

MEN OF EARTH

By Russell Lord



KING OF CATTLEMEN'S HEAVEN

SIXTY-FOUR years ago Charles Ancency came riding into the Little Gallatin country of southwestern Montana. Born on the trail, he rode in an improvised hammock swung at one end of his father's prairie schooner.

His father and mother were French. They had come all the way from the suburbs of Paris. Their wagons were drawn by pure-bred Shorthorn cows. In another sling, under the wagon bed, rode a pure-bred Shorthorn calf, also born on the trail.

Charles Ancency, the elder, died in 1900. He died after a curious, and occasionally spectacular, series of ups and downs fully shared by Charles Ancency, the son. He has been dead for over thirty years, but the son speaks of him constantly and tells with a certain bitter resentment how his father died.

In 1900, right in his prime, right when things were beginning to work out for us, he went out one evening to corral a couple of milk cows. His horse must have stepped in a hole. His pommel caught him right in the stomach. A man can get all tore up that way. Seventy-six years old. Tough as hickory. Good for another twenty years anyway. He and I went through a good bit together.

The man who stands thus and speaks, his arms folded, has come into the kingdom his father desired. He is almost a legendary figure in that part of the country. Men told that you have an appointment to see him look at you with a new respect. "If he takes to you, all right," said one. "He sizes a man up first glint. If he don't like your looks, he'll just keep smiling at you, polite as h—, and keep his mouth shut tight." This, it turned out, was legend pure and simple; but it does show how attractively they romanticize their mysteries, there around the snug valley city of Bozeman, Mont. Other men told me how, that very spring, Ancency had jumped his horse from a bridge fifteen, some say twenty, feet above the flood waters of the Gallatin and brought to shore a cow that had been crowded into the river. Still others had tales of his skill as a judge of men. How he had taken a boy from behind the counter of a country store, made him his herdsman, sent him east not long afterward to bid upward of a hundred thousand dollars at a big Shorthorn sale; and how the boy had made good.

A preacher told me: "Mr. Ancency isn't a member of our church. I don't know that he attends any church. But we wanted to hold our Presbyterian Sunday school picnic and barbecue up on the Madison, on his land, and he gave us permission. He also consented, as a convenience to us, to supply us with beef for the barbecue. When I saw the sort of animal he'd butchered and fixed up for us, I wondered if we'd ever be able to afford it. It was so much more than we had bargained for. I asked him what we owed him."

He looked me clean through with that cold gray eye of his and said: "Do you think I'd go to all that trouble to sell a steer?"

Well, Charles Ancency is actually a little like all that. Harry Childs is his business partner but he, Charles Ancency, rules that ranch—rules it with the sharp eye and the quick hand of a man who has seen in his time a little something of Indian insurrections, not to mention—since he won't—the beneficent later activities of the Vigilantes.

At sixty he remains closely knit, hard and slow. Not such a large

man but a mighty hard man to shove over. He has a chin built firmly forward into a profile that can seem for the moment hard as rock. But his chuckle is one of the pleasantest sounds imaginable.

With only four months schooling—in business colleges during the winter of his twenty-fourth year—he has trained his own mind. He thinks fast and his speech is direct and vivid.

He took me in a big car up a mountain to give me a look at his place. We got out and stood at the high bend of a road. Bordering mountains, dotted with cattle, stood clear and sharp against the sky. The air as you took it into your lungs seemed to lift you from the ground. Down through bright green meadows, far below us, flashed the fast waters of the Gallatin, hidden here and there by groves of cottonwood and sycamore. In the meadows, which are irrigated, men were cutting hay—timothy and alfalfa, speeded broadcast from a horse, and making, not just in spots but over large acreages, the unbelievable yield of five tons to the acre. Even natural hay in those irrigated bottoms of the Flying-D often comes up to three tons to the acre.

Absent-mindedly Ancency stood there looking over his domain, pointing out this and that and estimating for me the extent of the ranch properties:

"Let's see, now: 310,000 acres deeded, around 200,000 leased; about a half-million in all. Stock water on every quarter-section of it except one. Twenty-six miles lengthways and twenty-four miles across at the widest point. Follow the river and there's forty-two miles of meadows. Look how the meadows are locked right into the range land. I often think how much that Old Man of mine would enjoy seeing this sight."

"He used to tell me: 'Some day we're going to own this whole country.' He knew he had a coming idea. I wish he could have been here to see that bunch of cattle I shipped up to Butte yesterday. I had one weighed out separately; 1,620 pounds, grass-made!"

The Flying-D cow camp is fifteen miles up the valley from the home ranch where the breeding and show herds, some five hundred head in all, are stabled. We drove up to the camp and built ourselves a fire in the big stone fireplace of the lodge. Ancency had been talking of Harry Childs, his partner—"Wonderful fellow!" Now he said: "You take your pencil and I'll tell you some more about my Old Man, about how strong he was for good cattle. He brought a brand-new idea out to this country. All the way from France, he and my mother, in a sailing vessel; then across the plains, driving three yokes of cows and a yoke of oxen. New York to Pennsylvania to Missouri to Denver—I was born at Denver in '67—to Virginia City. He bought old Major Campbell, the first Shorthorn bull ever brought in Gallatin City, and started right in raising Shorthorns. I commenced riding range with him when I was just a little chap eleven years old. We used to close-herd those Shorthorns, so there wouldn't be any mixed blood, and give them salt; and that, mind you, was way before the pasture days."

"He was getting, even then, \$100 apiece for pure-bred bulls at weaning time. And he was looking ahead to the end of free range. Way back then, he'd say: 'Some day all this country is going to be fenced and farmed. The man who's really in the cattle business is going to own his land.'"

A fellow named Cole came along. He sure was a fast trader. We asked him fifty dollars a head for

our whole lot. About the way you'd about that. Not he had them.

"All out of cattle, we took a spur on horse. That was in '84. We bought five hundred wonderful weathers, and started raising them on island patches. When cold weather came they got wabby. We dipped 'em that fall and all through the winter we hand-dipped them. That's when I learned to give a sheep a wash. We trailed them to Billings on the twenty-third day of July and broke even. I've never raised a sheep since.

"Our first real experience on the open range came in the winter of '87. We borrowed a lot of money and bought 32,000 head of range cattle up in Oregon. We unloaded and branded at Billings and started turning loose fifty miles north. We got a permit to put them across the Yellowstone late in November, a five-day drive. The first three days it was warm and nice; then it turned bitter cold and snowed. You could ride a horse at alope on the crust. We came out with seventy-six head.

"That put us way in debt, but the only thing we could do was to stick on. A friend of ours sold a mine and went in with us. This time it was horses. We bought a thousand head of Percherons—fifteen, sixteen, seventeen-hundred-pound stuff—the cleanest lot of horses you ever saw. We took over 1,600 acres in the Gallatin valley and stock up to 2,400 head in all. We gave a ten-year mortgage at 12 1/2 per cent interest. The principal was \$125,000.

"At the end of twelve years we had paid up \$58,000 and kept up that interest. Then it developed that the owner had a nephew who wanted to have a horse ranch. Along comes the sheriff with an attachment. Well, sir, we walked off that ranch with \$5.75 between us. I had the seventy-five cents, my Old Man had the five dollars.

"We walked into Bozeman and borrowed \$38,000 on our name and nerve. Father took the train to St. Paul to see about getting some sections of railroad land. I took a horse and rode west. I bought up 1,000 head of cattle at fourteen dollars a head and drove them back. Seventy-five miles of that drive was across desert without water.

"This time we got started on a part of this land where I am now. Wonderful cattle country. Grass here seems to have more in it than it does other places. We don't have to feed grain, not even to our saddle horses or to our work horses, even in harvest; and our cattle go to the finest hotel and dining-car trade. Our costs are low. I'm handling from 12,000 to 20,000 head of cattle with two cowboys to help me and a couple more to help the month we brand. We brand around 70 per cent of our calves. Our losses on range are only 1/4 of 1 per cent. We feed hay right through every winter, but apart from that we operate nearer to the old range way, I guess, than anywhere else in Montana.

"At the time Father got hurt in 1900 we could see daylight ahead. By 1910, after a few more little ups and downs, I was out of debt and going good. That was when I got after Harry Childs, my partner, to come in with me.

"Harry owns the hotels, the transportation system and, as the saying goes, everything but the rattlesnakes, in Yellowstone park. A lot of our beef goes to his hotels.

"I had been wintering some horses for him, and he liked the way they looked when I took them back to him in the spring.

"What do you feed those horses?" he asked me. I told him: "Not a thing in God's world but grass. Come down sometime and see."

"Sure enough, one day down he came, I hooked a span of mules to a spring wagon and after lunch we drove up to one of the high points.

"I said: 'Mr. Childs, there's the finest stretch of natural cattle country in America right there before your eyes. I own a good bit of it. It's making me money. Now, you just come in with me and we'll own the whole thing and run good stuff on it and make a real thing out of it.'

"He rumbled around about how he didn't want any more ranches, that he'd lost money on every ranch he'd ever owned.

"We won't lose on this one," I said.

"What do you mean—w? he said; but he had begun to take the fever. He'd pointed out a 5,000-acre piece here and a 6,000-acre piece there and want to know what we ought to be able to get for it and what an option would cost. Pretty soon we'd arranged that I was to buy options on about 80,000 acres within the next four days. Then he said:

"What are you asking for my partnership in your place? I named the figure.

"Well," he said, "there's \$14,000 between us. He reached in his pocket and pulled out a silver dollar. 'What do you take,' he said, 'heads or tails?'

"It took my breath right out of me. I told him I was too poor a man; I couldn't be putting \$14,000 on the turn of a coin.

"Come on," he said, "if you're going to play with the you've got to be a sport."

"Heads!" I said.

"It came heads. We've been partners nineteen years now. A was a joyful fellow! You ought to know him."

OUR COMIC SECTION

Events in the Lives of Little Men



THE FEATHERHEADS

By Osborn

Volume



FINNEY OF THE FORCE

By Ted O'Loughlin

Say It With Flowers



The world-famous... Ontario Museum... Toronto. The... gift of a British... covered in Lake... Italy, 50 years ago, the... of small browned scales... It is form-fitting and of great strength.

Queen Gained Alaska
The voyage of Vitus Bering, resulting in the discovery of northwestern America, was made by order of Empress Elizabeth in 1741, and thus added to the possession of Russia. Thirteen years earlier Bering coasted northward far enough to satisfy himself that Asia and America were not connected.

Sunflower Not Artichoke
The sunflower that is commonly called the Jerusalem artichoke is not an artichoke, and does not come from Jerusalem—thus giving a concrete example of the uncertainty of common names. It is a native of North America, and was cultivated by the Huron Indians.

Growth of Garlic
Garlic differs from most plants in that it makes most of its growth during the cool weather. The old plants die each year and the new generation starts growth during late fall or early winter and in turn produces underground bulbs in early spring.

Germs Drift About
Harvard scientists say: "Minute droplets expelled by a person in coughing, sneezing and talking, do not fall immediately to the floor but evaporate and may leave behind infective germs which drift up alive in the air for many hours."

Rosetta Stone
The Rosetta stone, found near the Rosetta mouth of the Nile, is a slab nine inches in height, two feet four and one-half inches in breadth and eleven inches in thickness. The date of the inscription corresponds to March 27, 196 B. C.

Homes of Candidates
There is no provision of the Constitution requiring the President and Vice President to be from different states; in 1840 Harrison and Tyler, both born in Virginia, were elected President and Vice President.

Horsepower of Mules, Horses
Tests have shown that a good pair of horses or mules can haul 20-horse power and many good ones have shown 25 to 30-horse power for short periods.

Area of Cuba
The area of Cuba is 44,164 square miles. Thus it is slightly larger than the state of Ohio. In length it would reach from New York to Chicago.

Birds Like to Dust
Most wild birds have a fondness for dusting. Ashes, dry earth, dust, the crumbling wood of rotten logs and even ant hills are used for this purpose.

300 Days of Hail
Hail storms sometimes last for three weeks in the region of Cape Horn. In some years the number of stormy days of this type total 300.

Meaning of Florida
The state of Florida derived its name from the Spanish words "panca florida," which means "feast of flowers."

Have to Take It
"You got to be a good listener dese days," said Uncle Eben. "Tain't no use to talk back to a radio set."

Vitamin C in Apples
Experiments indicate that some varieties of apple contain more vitamin C than others.

Anything to Please
"Call me a taxi!"
"O. K. You're a taxi."—Pearson's Weekly.

