Rough Hands

A rough hand is a heap of help pervidin he has sence with it. No boss wants a feller that is allus tryin’ to make a good hoss buck and holdin’ up the crowd in the mornin’ to see him put on a wild ridin’ exhibition, and most owners would a heap ruther hear a waddy talk about how to shoe and how to keep a hoss in shape and learn him the work than about how high he can kick him in the shoulder when he’s buckin’.

A real forked hand is wuth plenty all the time but he ort to use judgement with it. A wrangler that charges a bunch of shod saddle horses in a narrow place and gits some of their heels tromped or a good hoss kicked and lamed is a loss. Fer hands don’t train hosses and bring them twenty or thirty mile to a work jest to have ‘em lamed up in the remuda.

Then take on a drive there is allus the fellers that bunch up and ride along visitin’ and readin’ their saddle horns till the herd takes on a whale of a spread, and then takes down their ropes and runs their hosses and chases weak cattle or fat steers neither of which aint so good. And the feller on day herd that is either pullin’ up bresh with his rope to see how much his hoss will pull or else makin’ or fixin’ at sumpthin’ till the cattle scatter and then gittin’ out and raisin the Devil.

The hand that allus has his rope ready when it is calf brandin’ time or that is there to pull ‘em out of a bog or doctor screw worms, or can take an ole moss back out of the bresh or a rough mountain is a real man and no foolin’. But the feller that sets in a winter camp and bakes his boots at the fire when he ort to be out choppin’ ice so the critters can drink is like enough to be the one to git out along in the afternoon and bust some ole lame steer on the froze ground to look at his foot when him and all the world knows he’s jest tender from bein’ up around the rim rocks.

I ain’t sayin’ but what I’ve tried to show off some times and I’ve lamed up hosses and crippled and even killed stock when I could have got around doin’ it but I am plum ashamed of it and the bosses was better about it than I would have been if I had been in their place. But I will say that I mostly tried to take care of things and not to do damage and I allus figured that the boys and the cook and boss would a heap ruther a feller drug in a little wood and was willin’ to help cook a little if need be than to put on a wild west show when there wasn’t no use in it. Lots of boys that is top hands is settin’ on the
fence some wheres or hangin’ round town or [mebbysó] chuck ridin’ and don’t know why they caint work twicet fer the same outfit. But if they would take a couple of drinks to sorter give ‘em a broad view of things and generally speakin’ set down and git wise to theirselves they could figger out why some awkward hands that caint ride fer sour apples or throw a rope into the crick is allus workin’ and they aint.

The rough hand with sense is a find fer any boss but the rough hand without no sense is as about as much use as a fly wheel on a curry comb or a bull dog in a sheep camp.

Hair Cuttin’^2

Mind how we used to clean up after the work was made and most of the boys had pulled into the home ranch with the wagon?

Yessir. We sunned blankets, washed clothes and got right busy. By the time we was all sudsed out and shaved it was about time to do some hair cuttin’. Some times there was a chair or two around the bunk house, but most of the boys would ruther set on a box because it seemed a heap more nat’rl and then, too, any cow puncher that really could cut hair had learnt on a box, and a chair sort of cramped his style. And some of them boys could shore cut hair.

We got out the old comb and worked it on a tight string till we had most of the gum out of it and then we got a whet stone and sharped up the best pair of shears that was around the place. After that all we had to do was to set ‘em on the old store box and take to it.

To be sure the shears might pull some and the old comb might be a little shy of teeth in spots but that wasn’t our fault and it didn’t worry us none. I don’t know what you would call the style of hair cuts we got, but any how they wasn’t no pansy pom-padores among ‘em.

Then, too, we had sort of a clearin’ house balance. All the little fellers that had sent off fer clothes mostly found when they got ‘em that they was so big that if they went out in a high wind them shirts and pants would have whupped ‘em to death, but that was all right fer they jest fitted the big fellers and the big fellers found out that the first time they washed their clothes they shrinked till they fitted the little fellers. It was only the medium sized boys that was out of luck.

When we got all slicked up there was generally a country dance timed-fer about then, and fer a day or two after we rode ten or fifteen mile to sit an’ watch some gal chaw gum, or if she was right high chinned she had an old organ and she sung, “In the Glomin’,” and “After the Ball,” while she tromped and pawed the organ. After that it was time fer three or four months more work.

Folks today would reckon it was a purty slow time, but we allowed we shore was cuttin’ a fat hog them times and was a whole lot happier than them that knows a heap better.
Wild Dogs

During the winter of nineteen hundred there was a bunch of dogs did considerable damage to calves in the part of the country where we lived. They were dogs of all sizes and breeds. One was very big. Several dogs from ranches joined them. As a rule they killed any honest dog that came in their way.

There was a strip of ground between two deep arroyos that was honey-combed with clay caves and some of these came out between the two watercourses, and here they denned up. They were as well protected as a prairie dog town. Only one of them was foolish enough to get into a trap. We then tried poison and that thinned them out pretty fast; two big dogs and a couple of small ones still kept it up. One day late in March I rode into a big arroyo and jumped three of them. One was the big fellow. The wind must have kept them from hearing me for we were right amongst each other before we knew it. I cut down and up on the big fellow, the first shot went short, but the next one wallowed him and by that time I had rolled off and leaded him plenty.

He was as big as a Saint Bernard and in fine condition. That was the finish for them, and in the remaining four years that I was in that section of the country they never showed up again. Small calves were their favorite dish, and several times they tore down meat that was up outside of houses or camps.

Likely many of my fellow readers have had similar experiences. If you have, please write it to Western Livestock Journal.

In the near future I will tell you how a clever buckaroo got a big lobo that had fooled all the trappers in the region.

Wolves

This is not a trapper talkin’. I never could catch anything in a trap but a pole cat, and, come to think of it, I have pinched my fingers a time or two. Some years ago two boys went onto a mesa to trap wolves. Later we asked an old trapper if they got anything. “Yes,” he said, “one of ’em ketched pneumony an’ died an tother one ketched a train for home.” That’s about how the average feller gets a wolf.

The winter of nineteen one I was left at home alone for six weeks. Twice during that time the old dog came into the house growling and the next morning I found wolf tracks. I always left a door open for him. They never bothered anything that I knew of. Wolves went through that country but didn’t seem to stop or kill. The next winter I was crossing the valley to get to my dad’s home and I met a wolf right in the fenced lanes. There was snow and I could see him plain. He passed within twenty yards of me on the other side of the fence and didn’t seem to take any notice of me. The next winter Joe Morgan and I were at a place on the Chicosa arroyo, working for Jim Gresham. I took Joe’s pet hoss and went to chop a water hole open while he made breakfast one
morning. It was just light enough to see when I got there and there were some coyotes around a carcass, but closer was a big lober. Why they go near a carcass I don't know, for they kill their own meat.

Well, I dropped my ax and charged him. He was awkward on the getaway for some reason and the little hoss was rarin’ to go. We stepped right up to him and I had a loop built but I had to guide the hoss for he wasn't follerin' wuth a durn. The wolf took a dodge in a cactus patch and when he did the little hoss just run off with me for a ways and when I got him bent, that wolf was somewhere else. Anyhow, I chopped ice.

The toughest wolf I ever knew was in northern Arizona. He ranged over a lot of country. Indian Jeff got a couple of wolves and so did another Indian, but this old boy kept right on killin’ calves. Charlie Duncan took a peeve at this wolf and put on a rifle for him. Charlie and I worked together that summer and every time we heard him bawl the kill cry it made us cuss. The varmint was too smart for us. It lasted all winter and into the next summer, that feud. It got to be a sort of a steady idea of Charlie's. Till, one day we came back to camp at Horse Flat tanks where we had been two days before and the wolf had gone into the ashes of our fire and dug out pieces of jerky and bacon rind and biscuit. That settled it. Charlie took to buildin' little fires over a trap and mashin' them down a little with a pan and puttin' bits of grub in them. I reckon it was about the third fire that he fell for and, as the feller says, he sure got his foot in it. He was the biggest one I ever saw. I always thought a lot about wolves. They ain't all the same and no wolf is the same all the time, but there aint time and room to talk about them in a paper, so I beg Mr. King's pardon for this long-winded yarn.

Reptiles

Most all fellers that has worked on the outside has a lot of rattle snake and centipede and tirantula yarns that they have told so often that they git so they believe them their selves. Now I don't claim to be no snake expert but I aim to try and sort the snake yarns that are true from amongst them that aint and tell 'em. I hope all you boys will reckon I got the bunch clean and classified up all right. There's a heap bigger stories than these but then theres a heap better snake men than me because one time I went to try and help sober a feller up and he could tell me about a lot of snakes I couldn't even see. So I figured I wasn't much of a snake man.

The worst snake scare I got was when I was a kid. I went out to fix some paster fence and run out of wire. I had an old ax along and I went to cut down a few buck horn [cactus] and drag into the break till next day and jest as I hit one cactus a rattler whizzed and a piece of cactus flew off and hit me in the laig. I dropped the ax and fell back on the seat of my overalls to die right now but when I grabbed fer the bit place I found there was a cactus pod there and I revived.
Another time me and another boy about my size stopped over night at a place and the man that was holdin’ it down had raised some melons. Well when the sun had been down long enough that we allowed the melons had cooled we all went to the patch. The big feller was ahead and he weighed about two hundred pounds and he jumped a rattler. Not one of them that piles up and waits but one of them little devils that comes a ramblin’ rattlin’ and a snappin’ all at once. I was the fust one out from there and I says to the other boy that I don’t like them kind of snakes. “Snakes Hell!” he says. “I was runnin’ to keep from being tromped to death by that big feller.”

One time a bunch of us boys camped at an old corral and shed where they had fed meal cake the winter before. It was a nasty rainy night and one feller drug his bed into the place where they had kept the meal cake. A little later we went to go in and a rattler whizzed. We couldn’t find him and hadn’t no light but matches so we bedded down under the open shed. The feller that was already in there allowed if they didn’t like his company they could do the next best thing. The rest of us, well, we wasn’t quite that tough.

One hot morning a bunch of us woke up and one of the hands had a daddy long leg spider on his neck. We told him it was a tirantula. That old boy snuck around soft and careful fer about five minutes to keep from insultin’ that spider and when it got around where he could see it he like to chased every body out of camp.

There was a cook got bit with a centipede one night when he was walkin’ around camp in a pair of slippers. It was a big centipede and it looked he had clinched and then half raised and grabbed again for he made a Y shaped bight. He corded his leg and the blood popped out on all them little places where the centipede had tracked. I had a good sized bottle of permanganate of potash and I just rubbed the crystals into the places. It sure made him shake that laig. His laig swelled bad and he was lame fer a day or two but he went right on at work. I shook a scorpion out of my pants one mornin’ before I put them on. I prefer doin’ it previous to doin’ it afterwards. It’s safer.

Old Time Country School Days

The kids has more fun now than they used to and has a lot more clothes and pitcher shows and things. They don’t have as many sisters and brothers and as many lickin’s as we did and they don’t have to go and build a fire in an old school house and thaw out on a winter mornin’, but I reckon they miss out on a lot of things at that.

One time we had a teacher down in the Missouri hills and she come from a big town. She asked more fool questions and knowed less than anybody in the settlement. Not barrin’ one old cuss that argyed the world was flat. She seen some hogs that had their tails froze off the winter before and wanted to know why their tails was cut off and one big boy told her that they got such big gobs of gumbo mud on their tails that it
stretched the hide on their face till they couldn’t get their eyes shut and the flies put them blind. And she believed it.

There was two old houn’ dogs that we always took to school and I reckon they knew about as much as most of us at that. One mornin’ we run a cotton tail rabbit into a rock pile and dug him out. We got him by the hint leg and he wasn’t hurt none and we put him in the school marm’s desk. When school took up she raised up the lid and see that rabbit a squattin’ in there and she allowed it was a rat and she sure give up a yell. We opened the door and poked him out and he got out of doors and took to the timbers with both houn’s after him. The school marm told the directors it was the biggest rat she ever see and that he had a tail over a foot long. Which we figgered was some tail for a rabbit.

Come Christmas we penned her out and made her treat and the directors allowed we hadn’t done no harm so she sort of throwed in with us. Yessir she even rode a mule to a country dance and helped doctor a couple of sick babies that winter and we reckoned she ort to settle right there for life but she was too durn good lookin’ and a town feller married her the next summer, but if she had got a couple more winters in the hills she would sure have joined up with us hill billies and no mistake.

Yessir one recess they was two boys a fightin’ and she run out to part ‘em and slipped and slid on a patch of ice in front of the door. She slid plum out from under her petticoats and we saw that she wore the old red flannels same as our Maws did and we figgered her in fer one of us right now. That stopped the fight fer she took our mind off fightin’ and no mistake.

I often wonder where she went but us kids sure did like her fer she was the only school marm we ever had that was young and good lookin’ and laffed more at a joke than us kids did. I reckon a lot of old fellers has went to that same sort of school house and bent down hickory trees and et pork sausage and corn bread and lived to a good age afterwards.

**The Traveling School Master**  

West Queensland is a funny place for an American to get into, or it was about twenty years ago when I was working there. They work different from us and their cow talk aint like ours and their way of thinkin’ and livin’ is all different.

A pasture is a “poddick” and a round-up is a “muster” and the range is a “run” and the home ranch is the “homestead” and a fence rider is a “boundary rider”. They rode flat saddles and carried long whips and nearly every “station hand” and “drover” had a tin pot on his saddle to boil himself a pot of tea with his lunch.

But what seemed odd to me was the travelin’ school master. This feller takes a team and a buckboard and makes the rounds in a certain section of the country and gets
around every two or three months. He sometimes has to wait a few days if his pupils are visitin’ on a near-by “station” as they call a ranch, or if some boy is out helpin’ on a muster.

He waits till he ketches all the kids on any station and then he examines them to see what they know, and after that he leaves them some more books and takes the ones that they are through with and drives on. They can never tell within a few weeks when he will land on a place because he has to wait sometimes in a place and then again the roads may be pretty bad after rains for that country can sure git boggy in wet weather and bridges jest aint. So you see the travelin’ school master has to be a pretty good bushman hisself to git bye.

Funny thing the kids all seem to like him and it is plum surprisin’ how much they learn and the most of them are mighty proud to tally up with him on what they learn while he is away. When he leaves it is not uncommon for one or two kids on those big leases to ride five or six miles to open and close a “podick” gate for him while his team “is still a bit brash.” For he has to use what he can for hosses. There is no feedin’ in that country and sometimes a hoss gits away on him and the hoss they stake him to may not have had much harness work.

Yes sir, him and them kids is pardners from the word go and when I think how a lot of them bush raised kids check up their affairs with him and act like real little men and women, it makes me ashamed of the way some kids that get a real break act in this country. BUT, the government don’t put nobody but a one hundred per cent man and gentleman on that job.

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**It Was a Draw!**

Joe Morgan and Anse Craig were turrible fellers to tell big windys and to ask fool questions, but they both made their braggs that they never told a yarn that they couldn’t explain, and never asked a question they couldn’t answer.

One night over at Flat Lakes they tangled in camp. Anse he started it. “Speakin’ of speed,” sez he, “I mind one time I was workin’ fur the Circle Diamond outfit and jumped a antelope. I was on my top hoss and ‘bout a mile from there I ketch him and jest as I snubbed him up short my shadder ketched up and cum alongside.”


“Speekin’ of speed,” sez Joe, “One time up in Utah a mighty fast old shep dog jumped a cotton tail rabbit, which went round a haystack and dive in. Old Shep thinks he’s still runnin’ and the fourth time round old Shep ketchet hisself by the tail.”

Joe looks at Anse and Anse sez: “He natcherly run his own tail off and was around to ketch it fore in hit the ground.” Joe he nods and then Anse sez:
“Speekin’ of Muskeeters, ‘stead of speed, when I was up in Montanny, they had Muskeeters that would set around on the trees and bark, and a great many of ‘em would weigh a pound.”

When that one hit Joe, he set up and slid like a cuttin’ pony, but he was stayin’ with it. He bites off a chaw and spits and sez:

“I reckon that’s about right. They couldn’t set on the trees ‘thout settin’ on the bark. And take enough of ‘em and they’d weigh a pound. A great many of ‘em.”

Then Joe asks Anse how a groun’ squirrel digs his hole and don’t throw out no dirt.

“Dunno,” sez Anse, “How does he?”

“He starts at the bottom and digs up,” sez Joe.

“How does he get down thar?” asks Anse.


‘Bout then two outside men come in and by the time we helped ‘em unpack their beds and throw their hosses to the remuda, Joe’s and [Anse’s] high power talk got all busted up.
THE COW BOY’S SHIRT TAIL

There is one thing people inquire about;
They ask why a cow puncher’s shirt tail comes out.
Most any rough hand that you happen across –
If he’s skinnin’ a beef, if he’s shoin’ a hoss;
If he’s ridin’ a broncho or flankin’ a calf –
Well, his shirt tail is out, or at least the last half.

If you’ve seen some old waddy jest bustin’ his neck
To escape from some critter that’s got on the peck,
You’ve discovered two things, jest between you and I,
That a cow boy can run and a shirt tail can fly.
He knowed what he’d get if he happened to fail,
So he shore didn’t stop to arrange his shirt tail.

Now workin’ wild stock where the brush is right thick,
Where the cattle is sudden and the cow boys is quick;
If you notice a man and a hoss disappear,
That is, if you view the event from the rear,
The thing that you always will keep on your mind,
Is that cow puncher’s shirt tail a floppin’ behind.

Them “Levi P. Strauss” is built small in the seat
And a cowpuncher’s frame doesn’t carry much meat.
He can eat a big breakfast and long before night
He’s so empty and hongry that nothin’ fits tight.
And besides, he gits rassled and tussled around
Till the best behaved shirt tail won’t hardly stay down.

Yes, I know it’s a fact and beyond any doubt
That a cowpuncher’s shirt tail will keep comin’ out.
It’s the work that they do and the clothes that they wear,
And it’s partly perhaps that a cow boy don’t care;
So I’ve had to explain to folks, time and again,
Their shirt tails come out ‘cause they caint keep them in.