

**WELLS BROTHERS:
THE YOUNG CATTLE
KINGS. [BOSTON]**

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Wells Brothers: The Young Cattle Kings. [Boston] by Andy Adams

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ANDY ADAMS

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WELLS BROTHERS

THE YOUNG CATTLE KINGS

BY
ANDY ADAMS



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WELLS BROTHERS

THE YOUNG CATTLE KINGS

CHAPTER I

WAIFS OF THE PLAIN

THE first herd of trail cattle to leave Dodge City, Kansas, for the Northwest, during the summer of 1885, was owned by the veteran drover, Don Lovell. Accidents will happen, and when about midway between the former point and Ogalalla, Nebraska, a rather serious mishap befell Quince Forrest, one of the men with the herd. He and the horse wrangler, who were bunkies, were constantly scuffling, reckless to the point of injury, the pulse of healthy manhood beating a constant alarm to rough contest.

The afternoon previous to the accident, a wayfaring man had overtaken the herd, and spent the night with the trail outfit. During the evening, a flock of sand-hill cranes was sighted, when the stranger expressed a wish to secure a specimen of the bird for its splendid plumage. On Forrest's own suggestion, his being a long-range pistol and the covey

wary, the two exchanged belts. The visitor followed the flock, stealing within range a number of times, and emptying the six-shooter at every chance. On securing a fine specimen near nightfall, he returned to the herd, elated over his chance shot and beautiful trophy. However, before returning the belt, he had refilled the cylinder with six instead of five cartridges, thus resting the hammer on a loaded shell. In the enthusiasm of the moment, and ignorant of its danger, belt and pistol were returned to their owner.

Dawn found the camp astir. The sun had flooded the plain while the outfit was breakfasting, the herd was grazing forward in pastoral contentment, the horses stood under saddle for the morning's work, when the trail foreman, Paul Priest, languidly remarked: "If everybody's ready, we'll ride. Fill the canteens; it's high time we were in the saddle. Of course, that means the parting tussle between Quince and the wrangler. It would be a shame to deny those lads anything so enjoyable—they remind me so much of mule colts and half-grown dogs. Now, cut in and worry each other a spell, because you'll be separated until noon. Fly at it, or we mount."

The two addressed never cast a glance at each other, but as the men swung into their

saddles, the horse wrangler, with the agility of a tiger, caught his bunkie in the act of mounting, dragging him to the ground, when the expected scuffle ensued. The outfit had barely time to turn their horses, to witness the contest, when the two crashed against the wagon wheel and Forrest's pistol was discharged. The men dismounted instantly, the wrangler eased the victim to the ground, and when the outfit gathered around, the former was smothering the burning clothing of his friend and bunkmate. A withdrawn boot, dripping with blood, was the first indication of the havoc wrought, and on stripping it was found that the bullet had ploughed an open furrow down the thigh, penetrating the calf of the leg from knee to ankle, where it was fortunately deflected outward and into the ground.

The deepest of regret was naturally expressed. The jocular remarks of the foreman, the actions of the wrangler, were instantly recalled to the surrounding group, while the negligence which caused the accident was politely suppressed. The stranger, innocently unaware of any mistake on his part, lent a valuable hand in stanching the blood and in washing and binding up the wounds. No bones were injured, and with youth and a