

STEALING BUFFALO CALVES.

HERDS of buffaloes as once known on the plains exist no longer. It is almost impossible for one who has never witnessed the sight to realize the immensity of one of these great droves as they were seen fifty years ago by the trappers and earliest pioneers who crossed the plains. Imagine yourself standing on an eminence reviewing a procession of these shaggy bisons, much as a general would an army



APPROACHING THE HERD.

of cavalry. Before you they would pass on the keen run in a densely packed column, perhaps two hundred abreast and stretching out to the horizon as far as the eyes could see, the very ground trembling like an earthquake under the impact of their feet and a roar like that of a rushing torrent filling the ears. It is many years since such a scene has been witnessed, and now a few herds of half a dozen animals here and there where they are partially secure from hunters are all that are left of the millions that once covered the plains.

With this practical extermination of the bison has come a knowledge that one of the most valuable resources of the country has been wasted. It has been discovered that crossing the buffalo with domestic cattle produces an animal superior to either, both as to its flesh and hide. It has also been learned that the quarter and half breeds thus produced are easily herded and are hardier and more able to endure the winter weather on the ranges than the ordinary range animal. With this knowledge has come an effort to secure as many of them as possible for breeding purposes. For this purpose the calves are caught, and the task of securing them is an exciting and dangerous one, especially as the death of the mother is not desired. To make prisoners of the young or to bring upon one's self the fierce avenging fury of a buffalo cow by throwing a rope over her calf, requires the utmost self-possession as well as that peculiar daredevil familiarity with saddle and horse which are found so fully developed in the range riders of the western plains. The hunt is profitless if the calves are injured, and the

preparations for the care of the captives are not only minute, but necessarily expensive. Domestic cows are provided as wet nurses, and a constant watchfulness is observed over these compulsory foster mothers until they have overcome a not unnatural repugnance to their new charges. The calves, however, when captured and placed in a corral with their nurses, display no excessive modesty in foraging for milk, and their impetuous raids upon the new commissary are extremely amusing. An important element in the buffalo hunting of today is the fact that the females give birth to their young very early in the spring, and the hunt must be accomplished before the beginning of the spring round up of cattle, or the calves become too strong to capture alive.

Early last spring such a hunt as this was made in Northern Wyoming, near the northern boundary of Red desert, the "scientific" work being done by three experienced hunters and vaqueros, Wright, Chapman and Gomez, the latter a Mexican. Each hunter had a "string" of eight horses to use, and was to receive \$25.00 for each calf captured uninjured. The party took the trail at daylight in the morning, driving the extra horses before them. When they had been riding along leisurely for an hour Gomez called attention to a buffalo trail, and followed it at some distance in advance of the others, carefully watching ahead. The trail led through sage brush, over the plains, across innumerable draws, until Gomez reached the summit of a low range of hills, when he suddenly wheeled his horse and returned to the party. Instantly all was excitement, the game was in sight. One enormous bull, four cows and three calves were browsing, unsuspecting of danger, about half a mile away from the party. Fresh horses were roped and saddled, and the hunters separated to surround the herd with as little noise as



A VICIOUS CHARGE

possible. At a signal from Wright, given when each of the hunters had crept as close as possible, the three horses made a dash forward. With a snort of fear the bull threw up his head, and seeing Wright rushing upon him he wheeled in blind terror and plunged headlong toward Chapman, whose horse reared and fell backward. As Chapman swung himself out of the