

RECOLLECTIONS OF SOUTHWESTERN KANSAS.

(Written for THE CONSERVATIVE by Willis George Emerson.)

[EDITOR'S NOTE:—Mr. Emerson is a resident of Wyoming. A dozen years ago he was cashier of the Meade National bank, at Meade, Kansas. In the Harrison and Morton campaign, he was the presidential elector from the Seventh Kansas congressional district, and later was selected electoral messenger, to carry the returns to Washington. He is a lawyer, an orator, a novelist, and a man of affairs. He is largely interested in the copper fields of southern Wyoming. In the last national campaign Mr. Emerson was vice-chairman of the speaker's bureau of the republican national committee. Recently he was elected an associate trustee with President McKinley and Vice-President Roosevelt, of the American University of Washington, D. C.]

My recollections of southwestern Kansas are many and varied. They come before me in moments of retrospection in panoramic vividness. My remembrances are of hurrying men, homesteading claims; of breaking out prairie lands, and broken promises of agricultural reward; of prosperity and panic, burning winds and blighted crops; buffalo grass and buffalo bones; the brightest prospects, and the direst poverty; freighters' outfits and fatiguing drives; old cattlemen and new farmers; money lenders and mortgage loans, exorbitant interest and hazardous securities; county-seat fights and crushed hopes; paper railroads and dreams of paradise; prairie dogs and prairie chickens; a rainless sky and a tireless people, sod houses and fragments of eastern luxury; old soldiers and good comrades; fortune and famine, meadow larks and moon-light nights; lariatting cowboys and long-horned cattle; coyotes and cactus; mirages of many lakes and bleak plains of alkali dust; brown sand dunes and red sand plums; a dearth of water and a deluge of water-melons; fields of sunflowers and days of sunshine; kingly hopes and kaffir corn; Indian summer days and an inland sea of vastness; prairie schooners and prairie fires; cattle corrals and canned goods; Kansas drug stores and Kansas sufferers; buffalo chips and centipedes; bucking bronchoes and baby buffalos; tumble weeds and tumble bugs; brave hearted men and noble hearted women; and, withal, a God-fearing people, patient, industrious, tenacious, heroic and possessed of more bravery, fortitude, endurance and tenderness of heart than the people of any other community that I am acquainted with on the face of the earth.

Farmers vs. Stockmen.

Southwestern Kansas is the great pasture-field of the North American continent. The soil is rich and nourishes a buffalo grass which is not only impervious to hot winds, but is cured by them and made more nutritious for the vast herds of cattle.

In the early "eighties" it was gener-

ally believed by the people in the east and middle west, that in the southwestern corner of Kansas there had been found an agricultural country, comparable to the corn belt in southern Iowa and the Red River wheat fields of Minnesota. A few years of test on the part of the agriculturists who flocked into that section, demonstrated that the marvellous richness of soil could not count against two elements, hot winds and scarcity of water. No one knows better than a Kansan that "water is the god of the harvest."

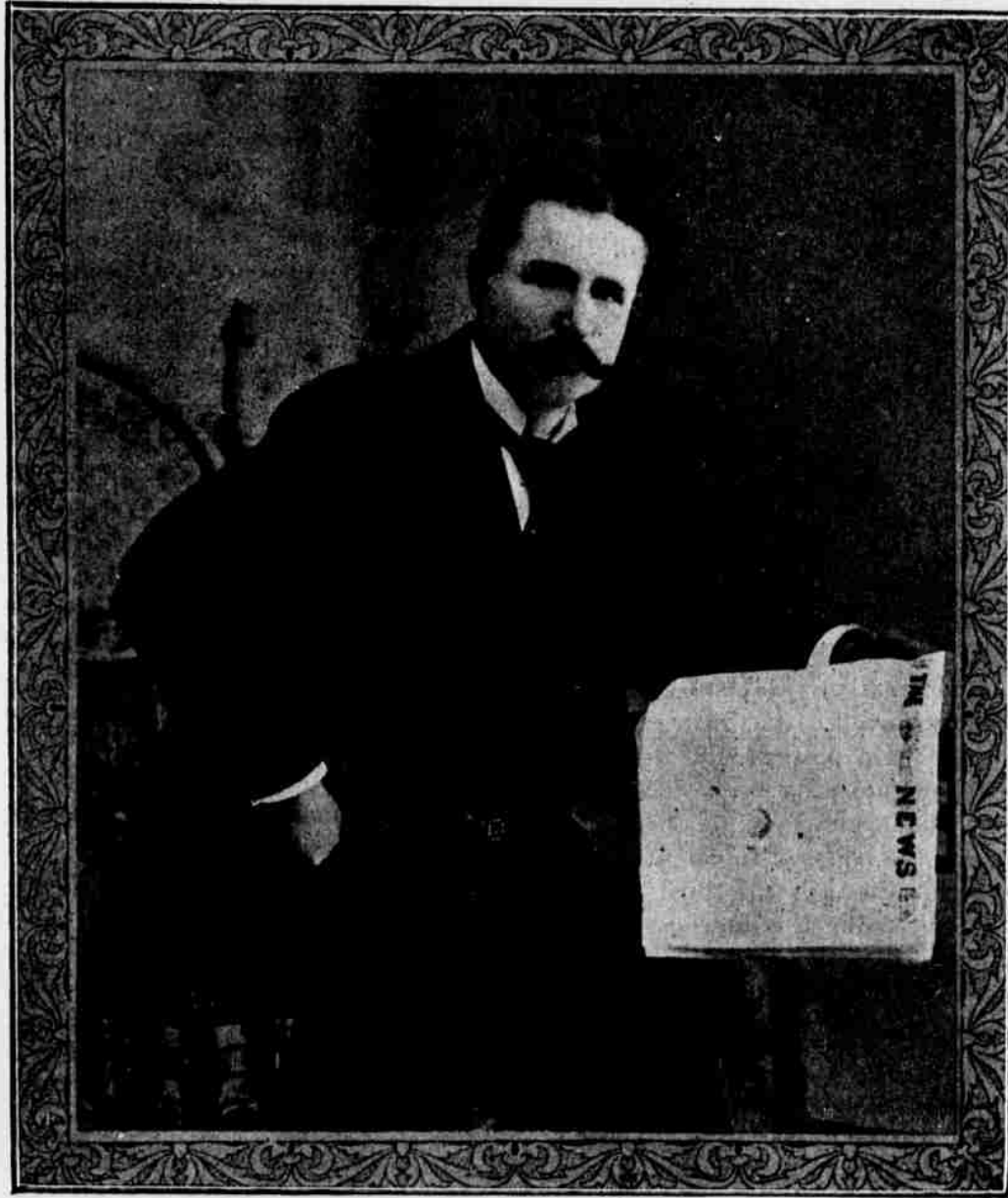
I went to Meade in June, 1886. At that time there had been two or three years in which farming had been suc-

cessful, but in the summer of 1889, a campaign of four days, it devastated the country.

The "Hot Winds."

I well remember the bountiful fields of wheat and barley that were beginning to yellow with golden promise. The farmers said that the wheat and barley were almost out of the "milk" and into the "dough," and, while the dry weather would prevent the kernels from filling, as in former years, yet, after all, there would be a fair yield. The cattlemen said: "Wait, and you will see whether southwestern Kansas is an agricultural paradise or a cattle range."

The farmers, however, were not easily discouraged. They pointed with



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cessfully carried on. Those years witnessed the raising of as large crops of corn and wheat as were being produced in sections that had been under profitable cultivation for many years. From the time the farmer made his first appearance in the southwestern counties of Kansas, he had been replying to the cattlemen's argument, that the newcomers were spoiling a fine range, to make third-class farms. For a while it really looked as if these arguments had been answered adversely to the cattlemen by the great crops produced. The following year, 1887, was prosperous; 1888 was fairly so. Then one day in 1889 a hot wind came belching up from the great southwest, and, after a vigorous cam-

pride to the thousands of acres of growing corn, and remarked to one another about how rapidly it was growing, and notwithstanding the dry weather, was not even firing at the roots. Its color was a dark, healthy green, luxuriant and tall, and each stalk was clothed with broad, bending blades, so stately that every corn-field seemed like a primeval forest. The corn was beginning to "tassel" and "silk." It was the 28th of June, 1889. I remember it well. It was about ten o'clock in the morning, when suddenly a hot wind began blowing, presaging disaster. As the minutes went by, the velocity of the wind increased, and by noon it was blowing a regular gale. It was stifling hot, and