

A CATTLE RANCH.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT'S WESTERN EXPERIENCES.

Advice Which the Would Be Cowboy Should Take Under Kind Consideration.

Theodore Roosevelt, President of the New York Board of Police Commissioners, writes on ranching topics in the Pittsburg Dispatch. He says: "Probably every man who has had much in the West has received a multitude of applications from people who wish to get on that ranch. Easterners seem not to know that a cowboy's business requires special training, and that a hardy, vigorous young fellow without any training can no more start off as a cowboy than he could start off as a carpenter. Moreover, a man who isn't a good cowboy is worse of a nuisance, because the average cowboy needs ten horses for his work, and if he doesn't do the work the ten horses are wasted. A man to be proficient in the business must not only be a good horseman, but must be able to rope well, read brands, to understand cattle, and must have a good knowledge of the craft. Ordinarily the work does not imply long continued physical exertion, like the work of a woodpecker, but it is often very monotonous and it is also fraught with hardship and danger. Nevertheless, in the spring, summer and early fall, the life is a very exciting and pleasant one for those who have mastered the work. There is an attraction in the wild, lonely country, and the entire freedom of existence spent mostly on horseback. After one gets used to it the rough little shack seems comfortable enough, and for much of the year the ranch wagon is the cowboy's home. To many a hardy, vigorous fellow the round up is ordinarily a picnic. The men are fed well, and though they do not have much sleep, yet the easiest of all forms of labor is sitting in the saddle; and the long rides in the morning to the corral and the afternoon to the roping and chasing round the herd when cutting out the beef steers and cows and calves in the afternoon, possess a very great charm for men of life in the open. Of course, when in summer there are unpleasant experiences. A stampede at night in a thunder storm is usually too exciting to be agreeable, and fighting fire is very wearing work, while there is always a liability to misadventure. A man may have now and then to make a dry camp; he may get injured by an unusually vicious horse, or be damaged in the rush of a stampede, or be drowned in the quicksand of some treacherous plains river. Still, take it as a whole, in good weather the life is pleasant enough. But in the iron winter work is very hard and very dangerous. The last roundups, which take place in November on the northern plain, are not agreeable. The nights are very long and the freezing misery of standing guard around a cattle herd does not tend to make them seem shorter. In fine weather nobody wants a tent; but it is not pleasant after twenty-four hours' cold rain to toss the damp blankets on the sodden ground and creep into them. Of course, the tarpaulin has kept out most of the wet, but it does not keep out all, and then some nights there is a heavy snow fall, and when you throw back the tarpaulin in the morning the snow gets down the back of your neck, and much dexterity is needed while drawing on your boots and trousers not to let the snow get into the blankets. The ground is like iron after the heavy frosts, and though the horses, being worn down and thin, are much less lively and vicious than in spring, yet if they do "act mean" they are more liable to slip and hurt themselves, and more apt to hurt their rider if they throw him.

Early in December the last of the season's work ends. Most of the cowboys are discharged, and they may then go into town, or build a little shack and hunt for a livelihood, or stay around the ranches, doing any odd job that turns up for their board. A few, however, are kept on to ride lines and keep track of the cattle in the snow. These men must needs be of vigorous constitution and thoroughly able to grapple with every exigency of plains life, for they are certain to have some pretty rough experiences before spring if the winter is at all severe. In riding lines each man has a definite beat. Of course, in good weather the task is a perfectly easy one. The rider lets his pony shag along until he comes to the end of his beat. If any cattle have crossed the line, he sees their tracks, and following, rounds them up and drives them back into the country where it is desired they shall range during the winter. If no cattle come near the line, he simply goes to the end of his beat and comes back again. But if a blizzard catches him he may find it an almost impossible task to avoid getting lost. All landmarks are obscured by drifts, and while the blizzard is blowing, the question of the

Of course if the day is a very bad one the rider won't go out at all, but often he has to take his chances and the snow may begin to fall and the wind to blow just when he is at the furthest end of his beat. Then back he comes over the long stretches of sand colored, lifeless prairie sward as fast as his pony can go. The snow comes first in puffs and little drifts—not the soft flakes of an Eastern snow storm, but fine ice dust which feels almost like sand when blown against the face. Heavier and heavier grow the gusts, thicker and thicker the snow clouds, and, finally, the storm means and shrieks and drives the icy flakes in almost level lines. The rider is then lucky if he can find his camp. Unless he knows exactly where he is and unless the landmarks are very conspicuous it is out of the question for him to do so. His only resource is to drift before the storm, exactly as the cattle do, until he finally strikes some sheltered place under the lee of a big rock or in a hollow where there is a bunch of thick timber. Here he will dismount, tie his horse (which shelters itself all that it can and then stands with drooping head, tail toward the wind), and himself cower down under the horse blankets in the most sheltered spot he can find. There is no small difficulty to light a fire, and indeed unless the shelter is good such a feat is impossible. Without any fire, if the cold is at all intense, the man's chances for life are not good, but often the blizzards blow over almost as quickly as they arise. As a rule the cowboy, who is very shifty and full of expedients, turns up at the home ranch or the line camps a couple of days later, perhaps a little frost bitten and certainly very hungry and uncomfortable, but not materially the worse for wear.

However, there are occasions when even veteran plainsmen succumb. A year ago last winter two men thus died in a blizzard not very far from my ranch. They had stopped at a horse camp, and while there a terrific storm blew up. After a time there came a lull and the men thought the storm had broken. Accordingly they rode off, intending to make a ranch on the Deadwood trail, far to the south. Not long after they had started the blizzard again began with increased fury. For weeks nothing was heard of the men. Then a rider hunting up strayed stock came across the body of one of them beside the body of his horse. They had been drifting before the storm until they finally came to a wire fence. By this time the man, in his effort to keep himself from freezing, was walking, and he must have got separated from his horse, which was a little distance from him. Both were brought up by the wire fence exactly as cattle are brought up, and there they stood and froze to death precisely as cattle do under similar circumstances. The man stood with his hands on the top-most wire, leaning straight forward, and in this position he had remained from the moment that the last spark of life flickered out in his breast until he was found. The horse had fallen down.

The other man never was found, but his horse was discovered by a round up wagon which went down on the Cannon Ball river, about one hundred and fifty miles off. One day the saddle band was joined out on the prairie by a horse with something queer on its back. The animal was very wild and difficult to approach, though it seemed weak, and it was some time before the cowpunchers got their ropes on it. Its bridle was torn off. The saddle still held, but it had been shifted and came down underneath it, and the cinches had cut deeply into the back. It was taken off, and the horse driven along with the saddle band, but it did not live to reach home, for one morning it was too weak to rise, and the round up wagon left it.

happenings of this sort are not uncommon in the life of every ranchman in the Northern cattle country, and before any man takes up the business he should be sure that he has the courage and the constitution to stand the terrible strain of ranch work in winter weather.

A Hint Which is Quite Effective.

The night clerk in any big newspaper office has his hands full of work, but time and time again is bothered by the tramp who wanders in to get a warming. Ostensibly the visitor looks over the file to search with advertisements, but with bowed heads soon fall to sleep. The true tramp can go to sleep standing as long as the surroundings are warm. A night clerk in a newspaper office has discovered a sure way of ousting these undesirable denizens without the use of force. He keeps a small collection of the electric light lamps that have become useless. He waits until the tramp is dreaming his soundest, and then throws one of these innocent-looking globes at his feet. There is an awful explosion. The tramp looks around in wonderment and fright. The imperturbable clerk is hard at his books entering the last "ads," sent in, and the tramp "scots," thankful to have escaped some greater danger.

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AN ELECTRICAL STONE.

All Meet Death, it is Said, Who Touch It.

One of the most recently discovered inexplicable phenomena is an immense electrical stone which crops out above ground in an almost inaccessible mountain pass some fifty or sixty miles north of The Needles, in Arizona. In pursuing a conscientious investigation into a subject of this kind one finds it necessary to call into requisition such an immense number of grains of salt that the real truth of the matter becomes frequently lost in a briny deep, as it were, but in spite of this the existence of the electrical stone has been proved beyond the possibility of doubt.

In a multitude of witnesses there is safety, and it appears that the natives were for years acquainted with the stone and its peculiar properties long before its discovery by a party of hunters a few days ago. Among the Indians the stone goes by the name of the "Death Trap," and the peak whereon it is located is called Death Trap mountain. They say that their fathers and grandfathers before them knew of the stone, and it is only an old and experienced guide who will venture to take a party in the neighborhood of it, lest by some unlucky chance a too daring hunter will lose his life by suddenly coming upon it in an unguarded moment.

The stone itself is described as being a rough, jagged outcropping, bursting up through the shale of its surroundings, reaching up the mountain side to the height of about seven feet, when a sharp projection shelves over again, making a three-sided tunnel, perhaps nine feet long and five feet wide. Ordinarily the rock is of a blue metallic luster, and shows traces of volcanic action, being seamed and ribbed as if by melted lava. In the heat of the day, when the sun shines squarely upon it, the

stone assumes a faded pale blue hue, at which time the Indians declare it to be perfectly harmless. As the sun leaves the gorge, however, the stone begins gradually to deepen in color, and when night comes and there is no moon it glows with all the brilliancy of a molten mass. This lumination may be distinctly seen for a great distance when there are no intervening mountains to obstruct the view.

Now, as to the peculiar death giving power of the stone. It is said that nothing great or small can set foot upon it and live. So powerful are the volts which it gives out at even the slightest contact that it is impossible for even the largest animals to withstand their strength.

Recently the party of hunters referred to ventured without a guide into some of the more dangerous mountain passes in the up country, and by chance found their way into a narrow gorge, having come in hot pursuit after a fleet limbed mountain goat which they managed to start from the rocks below. Suddenly, while they were some seventy or eighty feet away, they were astonished beyond measure to see the goat fall dead in his tracks, although not a shot had been fired. They were making ready to climb up the ledge and secure the little creature, when an old Indian high up on the cliff behind called them to stop. So frantic was his manner and so persistent his admonitions that they waited till he scrambled down to them, and then for the first time came to light the story of the electrical wonder.

The goat had fallen within the death trap, the Indian explained, and had the hunters followed after him they, too, would have shared his fate. There was ample evidence at hand to prove to the hunters the truth of the old man's statement, for the little gorge surrounding the stone has been turned into a perfect charnel house full of the whitening bones of its victims. And if this were not enough to convince the more skeptical, while they stood within thirty feet of the stone, a big rattlesnake crawled up the precipice and out upon the stone, only to coil and writhe and finally die in the intense agony.

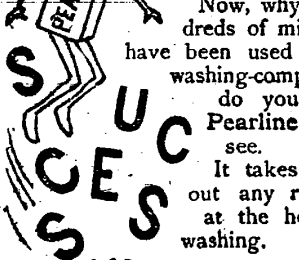
The hunters expressed the deepest gratitude to the old Indian for saving their lives, but regretted no little the loss of the goat, whose species is almost extinct now, whereupon the old man unyouned a rasta from his waist and flung it up under the rocks. His aim was unerring, and presently the goat was dragged down into a place of safety, whence the hunters removed him. This was an old trick among experienced hunters, the Indian explained, and said he himself had reaped a pretty harvest of peltry by snatching fresh victims from the grasp of the death trap.

PROSPECTIVE MOTHERS



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