

# OUR STORY TELLER



## BILL'S RACE FOR HIS LIFE

FOR over a week it had been threatening great things. For a week nobody on the "Lazy H." ranch had caught more than a momentary glimpse of the sun. Chill winds whistled and roared over the bleak and desolate prairies on the range and fitful whiffs of rain made it all the more disagreeable to the weary boys who were at work night and day to keep the uneasy herd from rushing away to the desert of the south. Although it was early for wintry manifestations, yet that a serious storm was imminent was realized by all the men employed on the ranch. Great bunches of cattle milled at various points on the range, but little effort was made to break the mills, for fear they would be followed by the more serious danger of a general stampede. Riders constantly watched the fretful animals when they became weary from hunger as they rushed around in that ceaseless grind. Nothing but a wall of horns was to be seen, as the steers presented an unbroken front to all comers. With the muttering of the thunder came lowings and tossings of the horns with added energy in the tramp, tramp of the frightened animals.

It was hard and weary work to keep the herd from starving as well as rushing wildly towards the gulf. All over the Panhandle country the same conditions existed, and that gloomy week in November was probably the most exciting tour of duty the ranchmen ever put in in a region where hard work abounds and the rewards are small. Ten thousands pairs of horns were enough to keep a small army of "Lazy H." cowboys fairly busy when everything was pleasant. Now there was need for double their number. They were scattered in groups under subbosses, so that every man was doing two men's work and that, too, without an opportunity for rest, excepting such as could be snatched when the milling bunches were quiet for a few minutes.

"If this thing keeps up much longer," said "Curley" Brock, as the week was almost gone, "I allow I'll jump the game. I'm almost all cashed in now and kain't stand it much longer. Just look at them bulls, a-millin' and a-millin' there. Ever see anything so mean? Why, they ain't done nothin' for a whole week but tramp about and go off their feed. I allow there ain't no use of trying to break 'em, whatever."

"They'll break pretty soon, or I lose my guess," said the boss, Bill Martin. "I figure that them clouds'll bust some-where hevenabouts, and then look out. Wisht I had some more ponies, or least-ways some that were fresh. We got to ride considerable hard to keep up of they stampede, which I allow they will."

As he spoke a long tongue of brilliant light left the clouds and, winding a devious and uncertain way across the black skies, plunged into the earth at no great distance from where the ranchmen stood. Instantly it was followed by a roar and rumble of thunder as if a park of artillery had suddenly gone into action. The sound was deafening, the thunder in that country often being sufficiently severe to shake the nerves of the strongest man. Following this came a roar as of some mighty cataract, as the wind took sudden volume and that huge bank of clouds bore rapidly down upon the milling beasts. Just as suddenly the animals halted in their march and turned frightened eyes in the direction of the advancing storm. Then they moved uneasily, tossed their horns and dug up the turf as the first spattering raindrops fell all about and upon them.

"Here, you fellers," yelled Martin. "Get busy there an' head off them blamed steers. Don't ye see they are goin' to stampede? Hurry, and pint 'in at that gulch over ther. Ride, you devils, as you never rid before."

Suiting the action to the word the boss put his pony into a violent gallop and raced off toward the bunch, shouting out his orders as he rode. He was mounted on a strong broncho, and it was well for him that the pony was comparatively fresh, for he soon found himself in a position of serious danger, and there he stuck for a long time. He

was caught in that stampede and hurried off toward the gulf at a terrific speed, his pony straining every nerve to keep ahead and the steers racing furiously behind in their efforts to get away from the storm.

As Bill dashed off to turn the flank of the bunch, just as the animals commenced to change their revolving motion for a straight-away run, "Curley" lifted up his voice and quirt and made a furious onslaught on the nearest steer. He swung his deadly quirt and thwacked that bull with great vigor, communicating a sudden impetus to the animal's movements. This had the effect of starting many others in the



"ON RUSHED BILL, AND ON RUSHED THE CATTLE."

same direction, and a couple of hundred bore rapidly down on Martin, cutting him off and putting him in the direct pathway of the stampede.

"Whatever are ye doin', ye blamed fool!" roared Bill as he saw what had happened. "Come around on the other side, ye cayote, an' head them bulls offen me. Burn yer skin, think I'm part of this bunch?"

"Curley" saw the mischief and attempted to divert the enemy, but it was too late. The other man had followed his lead and the steers instead of heading for the gulch were racing in a wild scrimmage straight away to the south, hunting solitude. Bill went with them. He had to. It was his duty, anyway, a thought that afforded him little consolation, for it was a race for life, with the chances about fifty to one on the bulls, with the same odds against him. Still, being a man of family, he gave his pony free rein and raced as he never did before or since, as he has frequently said himself. It was all "Curley's" doing, as that astute cowboy charged with undue impetuosity at an angle calculated to produce the result he had brought about.

As the cattle raced constant additions were made, until it seemed that the entire herd was chasing Bill. He reflected as he ran that he had this advantage, that when the ride was over, if he survived, he could locate all of the herd without much trouble. Just how long it would take to terminate the drift was the problem, as the herd was mostly made up of young steers, full of life and fleet of foot. Bill was busy particularly in his straining effort to avoid being inclosed in the rushing herd. He had a little the start of them; could he maintain it until a chance offered to quarter the drive and escape to one side? He dug his rowels into his pony's flanks and swore vengeance on "Curley" as soon as the fun was over.

On rushed Bill, and on rushed the cattle. Behind them, with yells and shouts spurring them to great efforts, raced

the boys. They were all pretty evenly matched, so that there was little change in their relative positions for a long time. How long Bill does not know. It seemed a week to him, but nobody in his plight could measure time with any degree of accuracy. The rain fell in torrents and the plains, now darkened by the fading day and the heavy green black clouds, was fitfully lighted by the constant flashes of lightning, which mockingly illuminated the pathway in front of Bill, likewise the steers. At every flash and every roar of thunder the bulls took on more steam, and after a short time Bill saw with apprehension that they were gaining on him. Would they trample him in the mud? It began to look as if they might, for his pony's wind was about gone and his panting was becoming short, sobbing gasps.

On they plunged, rider and pursued, making record-breaking time in a country where hard riding and plenty of it is the daily portion of all. Over shelving, broken land, down into small arroyos and out again up the steep grades plunged and seethed that mass of struggling cattle. Some of the boys behind noticed here and there the fallen figure of an exhausted steer as he fell from sheer weariness. They yelled encouragement to Bill, for this was a good sign, and indicated that the herd was rapidly reaching the point when it would be compelled to stop. On they ran, however, without wavering, pursued by the storm and chasing the flying figure of the boss. Would he escape death? Nobody could tell.

As the beaten pony struggled up a steep incline after a mad dash down into a gulch, Bill felt the hot breath of the advance guard of the cattle, furious as a furnace at his back. He cast a despairing glance backward, urged his pony with foot and voice, and was tossed headlong to the ground. He fell from the stirrup, rolled about for an instant, and then lay still as he saw that mighty herd leaping over the spot

where he went down. Bruised and shaken by the tumble, half conscious from the shock, he lay there and with the curious inconsistency of him in imminent peril, commenced a desultory counting of the black forms which plunged over him. Where his pony was he did not know, and he fell to speculating concerning him. On ran the steers and still Bill lay there, his dazed mind going through all kinds of arithmetical problems.

Finally the last of the herd passed and the boss, one of the most experienced ranchmen of the wild West, rose to his elbow and sent a careful glance to the rear. He saw his men racing furiously after the cattle and suddenly ducked again as the boys plunged over his position. Then it dawned on him where he was. He had fallen into a natural ditch too deep to wade over and just the right width to leap easily. This fact had saved his life, for the first steer leaped the ditch and all of the others blindly followed suit. Bill was safe and he crawled out of his hole not grateful for his escape, but with a mind full of wrath against "Curley," the cause of his downfall.

The ditch had also saved the pony. The little broncho fell when he threw his rider, and being deadbeat lay where he fell. As he had as much sense as his master, he kept quiet, and when Bill arose he saw that broncho quietly drinking at a small pool, his flanks still rising with undue rapidity, for he was very weak. Bill arose and introduced himself by taking the bridle and giving the unoffending brute a savage kick. He then remounted and followed after the herd slowly, knowing that by this time, the storm having broken, the steers were willing to quit, and that with plenty of hard work they would all be collected.

Well, it was as he expected. He finally found the herd scattered about on the plains, some lying down and some grazing, but all showing evidences of that wild fight from the driving storm. He

also found those cowboys, lying about on the wet grass, too tired and too savage to care what became of him. He advanced on the party and swung down from the saddle and stood scowling at the men as he hobbled his pony and prepared to arrange for the night.

"I allow yer about the best bunch of skunks I ever see," was his greeting. "Whatever do ye mean in stampedin' that herd? Get up an' get busy, all of ye. Scatter and see that them bulls don't drift to where we all kain't find 'em. Hear me?"

"Which we do, Bill," drawled "Curley" from where he lay all sprawled out in the ground. "An' we all ain't goin' to do nothin' of the sort. I allow them bulls is all right where they be, and they ain't no use in stirrin' of 'em, none whatever."

"Who's boss of this gang, me or you, ye wuthless cayote? Ye done all the nichief with yer durned quirt. Get up out of this or I'll sink my boot into ye."

"Which ye won't do nothin' of the kind, Bill," was the growling answer, as "Curley" half rose and returned the scowl of the boss with interest. "I allow they ain't goin' to be no bootin' yere. I also allow I'm goin' to stay right yere. Ef they's goin' to be any bootin' I hereby declares myself into the game, and so I tells you plain."

"Kin ye shoot?" roared Bill, unlimbering as he spoke.

"A beetle," said "Curley," rising to his feet with a jerk and pulling his gun as the other men scattered.

The two men gazed wrathfully at each other for a moment and then the pistols blazed out, shot following shot until all were empty. When the action was over "Curley" was lying still on the ground with a hole in his lungs and Bill was nursing a badly wounded shoulder.

Well, it was a bad business, but then none of the others felt any call to interfere, and the combatants were hastened back to the ranchhouse and medical aid summoned. Fortunately

neither was fatally hurt, but "Curley" did hospital duty for the rest of the season and Bill took charge of the stables. He was scarcely "fitten," as he said, for duty with the herd.

### An Effective Retort.

Few things are more useful to a public speaker than readiness in turning an interruption to his own advantage. Even the preacher can profit by it, as is shown in a story told of the late Rev. Dr. John B. McFerran in the Western Christian Advocate.

In closing a speech at a missionary anniversary at Jacksonport, Arkansas, 1856, he stated that once he was shrinkingly timid when called upon to take a collection, but that he had learned to take the shirk by the throat and say, "Pay me that thou owest!"

Just then a man sung out, "Yes, I heard it said that they would put on your tombstone, 'And the beggar died.'"

This created a laugh; but the doctor stood silent. A tear stole down his cheek, and in a subdued tone he broke the pause:

"Do you know what I told them? I said, 'If you'll add the rest of the verse, 'and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom,' I wouldn't care.'"

The effect was electric; money rained into the treasury, and shouts made the roof tremble.

A new life buoy, invented by an officer of the Austro-Hungarian navy, consists of a hollow metal ball filled with compressed air and a pair of semi-globular wings of rubber-covered cloth. On turning a screw the air inflates the wings, which then exert in water a lifting force of thirty-eight pounds.

No man is so worthless that a candidate will not treat him with great respect.

No woman is competent to handle the kin question; she is too sympathetic.



### Cities Buried by Sand Storms.

Sven Hedlin, the Norwegian traveler, has discovered on the north side of Kuen Lun Mountains, and in the edge of the great desert of Gobi, the ruins of towns which he thinks were buried by sandstorms about 1,000 years ago. The largest town was nearly two miles and a half long, and a canal connected it and the surrounding country with the Kerija River. The houses had walls of plaited reeds covered with mud and then coated with white plaster, and on these plaster walls were well-executed paintings of men, animals and flowers. Poplars, apples and plum trees had evidently flourished there before the invasion of the sand.

### Wasps Defend Cows.

A correspondent of the Irish Naturalist describes a curious scene which he witnessed while watching his cows in the field. He noticed many wasps buzzing around the cows, and upon stopping to observe what they were about he found that they were catching and killing flies. A white cow in particular attracted the wasps apparently because they could so easily see the flies that alighted upon it. They invariably bit off the wings, sometimes the legs, and occasionally the heads of the flies, and carried the bodies away, probably to feed their larvae. Three or four hundred flies were thus caught in about twenty minutes from the backs of two cows.

### Science and Great Cities.

Professor Brewer, of Yale University, in a recent address called attention to the interesting fact that at the beginning of this century not a single city in Christendom had so many as a million inhabitants. In 1800 Paris had 548,000, and in 1801 London had 864,000. Great cities could not exist then as the advance of science has enabled them to exist to-day. Science has helped the cities not only by conquering pestilence, and teaching the laws of health, but by enabling them to draw their supplies from the remotest quarters of the earth, instead of being dependent for food, as was the case at the opening of the century, upon the region of country immediately surrounding them.

### Measuring Its Own Velocity.

By means of an electrical device experimenters, acting for the United States Board of Ordnance, have recently succeeded in obtaining photographic records of the motion of a projectile while yet inside the bore of a cannon. The projectile carries a rod of wood attached to its front end, and copper rings, encircling this rod at fixed intervals, successively form electric contacts as the rod is driven from the gun. Each of these contacts produces an automatic record on a photographic plate. The Scientific American, in describing the apparatus and experiments, says that the shortest distance traveled by the projectile between two successive records was 3.7 centimeters, which is a little less than an inch and a half, and that some of the time intervals between the records were only one two-thousandth of a second.

### Seeing a Rose Grow.

An ingenious Frenchman has suggested a way in which a rose, or other flower, could be caused to appear growing and unfolding in the presence of a roomful of spectators. He proposes to employ the kinematoscope, a magic lantern so arranged as to produce moving figures on a screen by means of a series of photographs of living objects, each successive photograph having been taken only a small fraction of a second later than its immediate predecessor. But for the proposed new application of this instrument the photographs need not be made so near together, since they are to represent changes which require several months for their development. Beginning with the first appearance of the bud, several thousand photographs of a growing rose are to be taken, just near enough together so that the change of form in the flower is almost imperceptible, until it has attained its complete bloom, and then has faded and fallen to pieces. These photographs, being passed as transparencies, in rapid succession, through the kinematoscope, there would appear upon the screen the figure of a rose visibly budding, growing, opening, spreading its petals, and finally shriveling and dying, the whole process occupying but a few minutes. Many other applications of this principle to the representation of growing objects are suggested.

The sooner a monument is put up after a man dies, the nicer the thing said on it.

Almost all married people look in time as if they were living on a daily quail diet.