching the mounts. The "boys" took their lassoes (or ropes, as they are always termed out West), and whirling the ever-widening circle above their heads, flung it out and caught the horses they wanted. Sometimes, as the noose settled around the animal's neck, the horse would make a plunging rush for liberty, but the cowboy would brace back, rope behind him, and literally sitting down on it, would settle his heels in the dust, and in the end of a very few seconds show the horse who was the master.

The saddling was not always an easy job. These prairie horses, called bronchos in the West, have in the main pretty "mean" tempers, and the saddling *and* riding of a vicious buck-jumper or "pitcher" is a "Wild West Show" worth seeing. Granted the big Texan saddle is firmly "cinched" (or girthed) on the animal's back, and the cowboy gets the reins in place and one foot in the stirrup, *that* is only the beginning. Up goes the broncho on his hind legs, runs back, curves his spine into an arch enough to burst any ordinary girth, and during these manœuvres the cow-puncher, if he can, flings his right leg over and settles into the saddle. Then the wild plunging, bucking, and lashing out of fore and hind feet. Buck, buck, buck! The audience yells, whoops, and cheers all the time with laughter-choked advice to the rider to "stay with him!" and not "to go to leather!" that is, hold on by the saddle-

horn. Then the big Spanish spurs come into action, and any horse less tough than a broncho would have a pretty bad time of it. Eventually he will sober down, and do his day's work with only now and again a vicious buck or plunge, just, as they say there, to "show there's no ill-feeling."

Well, by now nearly all the boys had caught their mounts, and so interested had I become in watching the various antics of men and animals that I awoke suddenly to a very grim fact when the manager cheerfully invited me to "pick my broncho."

Ay, pick my broncho! I had my choice of picking out any one of those long-tailed bits of equine viciousness and getting bucked off; no one would hinder me, and if I wanted to break my neck, *here* indeed was my right royal chance. There was grim humour, too much of it in fact, but no pity in the face of each and every one of those loose-limbed centaurs; and three stepped forward instantly to rope for me any horse I might venture to point out.

I looked at the mob of wild-eyed bronchos pacing round the corral, looked, and being merely a struggling artist and no rough rider or "broncho buster," am not ashamed to state I looked with all my eyes to see if in that crowd I could discern any well-defined saddle galls, marking the fact that the owner had been ridden *well*. Presently a gray caught my attention—surely there were the marks I wanted—wanted oh so badly, for with the wicked eyes of those cow-punchers upon me I felt much like the late Maid of Orleans when she saw her persecutors getting the firewood ready, only alas! I lacked her faith. In a twinkling (too soon, in fact, for I would have liked to postpone matters, to have written to my mother, made a will, and fixed other little arrangements in case of my non-return to England) the rope whizzed through the air, and Red Jack led up my "fiery untamed."

The mare was bony, also she had red eyes. And that's about all I had time to notice, for the saddle was cinched on in a jiffy.

"You'd better stick yer finger in her eye as you mount," quietly drawled the man in the buckskin gauntlets, "'cause she's a daisy to buck."

"Jist git on and hang by yer spurs and make her waltz a bit," suggested another youth, and I mounted.

She did nothing terrible despite the fact that I kept my fingers from both her eyes, and I found that going on the safe plan of

choosing a horse with "saddle marks" on it had raised me a peg in Red Jack's opinion, and so with mute thanks to the red-eyed mare for not bucking, away we all galloped in the bright morning sunshine.

Again, as on the preceding day, the jack-rabbits jumped away into the low bushes; and again the prairie dogs sat on their burrows with elevated noses. The boys grew frisky with the freedom of the pure air, and the fresh animals beneath them. Comic spirits among them fell to sharply pulling hairs out of the tail of a comrade's horse, thereby causing the animal to buck; and my friend in the buckskin gauntlets burst into song as we cantered along the cattle trail. There was pure boyish joy in that fellow's heart, one could hear, and he had to show it somehow. The tune was "Sweet Marie." But, bless him! he thought no more of the actual words which he was whooping out over those unbounded plains, than a man thinks of the agony he is causing to others when he practices the violin with the window open. No; that great lump of muscle and bone was happy, and he let the jack-rabbits and the distant coyote wolves and all of us know it. It was contagious; and we all felt happy too—just a set of great children going out for fun. Trouble and "the blues" come quickly enough in this life, and incidents like this when one feels on good terms with oneself and all creation, and wants to run around and shake hands with the universe, are times worth looking back upon. There are a few thousand miles now between that long-legged Texan and this tenderfoot; but may the gods send that Western rider and his mates as happy hearts each time they "gallop o'er the lea," as on that bright May morning, when the jingle of spurs and the champing of bits formed a fitting accompaniment to the song which caused the prairie dogs to pause in their burrowing, and startled the hawks in their sedate wheeling in the blue overhead!

But though the boys joked and played with their horses, causing many strange evolutions to take place on the bronchos' part, they were "out on a business trip," and from a hardly audible word drawled out by the manager the spurs would go back with a quick movement, and away would dart a rider at breakneck speed after a distant bunch of cattle—for we were out to "round up" and to overlook some stock, and to separate some for market purposes. The herd by now moving before us increased every few minutes by bunches driven in, and soon we



ONLY THE BEGINNING.

halted before a large cattle-trough. In this section of the country creeks and streams are conspicuous by their absence; and as cattle must drink, water is pumped up through the sandy soil by means of a species of windmill, which I trust and firmly believe brought the almighty dollar in abundance to the inventor. The water being pumped up from a narrow well, flows through a pipe into a raised open tank from six to ten feet deep, and from thence again through a pipe into the cattle-trough. Surrounding the tank is the inevitable barbed wire fence to protect it from the cattle. Well, having moved together what the manager considered a sufficient number of cattle, the boys commenced to bunch them,—that is, keep them together in one great herd,—while Jim the waggon boss started to “cut out” those required to be set apart for market purposes.

And what a picture he made! Here were horse and man moving together as one and the same creature. Now Jim, seen sitting in the ranch-house porch, or Jim lazily scraping tunes from an old fiddle, was a totally different person to Jim the cowboy, slightly leaning forward in his Texan saddle, with his wide hat-brim flapping back, with his silver spurs touching his horse’s barrel, twisting and turning his foam-flecked steed through the press of semi-wild cattle at full speed, with his clear eye fixed on the one animal he was after. And Jim’s horse too—a large white-legged dun, springing like a buck beneath the spur, wheeling at a touch, disappearing for a moment into the sea of tossing horns, always to emerge again out of the rising dust, following closely at the rear of the “cut-out” steer!

The impression made on my mind during that morning’s “round-up” was a series of pictures of the finest and most active movements of horses and men and cattle. And it was catching too, and almost unconsciously I found myself in company with some sun-tanned son of the “Lone Star State,” racing after and turning back into the main herd some animal that was trying to break away. After a sufficient number of cattle had been cut out, the rest were allowed to spread, and we started back with the market-bunch.

At dinner that day Red Jack informed me he was “a-going to grease windmills” that afternoon. I didn’t know quite so much of that pastime as I do now, so I went with him. I hadn’t backed a horse for some time before that morning’s ride with the cattle, and we had been in the saddle since six, so after about ten miles or so I grew intensely

interested as to the time it would take to get to windmill number one. “Oh, merely a matter of about another ten miles,” said Jack, “and thar’s a coyote; let’s run him.” Away we went. Old Blood Eye, my steed, seemed to know what was wanted, and the way she tucked her legs up and bolted after that wolf, dodging or jumping the prairie dog holes, was a caution. That wolf was apparently just *strolling*, with a yard and a half of tongue hanging out of his jaws; but in a second he, as Mark Twain describes it, “made a hole in the atmosphere” far away out of range of any revolver that is made.

At last we got to the windmills, and Red Jack took his oil-can, climbed up, and oiled the works. I remember this well, because the wind was blowing, and what oil the mill lost I got! Again we mounted, and again crossed miles of sand and “skeet” bush to the next barbed-wire surrounded prairie pasture, talking of many things, and occasionally varying the monotony of the ride with a breakneck race or a chase after the wily and seductive coyote. Three windmills were oiled that afternoon, and when the job was finished we turned to a small clump of trees, the only grove I ever saw on those arid Texas plains, and lay down in the grateful shade. I won’t say I was tired—that’s not the word for it. I lit my pipe, and Jack told of incidents “by flood and field.” Of Indian outbreaks, when the Navajoes “jumped out on the war path”; of encounters with these gentry, and their ghastly work; of settlers butchered and homesteads burnt; of “big fights,” as he called them; of Mexican horse-racing; and of other things both wild and tame, for Jack knew his South-West well and had “seen things.” We discussed civilisation, which Jack voted a fraud (though, personally, I could have done with a soft padded chair just then), and of the various subjects that men speak of whenever they are thrown together, be it in a city club-room or away out in the wilds.

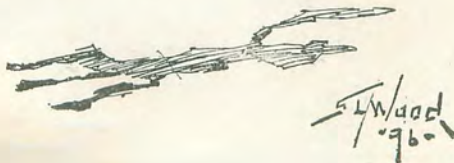
There was little romance about this red-haired son of the West. He didn’t tell me any love stories, like the cowboy in the novel generally does when he is alone with a tenderfoot chum; there was no “only one girl in the world for me” touch to add sentiment to the conversation. In fact, he expressed in a pretty outspoken way a good all-round unblushing devotion to the whole of the gentler sex. And all the while the Western wind blew, as it only *can* blow, on

those Texan plains, and the hawks wheeled overhead, and the two horses swished at the flies with their long tails and wondered at the smoke-wreaths curling from an English pipe.

We rode home in the glow of sunset, *personally* very happy, very tired, very hungry, and very, very stiff. The branding at this ranch had taken place the week before my arrival, and the days slipped by with incidents very similar to those already mentioned. One morning, hearing that a cattle owner was "in town" and short-handed for someone to help at the branding of his stock, I forthwith stuffed my few belongings into my bag, bade farewell to my cowboy

friends who turned out *en masse* to say good-bye, again climbed into the two-horse buggy, and started back to the settlement.

This time I offered my very feeble services as amateur cow-puncher, artist, or "friend, philosopher, and"—but no, *not* "guide"—to a man whose name I didn't even know, for Experience, with a big E, and for "fun"—the fun of drinking alkali water and eating fat underdone bacon mixed with dust, of sleeping in the sand to a lullaby of prairie wolf howls; the fun of galloping after cattle and punching the brand on colts and calves. And taking it all together, it was fun, real fun too!



A "TENDERFOOT" IN TEXAS.

Written and Illustrated by STANLEY L. WOOD.

II.—CATTLE-BRANDING.



HE stars shone out over stretches of boundless sand and low bushes, and the great moon rose with startling quickness as we drove leisurely along the dusty track.

We were "taking it easy," sitting in a rough Western farm wagon drawn by two bony grays. When I say *we*, I mean the boss of the "half-circle cross outfit" and my humble self, because "niggers don't count" in the South-West, and we had one on board.

But in my eyes, at least, Bill did count, for he was the best "man of colour" I have yet met—of which more anon; furthermore, he was the cook. Earlier in the night—for we were travelling at night to avoid the heat of the day—I had surprised the boss by presenting Bill with a cigar.

Bill showed two rows of gleaming ivories, and chuckled out profuse thanks. The

boss turned and looked at him in much the same way that a master looks at his pet dog when a stranger gives it a biscuit.

"Say, Bill, you hain't often had a white man give yer a see-gar, heh?" said he. At which Bill grinned the more.

And yet Bill's position was a higher one than my own at that particular time, although I ranked above him in what artists might call the "colour scheme." He was cook to the outfit; a position of trust and to be treated with due respect, although this outfit bade fair not to be a very extensive affair. In addition he was to work as a roper, brander, and anything else that the boss happened to want. This was Bill's birth-right; he was a nigger, and he could work all the time if he wanted to, for he was in

the cow country, where niggers are scarce, and where it is not healthy for a man of colour to "put on frills" and talk of "dirty low down white trash"—not even in his sleep. Bill was a good nigger and always busy; when he was awake he was working, and when asleep he was always trying to snore himself awake again.

As to my humble self, I was to do any work among the cattle the boss might require, and return to civilisation with the notion I'd had a good time. Also I could "sling my hook" any time I wanted without damaging in any way the financial position of the said boss. As we sat smoking in that old wagon, with the great theatrical moon shining down upon us, we talked of many things. Strange as it may seem, the boss showed an intense interest in the doings of the members of our royal family, particularly as regards the Prince of Wales.

Of necessity the South-West is a "horsy" country, and news of Persimmon's winning the Derby had drifted down to this remote part of Texas. So it came about that our conversation that night, as the two bony grays stamped up the alkali dust of that Western trail, was not so much of cattle or coyotes as of royal racers, Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle.

My knowledge of the home life of our royal family is limited, *strictly limited* in fact. And I fear that most of the stories I could remember as likely to interest a ranchman were more picturesque than truthful.

He however informed me he had long wanted to see "Wales"; that "Wales" and he were about the same sort, and if he ever "struck things fat" in the cattle biz, why he would go over to that little island and find "Wales." He should say, "Why, now, 'Wales,' come right *along* and have a good time with *me*! And, sirree, you *bet* he would! S—a—y! Why, 'Wales' and me is jist the same sort, you bet yer!—Git up thar!"

And the whip struck the bony side of the near gray, making him leap forward, and the boss grinned an expansive grin at the big moon—probably thinking of the good



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times to come, and how he and the Heir-apparent would, as he said, "Jist paint things *red!*"—that is if he ever "struck it fat" in the cattle business.

If memory serves me right, I believe there was a gentleman named Alnaschar in the "Arabian Nights," who dealt in glass and had day dreams of "a good time coming," which so "got on his nerves" that without thinking he kicked over his stock-in-trade, which rapidly brought him down from a seventh heaven to a very sordid earth. The story goes on to say "he be-moaned his fate," it doesn't say he *swore*.

And so too the alighting from the wagon in the small hours brought our modern Alnaschar down from his prospective romps with the heir to England's throne to the fact that the windmill was broken, and that the night air was laden with an odour not at all like the scents of Araby, but distinctly of *cattle*—*dead* cattle.

We inspected the windmill, saw that the pumping-rod must be repaired, noted bunches of wild-eyed cattle, spectral in the moonlight, then—well then the boss did what Alnaschar would have done had he run his glass business in a cow-town—he *swore*—Bill called it "cursing."

But I prefer to stick to the plain statement—that *the boss swore*. Now I have

spent midnight hours in a cavalry guard-room listening to the troopers' yarns when the language—well, is just a "wee bit" coarse. I have heard the festive navy "calling to his mate" when he felt aggrieved; I have noted the chief officer of a cattle boat "talk straight" to a gang of evil-eyed cattle hands; and once, just once, I was startled at

what an artist friend said when his wet Academy picture fell face downwards on a dusty floor. But never have I stood so spell-bound, so astonished, and feeling so utterly feeble and small as when the boss launched his wrath at that mill.

Not only was it the windmill which ought not to have broken, but, from what my dazed senses could gather, the windmill ought never to have been there! The cattle ought never to want water! They ought never to have been cattle!

Well, the boss continued to say naughty words, and Bill and I got the blankets out. We dumped out of the wagon our saddles and other articles,

and though the world on that great gray plain was good, and the tobacco smokable, what I wanted just then was sleep. So, kicking off my boots, I rolled into my blankets by the side of the still blaspheming boss, and with the cool night wind blowing, and away in the distance the faint howl of a prairie wolf for a lullaby, I dropped off into a sound sleep.



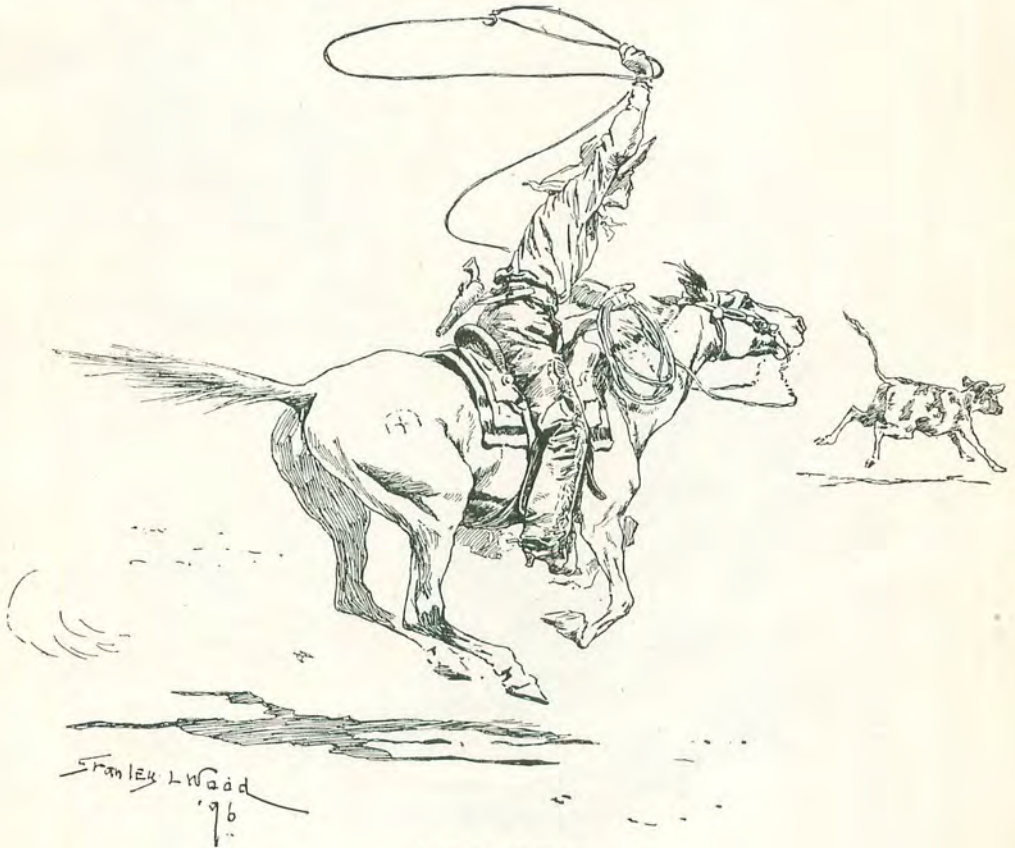
A ROPER IN THE CORRAL.

Stanley L. Wood
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I awoke in the chilly dawn to find Bill boiling coffee made from very stagnant alkali water, and to see the boss reflectively picking sand grits out of his head. He informed me he had had a bad night, mental visions of "Wales" and windmills, of "them marble halls" and dying cattle had haunted him in his prairie slumbers. But fat fried bacon, hot heavy bread and sandy coffee soon had their cheering effect upon him, and he grew jovial over the delights of a cattle-owner's existence. He had no house to worry about.

Bill mounted and rode away into that great nothingness of prairie, to emerge in three hours' time driving before him a spare broncho, my mount for the time. And then at daybreak the branding began.

To describe, detail for detail, every incident that occurred would not only take up more space than is worth giving to such an amateur penman as my humble self, but would probably also tire out the reader—and may the gods grant that the WINDSOR may never do that!



A ROPER AT WORK.

When he was out on the ranges he lived by his wagon, other times he lived "in town," sleeping on a camp bed among the saddles and lariats in his brother's harness store. When we had finished our not too elegant feed the boss lit his pipe and remarked there was nothing to be done until the windmill was mended. So all that blazing day we toiled at that mill, mending it at last by evening. There was joy in the eyes of those wild cattle as the water gushed out once again into the troughs.

But a general idea of a branding is this: Imagine a great enclosure surrounded by a high rail fence, the fire burning in one corner, the branding irons ready. Imagine this enclosure periodically filled with calves, say two or three hundred at a time. Within this "corral" sun-tanned men are seizing, throwing and holding down calves, while the punchers stamp the brand with red-hot irons on flank or side. The bellowing and roaring of the calves; the laughing, yelling, and swearing of the "boys"; the smell of

the singeing hair, and the heavy choking clouds of sandy dust hanging over all make up a strange semi-savage picture. Noise! Why, it's a pandemonium!

A man must keep his wits too. I saw a "boy" have his face from mouth to ear laid open by a kick from a calf, and all the sympathy he got was a general laugh. He ought not to have been so clumsy. This part of the work—branding the calves—is

widening circles until—whiz! and with a sudden tightening of the reins the broncho wheels and the four legs of the calf go up into the air together. With the lasso round his neck he goes bumping, grunting and bawling, towed along in the wake of the flying steed until the "calf wrestlers" seize him, and a big brand is burnt on him before he is really fully aware of it.

Poor little chap! It's a case of the



SEEING AS HOW HE'S A TEXAN."

looked upon more as fun, as it is generally now done on foot in the branding corral.

And yet in getting the calves into the corral one gets all the work one wants. I have far more respect now for the running abilities of a Texan calf than formerly. But in roping and branding in the open, what a picture it is to see the plain alive with the cowboys on their wiry bronchos! One is at full gallop in the rear of some bovine youngster, the ever-ready rope whirling in

inevitable, "seeing as how he's a Texan." He should thank the "Lone Star," or whatever star calves are in the habit of thanking, that it does not last long, otherwise the process of being hauled along at the end of a forty-foot rope over not too smooth ground might upset the living capacity of even a four-footed child of the plains.

With the steers the work really requires more nerve, but it is done in much the same manner. The cow-puncher catches him on

the run, either round the horns, neck, or hind legs, tows him up to the fire, another "boy" getting him round with his rope, bracing back to make the ropes taut, thereby pulling the steer out on his side; then the brand is put on. But it was always at the horse brandings that I was most interested. A band of unbroken, long-tailed, wild-eyed bronchos, of all colours and sizes, all pacing swiftly round the corral, the ground shaking with the thunder of their unshod hoofs, the dust rising and settling in fine powdery clouds over all.

In the centre of the enclosure stand the ropers. And see those horses as the rope whirls in the air—how they bunch together and make a wild rush to avoid the loop they know so well is meant for one or all in time! Occasionally they make a dash for the closed gate or high fence; and I have seen it once fly in splinters beneath their combined weight.

A man as a rule stands at the gate, on the inside of the enclosure, rope in hand, to keep the wild mob from rushing it by main force, for the swinging lassoes of the ropers send the herd crazy. As I have been the man at the gate I can speak from experience. The general effect is that of a lot of great staring eyes, blood-red extended nostrils, flying manes and an indescribable noise of hoofs bearing down straight upon you. Even if you call yourself an artist you *don't* drop your rope and take out your sketch book and sit down and make careful fore-shortened studies of semi-distracted bronchos. Oh no, you yell and whirl your rope, and lose your hat and get hot, and feel very little, and wonder with a strange awe how big and various and nightmarish those gee-gees have grown. And as you scare them by you the rush of their hoofs feels far too near. Perhaps you get a swipe over the face with one of those long tails, and it stings, and you get a pound and a half of sand grit down your throat, and as much again in your ears and eyes and shirt. You wait for a lull in this living nightmare to make a break for a tin pail of lukewarm alkali water, and you drink about a quart, and it tastes better than champagne.

Well, there goes the rope! Zip! over the mob; settles with a vicious jerk, with an iron-muscled cowboy at one end and a pitching, bucking collection of hair, hoofs and staring eyes at the other. Two twists round the stout "snubbing post" in the centre of the corral, and no broncho in Texas can break away. The tightening rope draws

the neck as small as a man's arm, and the four legs are straightened out as stiff as iron.

Roper number two playfully flicks a leg with his noose, and of course the broncho is so angry with this liberty that up comes his foot, possibly to strike, and when it comes down—why, it has stepped clear into the loop, drawn tight; then another leg is caught, a hind one, and with the slackening of the neck rope the animal thinks he can rear, which he can't. But he can make a trial trip, which he does, and goes flop on his side with his legs pulled together by one rope ending in the hands of a grinning cowboy.

Now before the broncho can do more than squeal he feels a something that stings his flank, and he'd plunge if he could. But there's a gentleman in mail-bag leather overalls, trimmed with buckskin fringe, who is sitting on his head, and when this gentleman gets up the rope is off and the broncho rises, free, but carrying his own advertisement to the effect that he belongs to the "Cross-Loop," the "Bar-Cross," "Two Star," or any other ranch, as the case may be.

As a horse is branded with his owner's stamp, and as he may sometimes change hands a good deal, his flanks and shoulders get in time to carry as many souvenirs of former meetings as a lovers' trysting-tree. I remember one gray which was so branded you could have taught a child his alphabet off his near shoulder. He looked quite like a walking magazine article. Then, as he had little diamonds and crosses, star and garter burns all over him as well, he looked like an *illustrated* magazine article. This seemed hard on him, at least from a realist's point of view. But I didn't pity him at all, because when he wasn't trying to roll with me he wanted to play at buck jumping, and I don't like that game, it makes you think too rapidly!

Now I believe I hinted I was going to mention Bill the cook again, and here is where my respect for that "coon" comes in. The horses and steers and calves were all duly branded, and the outfit was thinking of disbanding. Well, we had run out of grub, all but coffee, and my time to return to "town" was drawing near, the boss had again started to blank things—this time calves and niggers. The blanking this time was all due to the fact that one calf wouldn't come in and say, "See here now, you fellows, just punch me with a hot iron, as me and mammy want to be getting away with the rest of 'em!" No,

the calf did nothing of the kind, but he apparently just laughed at us and then disappeared.

The boss consigned Bill and all Bill's immediate relations to a far more sultry climate than—well, even Arizona—and it's hot *there*! This I heard as my mare and I started after the spotted demon, and adown the western wind floated the tail-end of something about "blanked calves" too.

I didn't stop—that calf had to be taken. Away out on the miraged-fringed sand-

calf was going like an intoxicated express train away out on the plain, but thundering in his rear, with the fatal rope well out, was that black philosopher and—well, there he got him; and not only got him but dismounted too, the horse standing still all the while. Bill tied that calf's legs, lit a small fire of "skeet" bush, heated his iron and "punched the brand" single handed—that is if you don't count the horse! And not only that, but he finished by pretty nearly starting a regular prairie fire too!



THE MAN AT THE GATE: HOW IT FEELS.

plain I saw Mr. Calf calmly punching his mother's ribs with his shiny nose, and I went for him. Away to my right I saw Bill cantering along on his wicked gray horse, a small branding-iron between his leg and stirrup leather, a rope coil in his hand, and confidence and perspiration shining on his black face.

The calf doubled and dodged me; evil thoughts of infanticide filled my heart. I would gladly have slaughtered that long-tailed youngster before his wild-eyed mother. By the time I had wheeled my steed the

That was a good enough ending to my cattle experience; so mounting a fresh horse, and not stopping to eat—for the very trivial fact that there was nothing more eatable left than coffee-beans—I turned my broncho's head in the direction of the settlement. Thus I started off "on the dead run" over those prairies, on the way back to civilisation, coffee without sand, water *with* soap, and now and then a long glass with ice in it—and something else.

How I was received in town would not be of much interest to the reader, but will always

remain in this "tenderfoot" heart and bind him pretty close to the "Lone Star State." Rough, big, self-reliant, ready to risk their life at a woman's word, are the Texan boys. Yet after all, in spite of what the books tell us, is there really in their everyday life so very much romance and sentiment? Romance and sentiment become very hard facts when they become incidents in daily life.

Away out on the borders of Arizona, up to a cattle camp at early dawn rode a wounded man, the blood trickling from his leg as he bent nearly double over his saddle horn. Indians; a stolen horse; a little counter-stealing on the white man's part; a running fight; three bullets in his leg. But to me the only really semi-romantic Captain Mayne Reid incident about it was that the cook wanted to try and get those bullets out with a fork!

A long room with a bar running the whole length; a crowd of big-hatted men, all armed, drinking; a table at which a party are having a quiet little game of cards—so quiet that if there's any cheating found out there'll be a coroner's inquest in the morning.

A border settlement and an alarm that the Indians are "out"; a general collecting of cowboys in town—for what? To come in for mutual protection? Oh no! For cartridges and another gun or two, and then out to meet the Indian raider on his own ground.

These and similar memories mingle with the smoke from my pipe as I look back to that perhaps too brief border experience in the land

Where the sun sinks through leagues of arid sky,
Where the sun dies o'er leagues of arid plain,

and where the free-hearted Western rider lives, works and dies. It's a great land; and if it breeds great faults it also breeds great virtues and good, kind, manly hearts.

In the near future there may be no cow-puncher left, and the boys of the next generation will only read about the man on the horse with the big spurs and the "gun." Therefore, as a mere illustrator, I am thankful to have seen those living pictures of plains life, if even from the point of view of a "tenderfoot" in Texas.



Here's my hand
For friendship's sake

Catch on!
Shake!!!