

man voice at night, and it's well, too, that they're not critical, for some of the musical efforts are extremely crude. Most of cow-punchers confine themselves to hymns, picked up, probably when they were children.

I lost no time in rolling out my bed and turning in, only removing my boots, heavy leather chaps, and hat, and two minutes after I was sound asleep. How long I slept I can't say but I was awakened by a row among the night herds tied to the "chuck wagon."

It is hard to find words to describe a stampede of two thousand head of long-horned, range steers. It is a scene never to be forgotten. They crowd together in their mad fright, hoofs crack and rattle, horns clash against each other, and a low moan goes through the herd as if they were suffering with pain. Nothing stands in their way; small trees and bushes are torn down as if by a tornado; and no fence was ever built that would turn them. Woe betide the luckless rider, who, racing recklessly in front of them, waving his slicker or big hat, or shooting in their faces to turn them, has his pony stumble or step into a badger-hole or fall, for he is sure to be trampled to death by their hoofs. And yet they will suddenly stop, throw up their hands, look at each other as if to say, "What on earth were we running for?" and in fifteen minutes every last one of them will be lying as quietly as any old pet milk-cow in an east country farm yard.

About half the time you can tell what stampedes cattle, and half the time you can't. Sometimes a herd will be lying fast asleep on a quiet night, and suddenly a steer jumps up, sends a great snorting puff from his nostrils, and races off into the darkness. And behind him may race two thousand of his companions, all going for dear life, and apparently scared out of their lives.

One night I saw a herd stampeded by the lighting of a cigarette. The cattle were sleeping peacefully, when one of the Mexican herders, riding slowly on his pony around the outskirts of the herd, rolled himself a cigarette, took out the flint and steel, an ancient way of striking a light which we ranchers have, and proceeded to light up. At the very first sharp click of the steel against the flint, a big steer jumped to his feet with a snort, and before you could say Jack Robinson, every other one of those two thousand head of cattle was careering wildly over the plain, rushing with frantic blind terror and a great thunder of hoofs which fairly shook the ground, into the dark night. Men could no more have stopped that stampede than a man could hold a steam engine with one hand. It took ten days to get the herd together again.

Another time I saw a herd stampeded by a man removing a slicker from his saddle. The night was intensely dark and it began to sprinkle. A cow-boy started to put on his slicker—such a coat as fishermen and sailors call an oil-coat. It stuck to the saddle where he had it strapped, and as he pulled it free it made a crackling sound. In an instant the sleeping herd was awake and off like the wind over the plains.

I happened to be on my horse right in the path of the stampeded cattle, and there was nothing for it but to ride for life. Away we went across the midnight plains, my horse straining every nerve and sinew, and I urging him forward with the certain knowledge that if he stumbled, the terrified animals behind me would trample us into the mud. The only thing to do under such circumstances is to keep going and try to keep out of the way if you can. Suddenly in the darkness my horse struck a barbed wire. I heard the wire snap like pistol shots as my horse plunged through the obstruction. "It's all up with me. This is my last herd" thought I to myself. I supposed the wire would have so cut my horse that the animal would die from loss of blood, then the end came. But he kept straight on, and for an hour I rode at terrific speed. Then I knew by the sound of the trampling feet of the herd that it had swerved to one side—at any rate I knew that I was no longer in its path. I was safe but mightily used up, and when I drew rein my poor horse was nearly dead, not from wounds but from sheer exhaustion.

Don't you believe anyone who tells you that a herd of stampeded cattle can be stopped when once it has got fairly going. It can't be done. Before it is under way—at the very first before the animals have got really going—a stampede can be stopped or rather prevented, by a skillful cow-boy; but not after the panic has seized the steers in its grip.

Sometimes it doesn't even take the striking of steel against flint, or even the crackling of a slicker, to stampede a herd. The animals break out apparently from sheer nervous hysteria. Cattle are queer creatures and even we who live all the time among them, do not understand them thoroughly. But I am to tell of another race with a stampede.

I turned lazily in my bed and saw that a huge, black cloud had come up rapidly from the west and bid fair soon to shut out the moon. I snuggled down in my blankets and was wondering if we would have to turn out to keep hold the steers if it rained, when the silence of the night was broken by a peal of thunder that fairly split the skies. It brought every man in camp to his feet, for high above the reverberation of the thunder was the roar and rattle of a stampede.

That broke right down on the camp, and we all ran to the "chuck wagon" for safety; but they swung off about a hundred feet from the camp and raced by us like the wind, horns clashing, hoofs rattling, and the earth fairly shaking with the mighty tread.

Riding well in front of the herd was Shorty trying to turn the leaders. As he flew by he shouted in his dare-devil way, "Here's trouble, fellows," and was lost in the darkness and dust. Of course all this took but a moment. We quickly recovered ourselves, pulled on boots, flung ourselves into the saddle, and tore out into the dark with Alkali Pete in the lead. I was neck and neck with him as we caught up with the end of the herd, and called to him: "Pete, they're headed for the cutbank; if we go over some of us will get hurt." Just then, "Bang! Bang! Bang!" went a revolver ahead of us, and we knew that Shorty had realized where he was going, and was trying to turn the leaders by shooting in their faces.

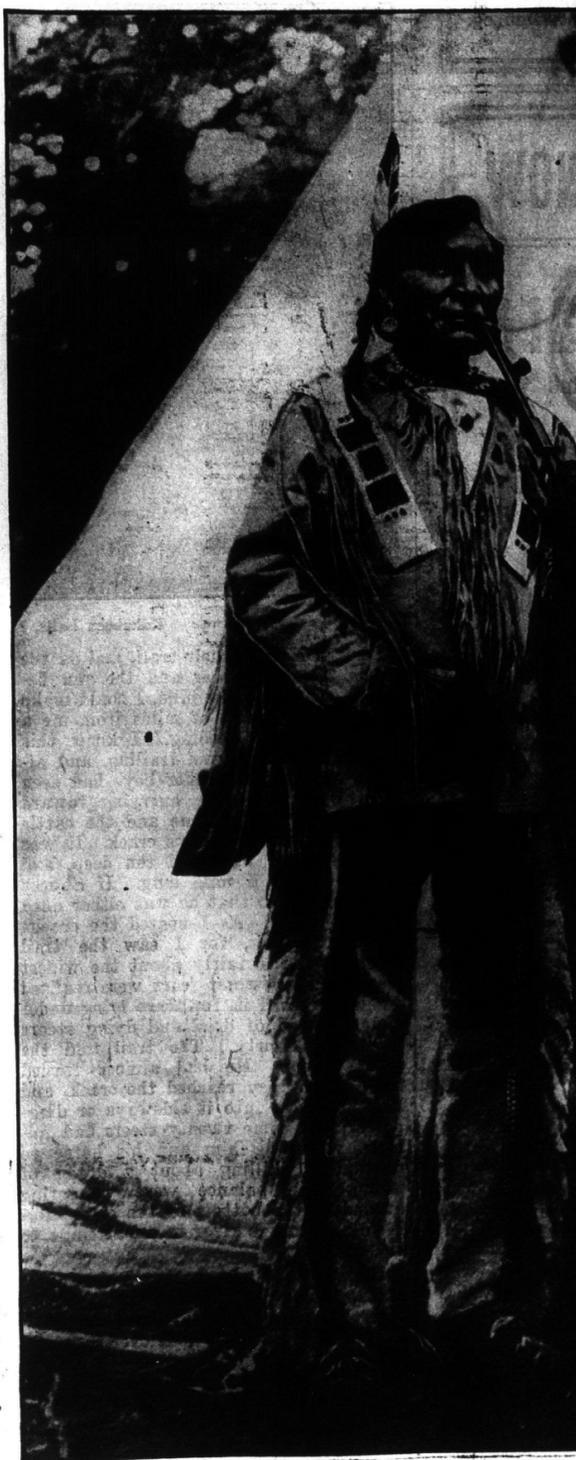
These cutbanks are curious phenomena and very dangerous. The Kootenay in freshet time becomes turbulent and often carries away tons of gravel and earth only to pile it up further down the stream. At Long Bottom the swift rushing water had dug into a bend in the shore just below our camp, and left a straight cut of fifty feet. From this cut and running back from it some hundreds of feet are a series of ditches or cracks made by the bench water on its way to the river. Some of them are ten feet wide and twenty-five feet deep; others are only a few feet deep and run back for miles on the top land. In the narrow ditches long grass hides the depth so a horse doesn't see them till he is fairly into them, and every cow-

boy dreaded that part of the Kootenay range.

Alkali and I soon came to what, in the dust and darkness, we took to be the leaders, and, drawing our revolvers, we began to fire in front of them, and quickly turned them to the right, and by pressing down from that side we crowded them round more and more until we soon had the whole herd running round and round in a circle, or "milling" as we call it, and in the course of fifteen minutes we got them quieted down enough to be left again in charge of the regular guard.

Alkali sent me around the herd to tell the second guardmen to take charge, as it was their time, and for the rest of us to go to the camp, which was nearby, a mile distant, and visible only because Morton, the cook, had got up and built up the fire, well knowing we couldn't get down the cut without it.

Before we got there the rain began, and we were all wet to the skin; but we tied up our ponies again, and five seconds after I laid down I was sound asleep and heard nothing till the cook started his unearthly yell of "Roll out! Roll out! Chuck away." I pulled off the heavy canvas I had pulled over me to keep the rain out of my face, and got up. The storm was over and in the east the morning star was just beginning to fade, and the sky was taking that peculiar grey look that precedes the dawn and sunrise. The night-horse wrangler was working his horses up towards camp, and the three or four bells



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