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WOMAN'S FONDNESS FOR OUTDOOR LIFE

Mrs. A. J. Plumer Prefers Life on One of the Finest Ranches in Nebraska to a Home in London or Philadelphia.

BROKEN BOW, Neb., May 1.—(Special.)—The man who said that central and western Nebraska was a "vast arid desert" never conceived that on the edge of the twentieth century practically every foot of the "desert" would be occupied by vast herds of cattle, horses and sheep. After ranging through the winter the stock in this country looks as well and in many cases better than those that have been ranged in stock fields and straw stacks in eastern Nebraska.

not a bushel of corn, wheat or oats is grown. An inquiry at the stores disclosed the fact that it is difficult to get sufficient eggs and butter for local consumption. Vegetables are shipped in and the town does not boast of more than 300 population. The cattle ranches are on a larger scale than those farther east and ranches with 500 head and more are the rule and not the exception, while some have as many as 2,000 head and more, but it is an exclusive "cow" country, as very few, if any sheep or horses are grown. The country north and southeast and west for fifty miles or more is a succession of sand hills and nothing more, save an occasional valley or hay meadow. On each of these some settler has homesteaded and the meadows are all fenced as well as some of the ranges and by an unwritten law of the country, the range adjoining a hay claim or valley belongs to the settler and his rights are respected by his neighbors and very little friction occurs between them. The hay is of the excellent quality and on many of the flats or bottoms as much as 200 tons of hay to the quarter section is cut annually, and in this vicinity the ranchmen do not attempt to keep cattle throughout the year without hay. From one to one and a half tons are considered necessary to carry an animal through the winter. The hay is what is called white top and is of as good a quality or better than the Platte or Missouri bottom hay or eastern Nebraska upland hay.

Cattle Not Sheltered. Strange to say, cattle have no shelter or protection but the sunny side of a sand hill, except at calving season. When a small corral is used in which are kept the heifer springs and these are carefully watched and as a result very little loss occurs either in winter or at calving time. On inquiry I found two reasons given for not sheltering the cattle. One is that in a storm the cattle will huddle under a shelter until they tramp each other to death and the other is that cattle with shelter will refuse to get out and rustle their living. The feeding is done all through the winter by scattering the hay along the base of a sheltering sand hill in the lee of the bluff and it has been miles of these feeding grounds in this vicinity with cattle feeding on them, and it is an inspiring sight. High grade cattle are preferred to thoroughbreds for the reason that they are said to be better rustlers. However, I found that registered bulls were used exclusively, and the Shorthorn and Hereford are the favorites. In fact, with one or two exceptions, I have found nothing else and so far I have found no disposition on the part of the ranchmen to use one breed of cattle exclusively. After a few years of Hereford exclusively, they change to Shorthorns and vice versa. There seems to be difficulty to get bulls here that are good rustlers and acclimated as the breeders do not do as well as local bred animals, even grades, as the first year they do not do well here, after being taken off grain and put on grass and hay exclusively, as not a pound of grain is fed in this country. It has occurred to me that a small ranch here with exclusively registered stock either Shorthorns or Herefords that would breed bulls for sale would be a paying investment and would result in a market for the ranch was established that would require all the stock at fancy prices that a registered ranch could supply. One bull to each twenty cows is the custom here.

One of Finest Ranches in State. I drove out to the cattle ranch of Dr. A. J. Plumer and saw what is said to be one of the finest ranches in the state. The doctor is a graduate of an eastern medical college and left a chair in the faculty to follow the occupation of a ranchman. Mrs. Plumer is an English woman by birth and an amusing story is told of her fondness for ranch life. She was called to London

some years ago to settle up an estate, and while gone her husband wrote her that he had an opportunity to sell at a good figure and might have sold before he could hear from her. She immediately called him not to sell until she returned. On her return she stopped in Philadelphia on a visit, and on returning to her home, twelve miles north of here and five miles from the nearest neighbor, she remarked that "London was too foggy and Philadelphia too stuffy," and she preferred western life, where there was more room. Today they have as large and handsomely furnished a fourteen-room house, with all modern improvements, as you will find anywhere.

Cattle on the Range. From seven to twenty men are employed and 2,000 cattle are ranged from May 1 to December 1. From December 1 to May 1 the cattle are fed the 2,000 tons of hay put up annually. Above 50 per cent of the cows raise calves annually, and a total loss to exceed 3 per cent annually from all causes is unusual. Water for their immense ranches is furnished by eight windmills and six flowing wells. The latter are 300 feet deep and furnish an unlimited supply of water, and each will water 200 head of cattle or more. Where range is short, and in most cases here the range is not equal to the hay, the ranchmen have summer ranges some distance from their winter and hay ranges, where there is less hay and more range. Buffalo grass, bunch grass and black root are the principal range grasses.

Branding of Cattle. The range or ranchman brand their cattle twice each year and each have a distinct brand, which is registered at the county seat and at the state capital. All the brands in the state are recorded and none are duplicated. Each county paper publishes the brands in the vicinity, for which the stock men pay. The most amusing feature of the open house drop curtain, on which was a handsome ranch scene painted for a center piece, was a fresco of ranchmen's brands. About thirty forty dogs each painted with a frame about it, and the brand on each cow with the owner's name brand. Dr. Plumer's ranch is fenced with over seventy-five miles of fence and

enough hay land to cut 5,000 tons of hay. A small band of sheep are kept on the ranch for summer meat. The doctor breeds to Shorthorn bulls exclusively, after his experience with Herefords. Twenty-eight of these bulls are now on the place in a corral, and will be put with the cows the 1st of June to prevent calves coming too early. The doctor recently refused \$100,000 for his ranch. Judge Stilson, county judge of Grant county, has a ranch stocked with 300 head of full-blood black polls, the best looking bunch of cattle I have seen so far. Many of them are fit for beef right now, and none of them ever saw a pound of grain.

MOVING TIME IN MIDLAND. Returning from Winter Vacations. Courtship and Homebuilding. The moving season has begun in the bird world, reports the New York Tribune, and great numbers of the little wanderers are returning from their winter vacations to the places which were made brighter by their presence a year ago. Among the first birds to come back were the blackbirds. They came, as they always do, in flocks, and seemed to know just where to locate, and many haunts which they chose as their homes last year are already occupied by the black advance agents of the warm season. "Their vacations were spent in the Carolinas, Georgia and Florida," said John D. Hicke, who is a careful observer of the birds of this country, "and their actions when they come back here seem to say that they are glad to be here again. They seem to like company and are always in flocks. Many often nesting in the same tree. They never fight and live peacefully. They are, even through the days of courtship, a term which with some birds is productive of much discord and conflict."

People who have had an opportunity to study the ways of the blackbird in the courtship time know that, despite his love of peace, he is anxious to make conquests, and in these his plumage plays the important part. The male bird struts and hops where the sun will show his feathers off

to the best advantage. These look purple, jet black, bronze and brown from various points of view. He ruffles his feathers, and, like a dandy, misses no occasion to make his appearance striking, until he has made an impression on some female, when he relaxes into the same state of indifference as to his personal appearance which often characterizes men whose failures dress as their distinguishing characteristic in their bachelor days.

The robin, which has also come for the season, is more richly endowed by nature than the blackbird as to plumage, but makes no effort at conquest by means of his personal appearance. Fine feathers are of no consequence in the eyes of Miss Robin and C. Robin knows it.

These birds have many peculiar traits. They come from the south in pairs and singly, low and when nobody knows. The flight is usually made at night and a chirp in the early morning is the first sign that the robins have come again. They go to the country or to places where there are lawns or orchards, and in the selection of their summer homes they show a decided leaning toward the habitations of man. The robin must have its mate, for he believes in domestic bliss, and he sets about the task of housebuilding soon after the summer home has been reached. His work is of a barbaric nature and requires pluck and perseverance. He picks a quarry with another male bird in the presence of a female, and knowing that he is fighting for a home, he fights hard. The lady bird sits near by, apparently unconcerned and unconscious of what is going on, but she always has an eye on the contest, the result of which is usually an engagement in Robinsonland, with the victorious combatant sitting on the nest.

Redeeming Partially Destroyed Bills at the Treasury Department. "While it cannot be stated that it is an American habit to light lamps and gas with money," explained an official of the redemption division of the Treasury department to a correspondent, "there are a number who appear actually to have money to burn, and who now are then burn it. There are more money burners, too, than come to the front and demand a redemption of their partially destroyed money, for some people hesitate before they are willing to appear in such an indefensible position. I don't want to be understood as stating that it occurs every day, for that probably would be stretching it somewhat, but it is a fact that it occurs many more times than would be supposed. A case of the kind came to the division last week, where a fellow lighted a match at the door of his room and from that lighted what he supposed was a piece of paper which he had in his pocket. He started with the lighted paper, and the gas lighted paper he ascertained, to his surprise and disgust, that his taper was a \$10 bill, more than one-half of which had been burned. In his communication to the secretary of the treasury, to whom he was advised to write, he admitted that he was foolish and deserved a kick instead of anything else, but said as grace was rather short with him he would have to appeal for redemption. He furnished the necessary affidavits which under the law have to be filed in such cases, and a new bill was sent to him for the half-burned note which he sent in for redemption. Lots of times people burn money, but make no claim for redemption, supposing that they have no redress in the matter. But the Treasury department does not see a rule hunt up trouble, so unless the claim is made none is suggested."

He Guessed Wrong. Philadelphia Press: Brown-You seem to be a hustler. I saw that life insurance agent go into your house this morning and less than half an hour after him came the doctor. Smith-Well, what do you gather from that? Brown-Merely that you were in a great hurry to undergo the physical examination and have it over with. Smith-You're wrong. The doctor came to examine the insurance man's wounds.

TOLD HOW TO CURE A STY. Hobbs Given a Variety of Remedies for His Affliction. When Hobbs came down to his office the other day, reports the Chicago Chronicle, the lower lid of his left eye looked angry and inflamed. It was swollen a trifle and was altogether out of sorts. His partner, Dillon, looked askance at it when Hobbs opened up his roll-top desk. "That's a pretty bad lamp you've got there, old man," he said. "Seem to be getting a sty, ain't you?" "I don't know," said Hobbs. "I guess I caught cold in it. I noticed it first when I got up this morning."

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Bell-My brother asked me to get him an Easter gift. The title of it, I think, is "Folded Hands." Nell-You mean "The Palms."