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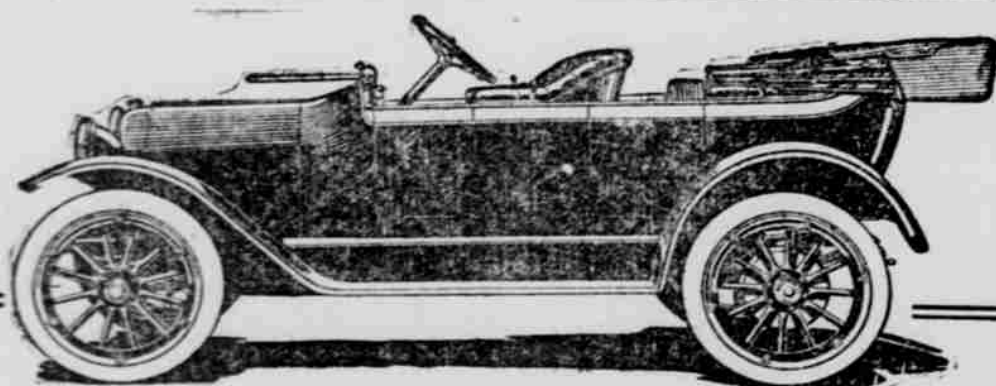
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EARLY DAYS IN NEBRASKA

(Continued From First Page.)

monished us boys not to get sick too often, as, if we did, our only medicine might give out. The grub wagon also contained a set of blacksmith tools and bellows, such as were necessary in shoeing oxen. To his many accomplishments, Boss Altaffer added that of an expert in the art of shoeing oxen. Some of the oxen would become footsore from traveling over the sand and then Boss Altaffer would start the bellows and in a short time the ox or oxen would be wearing a new pair of ox shoes.

Well, we took our teams to the farm north of Nebraska City, then owned by General Isaac Goe, where we loaded seven wagons with shelled corn in gunnysacks, for the use of the soldiers at Old Fort Julesburg in Colorado. This corn had been purchased by the government and Altaffer had taken the contract to deliver it at Fort Julesburg within a certain time or upon failure so to do, then at Fort Laramie in Wyoming or at such other place as the government might direct. After loading our wagons we then started westward traveling over the old steam wagon road part of the time. The writer soon had his first experience in a freighters' camp and his first experience in the art of cooking over the campfire. He discovered that he could drive four yoke of oxen much more successfully than he could mix flour, form biscuits and properly bake them in the old fashioned oven over the campfire. Likewise he soon discovered that he knew more about farming and teaching school than he did about properly slicing and frying "sow belly," making coffee, and cooking potatoes and onions. In fact, for a time he couldn't eat much of his own cooking while the rest of the boys, including Boss Altaffer, seemed to relish the work of the young, inexperienced cook. Boss Altaffer was ever ready to show the writer how to prepare the grub, and soon the writer could eat about as much as anyone and began to improve physically.

When we got into the buffalo ranges, the "buffalo chips" were in abundance and often these were gathered, put into gunnysacks and into the wagons and carried with us. They made an intense heat, and a bed of live coals under the old-fashioned bake-oven and some on top of the oven lid and the four big biscuits were soon baked. If in handling the oven lid, some of these red hot "buffalo chips" should fall among the biscuit, that seemed to make no difference with the appetites of any in the outfit. If any at all, our appetites became more voracious. And the amount of food consumed by us "bull-whackers" on that trip, would astonish, if not frighten many people of the present day. Usually about half a bushel of biscuits were baked and potatoes, onions and "sow belly" in proportion! And how we all soon enjoyed and relished that kind of food for breakfast, dinner and supper! But at supper time, when in camp after a hard day's drive, we sometimes added to this "sumptuous" repast some of that spirits frummenti from the keg. This liquid refreshment, no doubt, was just as palatable to us "bull-whackers," as is Secretary Bryan's "Grape-juice," to the guests at the White House. But none of us ever drank enough to produce intoxication. Boss Altaffer limited our allowances and he was a man in whom all of us had implicit confidence.

That Wild Steer.

As before stated, the writer was wholly inexperienced in driving and managing four yoke of oxen hitched to one wagon, and had requested Boss Altaffer to assign for his use, four yoke of gentle oxen. But somehow, the writer was given one of the apparently wildest and most unmanageable steers that anyone ever saw. This ox was a dark brindle in color, large and perfectly formed, was the off wheeler while his mate was equally large with white face and white spots over its body and gentle as a lamb. They were called, "Buck" and Brindle," the latter being that wild steer and the writer speaks of this particular steer now, because in the course of this narrative, a somewhat instructive incident will be related of "Brindle." When the writer first began yoking up his oxen he found all gentle and easily yoked except Brindle. It required the services of nearly all the boys to assist in yoking Brindle.

But when hitched with his mate to the wagon as my wheelers, no ox could possibly do his work more faithfully. But the writer soon noticed that Brindle would always shy off when he saw the whip swinging in his direction. This led to an investigation and a remarkable discovery was made. Brindle had been aiding in hauling stuff on the plains for a number of years. On examination, the writer discovered that Brindle's entire body was covered with many scars as if made by the whip in vigorous if not cruel hands. The conclusion was irresistible, that Brindle had been most cruelly and inhumanly beaten and thus made him afraid of anything in human form. The writer, had, early in life, learned that, to have so-called "dumb animals," obey, love and respect you, such animals must be treated with kindness and not cruelly beaten with whip and club. Acting on this theory, the writer commenced this mode of treatment by approaching Brindle in a way that this so-called "dumb brute" soon understood to be friendly. No whip was allowed to touch Brindle, nor was anyone allowed to loudly curse or abuse him. The writer, by kind and gentle treatment was soon able to gently rub those cruel scars on Brindle's body and to brush his beautiful brindle hair. In a short time, Brindle, apparently understanding this kind of treatment, returned like treatment as best he could; first by licking with his tongue, the writer's hands, then his body and finally the face. Brindle, soon became perfectly docile and obedient and when Buck was yoked and the other end of the yoke was held up, when called, Brindle would come from other loose oxen, march to his place under the yoke, and there, gently and quietly stand while the writer adjusted the ox-bow which yoked him to his mate. Could anything, more forcibly illustrate the great influence of kind treatment of so-called, "dumb animals?" The writer learned an important lesson from his experience with Brindle, which, ever afterward, compelled the belief that, most so-called "dumb animals" were capable of reasoning. But more of Brindle, before we close this sketch of plain life, 18 years ago.

Oxen in Ranchman's Cornfield.

A short time after we left Nebraska City with our cargo of shelled corn, we camped one night near a stream of flowing water, some miles west of the latter named city. The weather seemed ideal, and none of us ever thought of a rain storm. But toward morning, that rainstorm came, and it was a regular, down pour. It seemed, nearly everything was flooded. Early in the morning, Boss Altaffer called us boys to get up and go and look out for our oxen which Joe Tempest, the night-herder was supposed to be guarding. Soon Payton Dillon and the writer were mounted—one riding a mule, the other a pony and Boss Altaffer on foot. We soon found Joe, the night-herder, but at first couldn't find the oxen. Very soon, Boss Altaffer, although on foot, found the oxen in a ranchman's cornfield and it was only a matter of \$25.00 damages which Boss Altaffer paid, to redeem our enterprising oxen. A suspicion prevailed among us "bull-whackers," that Joe Tempest, the night-herder, had been sleeping and let the cattle get away but we could not then prove it, even by circumstantial evidence. But more of a sleeping night-herder hereafter.

Now, we had to reach Fort Julesburg with that shelled corn, at a certain time, or the government would order us farther west and this might mean, an all winter's job. But Boss Altaffer was equal to the occasion. He planned to protect our oxen as follows: As soon as it was light enough to see to yoke the oxen, the night-herder was instructed to bring them into the corral and we drivers were hustled out of our sleeping bunks and soon the oxen were yoked, hitched to the wagons and we were traveling in the direction of old Fort Julesburg. About ten or eleven o'clock a. m., we would go into camp, unyoke the oxen and turn them out on the rich grass to graze and rest, while we had our breakfasts. Then after about three hours, we would "hitch up" and travel until toward evening, when we would again go into camp for our dinners and give our oxen a chance to graze and rest. Then, after a good rest, we would again "hitch up" and drive as long as we could see the road and then go into camp for our suppers and a night's rest for ourselves and our oxen. By this plan, we reached old Fort Kear-

ney—a distance of 200 miles from the Missouri river, in eight days, making an average of 25 miles per day—the usual distance traveled by horse or mule teams.

A little incident is worthy of mention. Our suspicions that Joe Tempest, the night-herder, was asleep when the oxen got away and into that ranchman's cornfield, had taken a strong hold of most of us boys.

We had reached what was called the Indian country, where roving bands of savages were supposed to be on the look out for some small train of emigrants or freighters. The Indian question was the principal one discussed by us "bull-whackers" and Boss Altaffer. Well, we were in camp one night in this so-called Indian country. Payton Dillon, who had served in the Union army during the civil war and who had been mustered out of the service and at his home in Oloo county just three days before starting on this trip, and the writer of this sketch had become warm friends and somewhat chummy. Payton was some four years older than the writer. Well, before going to bed the night referred to, Payton and the writer concluded to play Indian on Joe. For this purpose we each wore a blanket and went hatless with our hair hanging over our faces. Each of us carried a loaded revolver in a belt around the waist. We soon found the heard and also Joe. But what was our surprise to find Joe lying flat on his back, sound asleep with one end of the lariar rope tied around his body while the other end was tied to the mule he had with him? We soon concluded not to disturb Joe until we laid the matter before Boss Altaffer. Payton detached the lariar from the mule, mounted it and rode to the camp while the writer remained on guard. The matter was presented to Boss Altaffer who directed that the mule be returned to Joe, but not until we gave him a good scaring. When Payton returned with the Boss's directions, we commenced making a noise to arouse Joe from his slumber. We yelled and drove steers around him but couldn't awaken Joe. We both then purposely stumbled over him and gave him a few gentle kicks. Joe waked up and commenced to arise. As he did so, Payton and the writer commenced firing off their revolvers over and above Joe's head, yelling at the same time, "Killee, Killee dead; sculpee, sculpee white man." Joe was badly scared and begged for his life, exclaiming piteously, "Don't kill me, don't kill me." He finally discovered that none of the dozen shots we had fired had touched him and even recognized us when he exclaimed, "I didn't know who in the blazes you was."

At Old Fort Kearney.

We arrived at Old Fort Kearney, where the military authorities stopped us and compelled us to wait until trains should arrive so that we would have at least fifty armed men to make the trip further west. Our train was small, only ten in number, including the Boss, but we were well armed, each carrying a revolver, besides, we had a Springfield rifle and one musket. It is true that the many Indian depredations had caused universal alarm. The horrid and brutal massacre by the Indians at Plum Creek just the year before, was fresh in the minds of people, especially in those of freighters and emigrants.

In a short time we had our fifty armed men when we left Old Fort Kearney and continued our journey to Fort Julesburg. But it was not long before we discovered that our associate trains traveled too slowly and if we remained with them at such a gait, we would not reach Fort Julesburg on time, and would then be compelled to go on to Fort Laramie or some other place.

We boys held a council of war with Boss Altaffer, chairman. The whole matter was discussed, each "bull-whacker" expressing his views. The great danger from Indian attacks was fully discussed and without one dissenting voice, we decided to pull out from the other trains and go alone just as soon as we felt safe from military interference.

Well, we finally struck out alone and took chances with possible Indian attacks. We could see Indians, occasionally, riding their ponies along the bluffs, a considerable distance from the freight and emigrant road, but never saw any near the

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road. We could see Plum Creek where that terrible massacre by the Indians was committed the year before—in 1864, and there saw the wagon tires and iron bands, all that escaped the fire with which the Indians had burnt the wagons after stealing their contents and murdering and scalping the men and boys.

Stuck in a Mud Hole.

In crossing a slough in a certain place, a number of our wagons became stuck in the mud. The writer's wagon went down until the hubs were covered over. His four yoke of cattle were literally stalled—couldn't move a wheel. It became necessary to double up the teams to pull the wagons out. Some twenty-eight yoke of oxen were hitched to the writer's wagon. When all were properly hitched, with their respective drivers standing beside them, Boss Altaffer passed along the line, riding the mule, swinging his large ox-whip and yelling and swearing to such an extent that a person would naturally think that he was going to beat the life out of those oxen, or some of them. He approached the writer's four yoke in this manner when the writer objected to his using the whip on any of the former's oxen, and bluntly said to the Boss that before he whipped any of the writer's oxen, he would have to whip the writer first. The latter said to the Boss, that he did not whip his oxen, particularly Brindle, and would not consent that any other person should whip them as long as he drove and managed them.

The writer suggested to Boss Altaffer that when all were ready, he give the signal to the drivers and have all the oxen start pulling together. This suggestion was acted on and then the writer's wagon apparently arose straight up out of the mud and was soon on terra firma. And no ox of the large number hitched to that wagon, did more faithful, powerful pulling, than did that formerly wild steer, Brindle. After landing on solid ground, the writer went to Brindle and while rubbing and stroking his hair, that so-called "dumb" animal turned his head and with the tongue commenced licking the writer's person, thus showing that the animal intelligence reciprocates kind treatment. The writer learned an impressive lesson from his experience with this so-called "dumb" animal, and believes that readers of this sketch will profit from such experience.

Brindle Defending His Friend.

On the road, we drove along a portion of what was called "Fremont's Slough," so named after General John C. Fremont, who traveled this route in 1805, in his search for a Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean. We were camped for the night near this slough. On the north side, the bottom was covered with rich grass and in places with a dense growth of underbrush, while on the south side and just south of the freight and emigrant road, there were numerous bluffs and deep bush-covered ravines. Such was an ideal place for the concealment of Indians and we were fully aware of the danger. Boss Altaffer and the writer "bunked"

together, that is, occupied the same sleeping apartments either on the corn filled gunny sacks in the wagon, or on blankets spread on the ground.

Our custom was, that just before retiring for the night, Boss Altaffer and the writer would visit the oxen in charge of Joe the night-herder to see that things were all right. On this particular night, at about eleven o'clock, we made our accustomed visit and found the oxen absorbed in grazing but couldn't find Joe. We tramped around the herd and repeatedly called Joe but no answer. We were surprised and dumbfounded. Could it be possible that Joe was asleep somewhere in that wild and dangerous country, or had he skipped out and left the oxen to wander where they pleased? We finally returned to camp and there found Joe lying under one of the freight wagons.

(Continued on Page Seven.)

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