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FOUR COWBOY SONGS

BY G. F. WILL

I. PUNCHING COWS¹

(From Mr. William Sunderland of Bismarck, N. Dak.)

ONE day I thought I'd have some fun
And see how punching cows was done.
So when the round-up did begin,
I tackled a cattle king.
Says he, "My foreman is in town;
He's in that saloon, and maybe he'll take you down."

Says I, "That's just the thing!"
We started for the ranch next day;
Brown talked to me most all the way.
He said punching cows was nothing but fun,
There was nothing to do but ride.
But, Jiminy Christmas, how he lied! He surely had his gall.

They put me in charge of the cuvvy yard,
A hundred and forty head to guard;
And to watch them was nothing but play, unless one should break,
And after him my horse would take;
Unless, perhaps, my horse should fall,
And I'd shoot on like a cannon-ball, till the earth came in my way.

They saddled me up an old gray hack
With big set parts all over his back;
They patched him up with gunny sacks, and used my bedding all.
When I got on to this old gray hack,
He went in the air to turn around;
When he came down, I struck the ground; I had a terrible fall.

They picked me up, they carried me in,
They rubbed me down with a rolling-pin;
And then says Brown, "If you don't die
We'll give you another broncho to try."
"But won't you let me walk?" says I.
"Yes, into town," says Brown.

Come, young men, take my advice,
Get a heavy insurance on your life,
Kiss your pretty little wife
And shoot yourself with a butcher-knife;
For that's the easiest way to die.

¹ Another version is printed in Lomax, *Cowboy Songs*, pp. 136-138. — EDS.

2. THE TEXAS RANGER¹

(From Mr. William Sunderland.)

Come, all you Texas rangers,
 Wherever you may be,
 My name is nothing extra
 To you I will not tell.
 I am a jolly ranger,
 Although I wish you well.

Our captain he informed us,
 Perhaps he thought it right,
 "Before you reach your station,
 My boys, we have to fight."

I saw the Indians coming,
 I heard them give the yell;
 My heart it sank within me,
 My courage almost fell.

I saw the smoke ascending,
 It seemed to reach the sky;
 My feelings at that moment were,
 "Now's my time to die."

We fought for nine long hours,
 Until the strife was o'er;
 The sight of the dead and wounded
 I never saw before.

There was six as good rangers
 As ever travelled west
 Lay buried with comrades,
 Peace be their rest!

Perhaps you have a kind old mother,
 Likewise a sister to like you,
 Likewise a good old sweetheart
 To weep and mourn for you;

If this is your situation,
 Although you like to roam,
 I'll advise you by experience
 You had better stay at home.

My old mother in tears
 To me did say,
 "To you they are all strangers,
 With me you had better stay."

But I thought she was old and childish,
 The best she did not know;
 My mind was bent on ranging,
 And with them I was bound to go.

¹ Another version is in Lomax, l. c., pp. 44-46. — EDS.

The following song was obtained from Mr. E. R. Steinbrueck of Mandan, N. Dak. In regard to it he says, —

“When that song was sounded nights in the lumber shanty, there was a break-up of teamsters in the morning. At no other occasion did the thought of that song, among the many others, enter the mind of anybody. I heard it sung on various occasions during my four winters’ shantying in that region, between the Bonne Chere and the Madawaska in Ontario. And that was during the years 1871-76.

3. SHANTY TEAMSTERS’ MARSEILLAISE

Come, all ye gay teamsters, attention I pray,
I’ll sing you a ditty composed by the way,
Of a few jovial fellows who thought the hours long,
Would pass off the time with a short comic song.

Chorus

Come, cheer up, brave boys, it is upward we go
Through this wretched country, the Opeongo.

As it happened one morning of a fine summer-day,
I met Robert Conroy, who to me did say,
“Will you go to my shanty and draw my white pine,
I’ll give you good wages and the best of good time.”

“For to go to your shanty we do feel inclined,
To earn our good wages and be up in good time;
To our wives and our sweethearts we’ll bid all adieu,
And go up to York Branch and draw timber for you.”

There assembled together a fine jovial crew
With horses well harnessed, both hardy and true;
All things being ready, we started away
From fair Elmer town about noon of the day.

The road led o’er mountains, through valleys and plains,
In a country where hardship and poverty reign,
Where the poor suff’ring settler, hard fate to bewail,
Is bound down with mortgage, debts due, and claims.

At a place called York Branch, where Conroy holds his rules,
There assembled together his hack-knaves and fools,
And old Jimmy Edwards, that cut-throat and spy,
Would try to deceive you by advices and lies.

Not long at the farm we’re allowed to stay,
But escorted by Jimmy we’re hurried away,
Where Frenchmen and Indian, their living to gain,
Were abused by a brute, Jerry Welch was his name.

We read of the devil, from heaven he fell,
For rebellion and treason was cast down to hell;
But his son Jerry Welch remains here below
To work deeds of darkness, cause sorrow and woe.

With the eyes of a demon, the tongue of a knave,
 These two villainous traitors should be yoked in a sleigh;
 And Jerry's old squaw, for a teamster and guide,
 To tip up the brutes of the Branch for to drive.

At length we commenced the white pine to draw;
 It was Jerry's intention to put us square through,
 To break down our horses, and show no fair play;
 And he ordered brave Jimmy to drive night and day.

But the teamsters consulted, and made up a plan;
 Since fair work won't do, to go home every man.
 So we left Conroy's shanty, and Jerry the knave;
 For true loyal teamsters ain't born to be slaves.

So we are at home and surrounded by friends,
 We are thankful for favors that Providence sends;
 We'll sing our adventures, and our shantying is o'er,
 And we'll never go up the York Branch any more.

Chorus

Come, cheer up, brave boys, we plough and we sow,
 And adieu evermore to the Opeongo.

4. THE TEXAS COWBOY

(From Arthur Bivins.)

I am a roving cowboy just off the Texas plain,
 My trade is cinching saddles, and pulling bridle-reins;
 I can throw a lasso, I can throw it with my ease,
 I can rope a broncho, and ride him where I please.

My bosses they all like me, they say I can't be beat,
 For I gave them all the bold stand-off, — you know I've got the cheek.
 It's true I work for wages, I take my pay in gold,
 But I'm bound to follow the long-horn cows until I get too old.

I once did love a little girl, I loved her with my heart,
 I would have worked and supported her, and taken her for my part;
 But when I made a little stake, and married thought we'd be,
 The prettiest girl in this wide world went square back on me.

It almost broke my heart when she was taken away,
 She fell in love with another gent, and cursed be the day!
 But I will cheer up my courage now, and love another one,
 But I'll punch the cows on the Lone Star trail until my race is run.

Adieu, kind friends, I'll leave you now,
 You see I am bound to roam, leave my dear old sweetheart,
 Two sisters and a home.
 But when I am on the Lone Star trail, I'll oftentimes think of thee,
 I will oftentimes think of the pretty girl that went square back on me.

BISMARCK, N. DAK.