

BETWEEN THE CHORES

JOTTINGS BY A RANCHER :: Written for The Western Home Monthly by S. P.

INTRODUCTORY.

Ranching does not necessarily denote "bubolic barbarism." Who drives fat oxen need not himself be either fat or bovine. But "facile est descensus averno," and avernus in the case of a rancher consists of the backwaters of intellectual sluggishness and slipshodness whereby culture gets choked. There is a form of activity in backwaters which may be mistaken for progress; but it is the restless, aimless, swirling round and round of petty flotsam quite apart from and out of touch with the main stream of the world's social and intellectual life. Culture as well as capital is required by the rancher; the latter to build up and make a success of his herd of cattle; the former to build up and make a success of himself. Rural Canada at the present moment needs both badly.

Many things made a deep impression on my mind when I was new to

my own chores. Had I possessed as little culture as capital these chores would probably have dragged me down to their level, making mine the life of a hind. But culture has raised the chores; I placed them in the category of life's duties; and thus ennobled, my chores afford me as much pleasure in the performance and as much satisfaction when performed as in former days and in "another place." I spent my working hours in a different kind of daily tasks. "The mind is its own place," wrote Milton; and one can make a heaven of what, without culture, might be but drudgery. Shall I tell you my secret? It is simply this: I use my chores as a medium of mental work. Some are better media than others for the purpose. For instance, collecting the forenoon's harvest of eggs requires one to be "all there;" it is too delicate a task to permit of the mind's being engaged on the problem, say, of pro-

The Rancho Farmer.

In a rash moment before starting for Canada I gave a promise to an unfortunate editor of a Bengal magazine that I would send him "something from the land of my adoption." I contributed, in fulfillment of my promise, a short article entitled "The Ethics of Ranching." The concluding paragraph ran as follows: In this short "study" there is not space for more, though much more could be written. Like one of Sir Noel Paton's masterpieces, while the tout ensemble forms one grand picture, each detail is a picture by itself, full of interest and beauty, novelty and picturesqueness, and over-worked city men in eastern centres, such as Calcutta, would find exhilarating and recuperative resort—something different from, and probably better as well as cheaper, than the usual "run home." Months passed; the article was duly published—and forgotten, when one day I found in my mail-bag a letter in an unfamiliar hand addressed:

Mr. S. P.,
Rancho Farmer,
Foothills of Alberta,
Canada.

Much to the credit of the postal authorities that letter arrived safely.

Neuk of Fife. The post office is a marvellous institution—the Canadian "Rural" not excepted.

Needless to say that, philologist as I am, the new word "Rancho-farmer" attracted my attention. It amused me at first—it looked so funny! But as it became familiar it began to take its place as a useful addition to my vocabulary. As far as I am aware, it is a new coinage, but I am open to correction. At all events it is, I think, a more accurate expression than "mixed farmer."

In government pamphlets on Western Canada one constantly reads of "mixed farming" as being the ideal form of profitable rural industry in the West; and by mixed farming is meant the owning of a small herd of cattle and the growing of cereals for the market. Now, "farming" and "farmers" are well known terms; so are "ranching" and "ranchers." To see farming at its best one should visit the Lothians of Scotland. The West of America is, I believe, the home of the rancher. It is to Alberta and its neighborhood that we are invited to go and see "mixed farming" and the "mixed farmer." I wonder what district is left for the "mixed rancher!" Probably he may be seen "booted and spurred and a,"

frequenting the popular resorts of the nearest city. He has branded his stock, turned them out for the season and has come to town for a rest and change. As a rule the "mixed rancher" is in imminent danger of becoming a cropper in a financial bog-hole.

Time was, and that not long ago, when owners of cattle—no matter whether the herd numbered 20 or 200—could turn them out on the range and devote his attention to putting up a liberal supply of hay against a bad winter. These happy days have not quite gone yet. In the hills last year, I passed through several properties, the owners of which had nothing to show in the way of ploughing but a small "cabbage patch." But wave after wave of the rising tide of immigration is rolling over and engulfing our open land. That disfigurement par excellence of our lovely country, the barbed wire fence, is throwing out its hideous tentacles in all directions, and the owners of small properties are wondering what is to become of them when the country is "all fenced up." Necessity compels the small rancher to look more closely after the land that belongs to him, seeing that "what isn't his'n" no longer is at his disposal.

And so he develops into—what? A mixed farmer? Heaven forbid! There is nothing "mixed" about the hard-headed, keen-witted "sons of the soil" that have made a home and a competency by frugality and honesty in the "Far West." No! They develop into ranch farmers. Forced to cultivate their land, in order to pro-



A RANCH IN THE WEST.

the country—four years ago. The universal kindness and courtesy of the railway officials from Halifax to Calgary; the ease with which I got all I wanted in the shape of wines and spirits in Maine; the pleasant surprise at finding my boots again in the morning outside my hotel bedroom door—uncleaned; and the unpleasant one at not finding my new shot-gun which I had left downstairs in the luggage room. But what impressed me most was the, to me, new word "Chores." Everybody used it. It seemed to be a kind of Shibboleth and I was eager to know more about this charming addition to my vocabulary. That was four years ago. I still hear the word; but somehow it has lost its pristine charm. Philology is a favorable study of mine and (at first) I tried to find the origin of the word "chores." The Hindustani word "chor" at once suggested itself. "Chor" means "a thief." "Chores" may be so-called because they are the thief of a man's time. There is another Hindustani word "chur" meaning a bank formed in a river by gravel and debris obstructing the channel, and sometimes forming a permanent island in mid-stream. Certainly, one's chores obstruct the main current of one's daily life!

Having started ranching with more culture than capital, I have had to do

tection versus free trade. But demolishing a gnarled tree-root and converting it into a pile of fire-wood is an excellent incentive to vigorous thinking. I have solved many a knotty problem while dislocating the joints of a knotty stump. It is infinitely better for the purpose, and infinitely more healthful than a gallon of midnight oil or a score of pipes of tobacco.

Hewing wood and drawing water, be they ever so ennobled, are none the worse of intervals of rest. In fact, part of the enjoyment I feel in performing my chores is derived from the consciousness that someone is sitting upstairs waiting (shall I say wearying?) for my joining her in her cozy boudoir. My tiny writing desk is there and our choicest books, and while resting "between the chores," I jot down the thoughts that have been crystallizing out of doors. Or may read aloud portions of some favorite author. And thus our days are spent—happy and useful—and let us hope that while leading an idyllic bucolic life, we are so alive to the dangers that beset an unconventional life, and do so assiduously cultivate the antidotes to "bubolic barbarism" that the culture we brought with us to "Sunny Alberta" is still an active influence in our home, sweetening all around us.

It reminded me of a curious postal experience I had some years ago. I had written a letter in Bengal to my wife, who was then residing in Fife-shire, Scotland. The letter was addressed:

Mrs.
Dura House,
Cupar-Fife, N. B.

I went home on leave shortly after posting the letter and arrived before it; but it had come by a circuitous route. An intelligent Bengali clerk had translated "N.B." into Northern Bengal, instead of North Britain. It was evident to him then that "Cupar" was a misspelled form of "Chapra," while "Fife" was merely a calligraph ornamentation. Off then went my unfortunate letter to that centre of the indigo industry. One can fancy the post office Bagus of Chapra putting their well-oiled heads together in deep consultation as to what they should do with the document. By chance a Fife-shire man, who is up there "making his pile" in indigo, walks in and the Babus lay the matter before the "Sahib."

"Try the East Neuk" is the oracle's advice and down go the mysterious words in the regulation red ink on my envelope—"try the East Neuk." And so the letter started on its journey again and found its way—too late to be of any interest—to the East

AGENTS Agents and Home Buyers send for my Catalogue. Save money. Samples 10c. **EASTERN SUPPLY COMPANY, MURLEYVILLE, N. Y.**

A GREAT CHANCE TO MAKE MONEY

Would you like to make \$5,000 a year. I am making that on an original investment of \$10. You can do the same. By working this plan you can gain independence and build up an honorable legitimate and profitable business of your own. Plan complete \$1.00, or full particulars for a red stamp, L. ELLIS, Box 644, Toronto Junction, Ont.

HOW TO BE HAPPY IN **LOVE**
Illustrated book. Send 10 cts.
In coin to **DECOTA SUPPLY CO., Fargo, N.D., U.S.A.**

HOME WORK

\$7 to \$10 per Week

We want reliable parties to knit for us at home whole or spare time. We furnish machine, yarn, etc. Send your name and address at once for full particulars.

The DOMINION KNITTING CO. ORILLIA, ONT.

When Writing Advertisers Kindly Mention The Western Home Monthly.