SHEEP IN PATAGONIA.

Ranchmen to Whom Fortune Has Come Quickly.

GREAT PROFITS CLAIMED.

A Boom in Sheep Farming Just Now Under Favorable Conditions.

Some Successful Men Started with Capital and Some Didn't—Three Shipwrecked Sailors on the Road to Fortune—Hard Work Required and Hardships to Be Endured—Estimates of the Cost, Expenses, and Profits of a Ranch—Peculiar Favorable Circumstances That Cannot Last—Fascination of the Wild Life on the Plains.

Patagonia is just now enjoying a boom in sheep. Novelists who want to locate the forgotten uncle who has become rich and dies in the nick of time to leave his money where it will do the most good should not overlook Patagonia. Australia as a place for making a fortune in sheep quickly has become obsolete, while Patagonia is just now coming to the front with most remarkable strides. At the port of Gallegos, as THE SUN has told, I had a long conversation with Edelmiro Mayer, Governor of the Patagonian territory of Santa Cruz. The greater part of this talk was devoted to the sheep business, the one productive industry of the region that now pays a profit to all having capital in it. Of the stories that he told a few will serve as samples illustrating the growth of the sheep business in this new country.

John Hamilton and James Saunders, British subjects, went to Patagonia in 1885, arriving there with £500 each and a thorough knowledge of the sheep business. They bought some land and rented some more from the Government and expended the rest of their money in a flock of sheep, uniting their funds as partners. As time went on, and they were able to sell wool, they invested their gains in more sheep and more land. In the season of 1893 they sheared 42,000 sheep and were the owners of fifty-eight square leagues of land, of which twenty leagues were paid for in full and the mortgage on the rest was in such shape as to give them no uneasiness. By the estimate of Gov. Mayer the sale of the wool from the 42,000 sheep in 1894 paid the owners just $42,000 gold clean profit above all the expenses.

Another Englishman—I have lost his name—went to Patagonia in 1886 with no capital save his knowledge of the sheep business and a good reputation. Having abundant testimonials as to his character and qualifications he got sheep and the use of land on credit; a capitalist was found to grub stake him, as the miners say. In 1893 this man sold out his accumulations for £26,000 and with his wife and children went back to England to live like a lord. It is a curious fact that will be elaborated further on that this family returned to Gallegos early in 1894, bought for cash eight leagues of land, and stocked it with sheep. They are there now, and they will never again leave Patagonia save for brief intervals.

I saw a man at Gallegos who had gone there to work as a carpenter. He did not have $10 when he arrived—in fact he went there in the steerage of one of the Government transports. He had been in Gallegos less than three years, and he had a family to support out of his earnings meantime. Nevertheless he was the owner of 1,000 sheep, of which two-thirds were ewes. In the ordinary course, as matters run, he will be a man of independent income in five years.

There are three sailors in the country who, within five years, were wrecked on the coast and landed with nothing but the clothes on their backs. A good many sailors have been wrecked there at one time and another, because the marine insurance companies can never prove fraud so far away from civilized parts. About all these wrecked crews go to Punta Arenas, the gold diggings, or the dogs, but the three mentioned went to work on sheep ranches, and now have several thousand sheep each.

"And how many men have gone into the sheep business and failed?" said I, when Gov. Mayer had told of these things.

"Not one."

"Have any big companies tried it?"

"Yes, down on the Chili territory.

"Have any of them failed?"

"Not yet. On the contrary, all have paid big dividends, but, of course, a company may be made to fail by its manager. The business in the hands of individuals of moderate means is just now the best in the world. It is better than 100 per cent.

"I should think everybody in Buenos Ayres, Valparaiso, London, and every other money centre dealing with this region would be rushing into it, then."

"The country is filling up rapidly, but of course capitalists are generally shy of a business that offers such big dividends. Besides, one must learn the sheep business if he would get rich at it, even here."

"How much land remains now for the capitalist to buy?"

"In Santa Cruz territory there are to be had 2,500 square leagues of strictly first-class land. It will carry more than 1,000 sheep per league and it is held by the Government at from $2,500 to $3,000 gold per league, according to location. You can find about 12,000 square leagues more of fair land that can be had at prices considerably less. It would perhaps prove a better investment in the long run. The territory has about 12,000 leagues of worthless land—lava beds, &c., utterly barren—almost too poor to support a guanaco.

"Of course a very poor man cannot buy even a single league of good land, and he doesn't need to buy. One ought to have some capital with which to buy sheep, but the land can be rented for periods of, say, ten years, subject to purchase at a stated price. If one can raise the money for the sheep, the land need not trouble him. The rental of the best land is but $20, gold, per year for a league."

"What is the cost of sheep now to a man who would invest?"

"From $2 to $2.50 gold per ewe. Rams cost from £2 each up to any price you want to pay for fancy stock. The ordinary ram at £2 is the one to buy now."

"Then, for a fair beginning, how much capital should a man have?"

"Five thousand dollars gold."

"But how did the sailors, with neither capital nor a knowledge of the business, get on?"

"They accumulated both by hard work, and it can still be done readily. The sheep owners are always glad to hire sober young men who are ambitious to learn the business and willing to endure the incident hardships. Their terms are not very attractive perhaps. The learner signs a contract to work for four years. The first year he gets no wages in cash. His food and shepherd's outfit are supplied, but he must clothe himself. The next year he will receive from £2 to £3 per month, and the last year from £4 to £5 a month, according to his ability. He must be a first-class man to get £5, however. Meantime, if he has any capital, he can keep as many sheep of his own as he wants, not to exceed 1,000 to begin with. These he may pasture on the owner's land, and the owner furnishes the rams to run with them. He may also keep the increase of this flock of sheep on the owner's range, so that at the end of his four years' apprenticeship he not only may have his experience, but he should have not less than 2,000 head of sheep. That, of course, is for the youth with capital to start with. With no capital he would get on but slowly, for his wages will not buy many sheep."

"In the United States the pressure of young men ambitious to become owners of herds very often secures to deplete the holdings of those who are capitalists," said I. "Those young men sometimes quarter calves that do not belong to them and re-mark full grown animals. Are you troubled so in Patagonia?"

"Not yet. We have read about your rustlers, but have had no experience with them, though sheep are more easily stolen than cattle."

"Are you ever troubled with drought?"

"Not in southern Patagonia. This country is really a desert, and yet it is well watered; by which I mean that there are plenty of lakes and springs south of the Gallegos, although the region between these waters is either very like a shingle beach or a rock-strewn waste."

In Punta Arenas everybody seemed able and willing to talk about sheep. Men who owned large herds were in all cases enthusiastic over the present outlook of the business, but their figures were a trifle less booming than those of Gov. Mayer. Thus one man who was manager for a French company owning something over 100,000 sheep, with the necessary horses, said that they made three francs on every head clear of all expenses from the sale of wool alone. The increase of the lambs averaged about 90 per cent. of the ewes, and this was an additional profit. When told that estimates made up the coast called for 100 per cent. increase he replied that that could be had only where labor was abundant enough to care for the lambs when first dropped. The lamb at birth does not know anything—not even its own mother. Even on finding her by accident it does not know where to get its natural nourishment, but is as likely to suckle a lock of wool as the teat. Such helpless beings need great care, though after a week or so they require no more attention. The long-wooled varieties of sheep are in favor there. A common ewe will weigh from 160 to 180 pounds in the fall. The lowest average of wool sheared is said to be 7 pounds per sheep. A printed table of statistics which the manager carried showed that the average yield in 1889 in all the Argentine was 4.4 pounds, while that of the United States was exactly that of the lowest yield of his flock—7 pounds. His range was considered poorer than the average, but it had sustained two sheep to the hectare—one sheep on an acre and a quarter of the range.

The great difficulty that owners of large herds had in making profits, he said, was in finding laborers competent to do the work. The Scotchmen stood at the head of all in efficiency. After them came natives of Uruguay and Chili, and, last of all, the Argentines. Citizens of the United States were never seen there. Italians were numerous enough in the ports, but they did not take kindly to the solitary life on the ranch. The Chilians, if treated with great courtesy, were very fair men, but the Argentines would take offence when none was intended. When the Chilian was offended he would leave the ranch at once, very often without stopping to collect his pay. The Argentine would first stick a knife into the offending person and then leave. The Scotchman attended to business day and night and never made any trouble, but at the end of three or four years he was off to care for a herd of his own.

The one disease to which Patagonia sheep are liable is the scab. This is kept under by dipping them in various kinds of baths, the expense for the bath running from $80 to $90 gold per year for every 1,000 sheep. The next greatest expense is for the killing of panthers. A common night's work of a panther is the killing of sheep to the value of $100 gold. Every shepherd, therefore, carries a carbine, and must be supplied with all the cartridges he wants. These rifles sell for less money in Punta Arenas stores than in New York gun shops, but the annual expense for rifles and cartridges on some ranches runs up to hundreds of dollars.

Foxes and a species of wildcat make havoc with the young lambs, and so these must be exterminated, too. What with hunting down vermin and looking after the sheep to keep them on the range and to dip them for the scab, the French manager had to employ a man for every 2,500 sheep in his flock. On the whole, his flocks, numbering a little over 100,000 sheep, cost the company 200,000 francs per year, while the sale of the last clip yielded 500,000 francs, and the price was not high. In his judgment it would be a very poor business man who, after starting with a good outfit and 1,000 ewes on the Patagonia range, did not attain an income of $20,000 gold a year at the end of ten years.

This being the most conservative estimate of the profits of sheep growing in Patagonia, the picture as a whole is certainly enchanting. It will probably remind some of THE SUN'S readers in the Southwest of the days, something like twenty years ago, when the profits of the cattle business in Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and other grass-and-water countries were setting people wild. These readers saw great mansions built and furnished in a style to make merchants smile and artists weep—built out of the profits in cattle. They saw men go into the cattle business one day with no capital but a broad-brimmed hat and the next, so to speak, saw them draw certified checks for tens of thousands of dollars. Patagonia sheep are now just where Texas cattle were when the owners began to reach out for the green bottom lands of the Arkansas and the Platte, the San Augustine plains of New Mexico and the Rio Grande valley of Colorado. But because the leaders in the sheep business are hard-headed Scotchmen the Patagonia boom shows no such crazy doings as characterized the cattle business. Sales of cattle herds by book accounts at $25 per head were not unknown in Texas. The purchaser of the Patagonia flock of sheep pays from $2 to $2.50 gold per head counted.

Nevertheless, it is not in the nature of any business to pay 140 per cent or more profit per annum for any length of time. I do not doubt the figures of either the manager of the French company or Gov. Mayer, but the conditions are now of a kind that cannot last. It is therefore worth considering what the sheep owners in the well-settled parts of the Argentine are doing. The following figures are furnished by Mr. Herbert Gibson, a native of the State of Buenos Ayres, though of English descent, one of the best known sheep breeders of the country. He says:

"Two square leagues, or say 13,332 acres of land, capable of carrying 16,000 sheep, 1,600 cattle, and 200 horses and mares, can be purchased at 25 shillings sterling per acre. After buying the estancia it will be found in need of some repairs, of course, and some additional fencing must be built to meet the notions of the new proprietor. We will suppose that the sheep are Lincoln crosses, probably the most profitable breed to grow at this time. They will cost 9 shillings per head, and the cattle say 11 shillings. With this for a starting point you have:

CAPITAL OUTLAY.

Land, 13,332 acres, at 25s. per acre	£16,665
New fencing, say six miles	600
Repairs of buildings, purchase of carts and tools, &c	1,200
16,000 sheep at 9s	7,200
225 rams at 70s	963
1,600 cattle at 11s	880
16 bulls at 80s	64
60 horses at £80	192
140 mares at 12s	84
30 stallions at 120s	180
Driving the stock to the estate and distributing it there	500
Total outlay of capital	£28,456

GROSS REVENUE.

	£	s.	d.
Wool:			
80,000 pounds fleece wool at 7½d	2,500	0	0
5,600 pounds bellies and pieces at 2½d	58	6	8
9,000 pounds lambs' wool at 6½d	250	0	0
Sheep skins:			
1,200 at 2s. 9d. each	165	0	0
Lamb skins:			
1,000 at 4d. each	16	13	4
Cow hides:			
900 at 8s. each	36	0	0
Horse hides, horse hair, calf skins, tallow, and minor produce	35	0	0
Sale of stock:			
1,800 wethers at 9s	£810		
1,000 cull ewes for butcher at 8s	400		
1,200 culls at 7s	420	1,630	0 0
180 steers at 35s	£315		
260 old cows at 15s	195		
		510	0 0
50 tame colts at 25s		37	10 0
70 foals at 7s		24	0 0
Total of income		£5,810	19 0
Deduct from this working expenses equal to 35 per cent. of gross revenue	£1,858 18 6		
Taxes	120 0 0		
		1,978	18 6
Net income		£3,831	16 6

This is a profit of a little over eleven per cent. on the capital invested, after allowing large sums for repairs and additional fencing. Repairs would have to be made every year, but not to so great an extent as that estimated on the average ranch of two square leagues. Meantime the flocks have been improved by judicious culling. It will be observed, when comparing these figures with those of a Patagonian sheep herder, that the working expenses are put at thirty-five per cent. of the gross income in the Buenos Ayres ranch, while in Patagonia the expense was apparently forty per cent. But, as a matter of fact, in proportion to the number of sheep, the Patagonian expense is much less than that in the State of Buenos Ayres. To put it in American gold, the annual expense per sheep in Patagonia is about 40 cents, while in Buenos Ayres it is about 50 cents. The Patagonian ranch does not count any income from the sale of wethers or culls or cattle, but the clip averages two pounds per head more, and this more than makes up for the lack of a market for cattle and culls. Then, too, the cost of land in Patagonia, or, if it is leased, the annual rental, is but a trifle when one considers the cost of land in the State of Buenos Ayres. Further than that the Patagonian men do not now pay a cent a year for fencing or repairs, and scarcely anything for buildings or yards. Corrals must indeed be built in connection with the plant for dipping the sheep for the scab, but a few spools of wire and a few good posts for corners serve every purpose at present. The crooked little trunks of the Patagonian sage bush are used to fill in the wires between the posts, so that the corral fence at present is really a mat made of three or four wires filled with twigs.

On the whole the great profits of the Patagonian sheep owner are now due to the small expense of managing sheep, and the expense is small because the range is wide and uncrowded. Every practical sheep man knows how rapidly these conditions must change as the range fills up, and the readers who saw the cattle business go to smash in the free range regions of the United States can easily guess what will happen to the sheep men of Patagonia if the range there is overstocked, especially when it is remembered that the present high profits lead to a slipshod method of conducting the business.

In connection with the profits of the sheep industry must be mentioned the effect of rag money on the prosperity of the sheep owners. In both Argentina and Chili the national money was at so great a discount when I was there that a gold dollar would buy from $3.75 to $4 paper, according to the fluctuations of the market. Because of this depressed condition of the currency, both countries had about the cheapest labor to be found anywhere. That is to say, when the currency was inflated and its ability to purchase gold fell there was little, if any, increase in the number of dollars paid to ranch hands per month. Now the sheep owner sells and continues to sell his wool in Europe for gold. He exchanges as much of this gold as he must for paper with which to pay his men; but because the paper dollar has become worth only 27 or 28 cents in gold he can now pay off his men with less than one-third as much gold as was formerly required. So far as food is concerned, the workmen are unafflicted, for they get nothing but meat and a ground root called farina, with Paraguay tea to drink, but for their clothes they must pay four times as much as formerly, because about all the cloth of the region comes from Europe. The fall in the currency—cheap money—has been of the greatest advantage to the ranch owners, and they will stoutly resist any attempt to put it on a par with gold. They do not want it depressed further, however, lest there arise a pressure for higher wages. Everything is just right for the Patagonian ranchman now, and so long as there is no war between Argentina and Chili over the boundary he will remain content.

The homes and the home life of the sheep owners and sheep herders are well worth describing in connection with what has been said of the great profits the careful and industrious owners may make. I visited one of the best ranches in the territory of Santa Cruz. It was located three miles below Santa Cruz city, and was the property of two brothers of English blood, though they were born in the Falkland Islands. The Falklands bring full of sheep and no more land to be had there, these brothers took their inheritance and went over to Patagonia. They located their range when choice could be made anywhere, and so got two valleys running into that of the Santa Cruz. No matter how dry the season, therefore, they were sure of grass for their flocks, and no matter how severe the blizzards of winter, sheep could find plenty of shelter under the hills and steep banks and in the lee of the clumps of brush that grow on low ground. The brush, too, was in sufficient quantity and of a size to serve as fuel and for building corrals. It was as good a location as one could ask for.

On the tongue of moderately high ground where the two valleys united to enter that of the Santa Cruz they built their house. It was a mansion for that country. The walls were of vertical boards battened with thin strips, and the roof was of corrugated iron. This structure was divided by wooden partitions into four comfortable rooms, of which two contained two beds each, one was a general living room and kitchen combined, and the fourth was a store room. All but the last had good wooden floors. There was a good wrought-iron cook stove in the main room, and a table and chairs that had come from a furniture factory. The beds, too, were of factory make, and there were sheets as well as blankets on them. There were a few photographs on the walls—portraits of relatives and friends—and everywhere a profusion of grocery and tobacco store lithographs. All these things could be seen when the doors were closed because there were windows with glass in them and the glass was kept clean. There was a broom in the corner, and the floor showed that it was used regularly. In short, here was a house that was neat and comfortable.

I ate dinner with the brothers. We had mutton roasted over an outdoor fire—the best kind of roast—with fresh-baked bread, Yankee hard tack, and coffee with granulated sugar and Yankee condensed milk in it. Knowing something of ranch life as it is ordinarily found in Patagonia, I said to one of the brothers:

"I do not believe there is a sheep man in Patagonia that lives more comfortably than you"

"I fancy not," he said. "We have about everthing that we want, and do not mean to starve for the sake of saving sixpence extra."

Thereat an employee who had been a sailor and had turned shepherd with good success, rolled his eyes expressively toward a bright-colored lithograph on the wall above the table. This picture showed a pretty girl leaning over a farmyard gate in a way to show her well-rounded form to advantage, while her skirts were so short that she was at least in no danger of tripping on them when she walked. Jack's gaze lingered on the fair form for a minute, and then he said:

"We have everything that the soul could long for, except society. You can't get the kind of a wife you want to come to this country."

"I've heard," said I, "that the Tehuelche girls are pretty and coquettish in their manners and not at all averse to marrying stalwart young white men."

"That's so," said Jack. "I know. I tried it. I gave an old buck six horses for his daughter, and she was the prettiest one in the whole tribe. We were married Tehuelche fashion. They killed and ate half the horses I gave for her, and made a dance, and the medicine man shook his rattles over us and put charms around our necks to keep the devils off. That was the swellest Patagonia wedding of the year, I'll lay five pounds. So we set up housekeeping. Then the old buck and the mother and the grandmother, and the sisters of the grandmother, and the brothers and sisters of the buck and of the mother—Lord! The whole tribe came to visit us. It took ten sheep or a horse a day to supply them with grub. I stood it for a month and then I got a divorce."

"That's an interesting incident. How did you manage the divorce business?"

"Took my Winchester and run the damned outfit to the other side of the Cordilleras."

So much for the ranch of Messrs. James Betts & Brother. Here is the description of another as furnished by Mr. C. E. Ackers, an Englishman who has travelled over a considerable part of Patagonia:

"The headquarters are located in a house that is fourteen feet square, built of stone and mud. The floor consists of the ground in the condition that nature placed it there. The roof is almost flat and made of boughs of shrubs on the top of which are piled up some six inches of mud. Through this covering the rain comes pouring down in wet weather to such an extent that the dwellers generally leave it, because, as they say, they find it dryer outside. That is to say, they go to such shelter as is afforded by two thin calico tents.

"The furniture is in keeping with the building. It consists of a plank to do duty for a table, another one as a bench, and two or three empty boxes to take the place of chairs. In the corners are some piles of very dirty old bags, over which are thrown some guanaco skins. These form general lounges by day and beds and bedding by night. Against one wall a board is fixed to act as a shelf. Its chief support is a strap of rawhide running to the roof. On this may be found a varied assortment of bits of meat, grease, candles, Paraguay tea, sugar, salt, tobacco, tools—in fact, it is a catch-all for everything in the establishment.

"The food served consists of meat, either boiled or roasted before the fire, some farina (which more closely resembles sawdust than anything else), and to follow the repast some Paraguay tea. The number of plates is five, all of tin. There are four forks; to cut up the meat each man uses his sheath knife. Four tin cups and a kettle complete the dinner service. To complete the general effect there is always an appearance and atmosphere of dirt over both house and food from which the most careless cottager in England would shrink in blank dismay.

"It was in the shearing season when I made my acquaintance with this ranch, and when meal time came round it brought into the house the superintendent, his assistant, and two foremen, fresh from the sheep yards. They were coated with dirt and grease from head to foot, and their hands and clothes were plentifully bespattered with blood. Washing was a luxury they seldom indulged in, and they sat down to gnaw and tear at their food like so many wild beasts; and yet all these men had, more or less, been brought up among civilized surroundings, and had simply degenerated into their present mode of life from force of long habit.

"The hands working at the shearing were principally Indians. The knowledge these men have of any kind of work except live stock is of the most limited description, and the way they shear sheep would drive an Australian squatter out of his senses. They first tie down the animal and then cut and slash it about as if determined to take off as much hide as wool. In Patagonia it is necessary to employ these men, because not enough Europeans can be found to face the privations of life in the far south."

I saw half a dozen sheep men together in Gallegos. They had come to the settlement partly on business and partly for the pleasures of society. With a dozen villagers they were seated at a large table in the dining room of one of the hotels. A huge kerosene lamp overhead afforded fair light—enough at least, to show that the crowd was unshaved, unwashed, and squalid. Each man had a tumbler at his elbow. A fat, round bottle that held about a gallon of claret was passed along at frequent intervals to keep the tumblers full. All but one man were drinking wine. The exception was an Englishman, and he took whiskey. Half the crowd were playing cards, and there were kernels of corn in little heaps as chips before each player.

"This is a great game," said Mr. William Clark, formerly of Salem, Mass., a ranchman, who acted as my guide. "You play it, eh? Of course you do. Why, man, they've only corn for chips, but they are winning and losing a hundred dollars and more every game."

"So? To judge from their dress they couldn't afford to lose fifty cents."

"Of course they couldn't, but they're rich—most of them. Each red kernel is a dollar chip, each white one twenty-five cents. This is a great country."

"So it is. Is that old fellow with a ragged shirt at the head of the table one of the rich ones?"

"You bet he is. Ragged, eh? Well, rather, but he's the proprietor of this hotel and owns ten thousand sheep besides."

"And the swarthy old pirate alongside with the big heap of reds—who's he?"

"You call him a pirate? How did you find it out? That's just what he is. He lent me a hundred not long ago and charged me two per cent. a month. He's the Government blacksmith. He gets only $30 a month, but he has hundreds of dollars loaned out at two per cent. a month. Big pile of reds, eh? You call him a pirate? That's just what he is."

On further inquiry I learned that three men playing at the table with the landlord had incomes better than $2,000 gold a year, while the rest were employees on small wages paid in paper, the best-dressed man being a servant on $20 a month. Four had been well educated and two could barely read. Apparently they were all enjoying themselves, and I asked Clark if they were. He looked at me in astonishment.

"Why, man, of course they are. What more could you want?" he said.

The sheep man does not want anything more.

Mention has been made of a man who sold out his holdings in Patagonia for £26,000, and then went home to England to enjoy the proceeds of his labor, only to find on arriving there that he was unable to enjoy himself as he had expected to do. This family had lived in Patagonia only a very few years, but the life in a mud hut, where there was not a single restraint of civilization, had changed their habits and thoughts so much that they were utterly out of place among their old friends. To keep her house clean and herself neat was a burden for the wife, even when she had servants to help her; to wash and shave, and wear a starched collar, made life intolerable for the husband. The latent wild instinct in both had asserted itself until it was beyond control, and they returned with joy to the savage freedom of the desert.

And so it had happened to every sheep man living among his sheep that I met or heard of, except the two brothers near Santa Cruz. That there were other exceptions I have no doubt, but they were mere exceptions. The ranchmen of Patagonia are almost to a man educated, and by their youthful training refined. Some, as said, are university men, but as a class they live lives that, to people of culture and refinement, seem utterly savage. They become so accustomed to this manner of life that they will endure no other.

The desert is a strange region. It is forever bleak, barren, and monotonous to the eye. With its piercing winds and blizzards on the one hand and its fierce heats and thirsty wastes on the other, it is apparently the most inhospitable region in the world. But it takes hold of the heartstrings of men, strips off their thin veneer of civilization, teaches them joys of which they had heard only such faint rumors as may come in dreams, and so holds them fast. "Such things were and are in men; in all men; in us too."

JOHN R. SPEARS.

THE HOME OF THE MANAGER OF A RANCH WITH 100,000 SHEEP, PATAGONIA.

A PATAGONIA SHEPHERD'S KITCHEN.

STORIES OF THE HAWKS.

Sharp Work of the Birds Among Annoying Rats and Squirrels.

SCRANTON, Dec. 29.—One morning recently Farmer Resolved R. Hallstead of Elkland township saw a large white-breasted hawk dart into a sashless window near the peak of a wagon barn that he had finished building a few days before. It flew out in a moment with a squealing rat in each claw, and the interested farmer watched it till it met another hawk in midair. The two circled and undulated side by side for a spell, when the one with the rats resumed its flight toward the forest. The other hawk immediately pointed for the barn, shot through the window, flitted out a few seconds later with a struggling rat in each talon, and sailed off in the same direction. Mr. Hallstead started to tell his wife about what he had seen, when the hawks, or a pair exactly like them, flew into the barn window, and came out shortly with their claws full of squealing rats. There was no grain or hay in the new barn, and the farmer wondered where all the rats came from. He was also in a quandary as to how the fierce forest birds knew where to find rats under a roof.

On going into the upper part of the barn Mr. Hallstead saw scores of rats scampering around on the floor, and the mystery of their presence was solved. Two nights before, a day or so after the barn had been completed, the young people of the township had a ball on the upper floor. The jocund rustics brought pecks of pop corn to the party, and between the dances they sat on rough wooden benches and munched it with their partners. When the ball broke up lots of the pop corn was left, and the rural merrymakers threw it at one another till the floor was covered. The rats in the other barns soon got scent of the fragrant pop corn, and swarmed into the new building after it; but how the hawks ascertained that the rats were there in large numbers none of the smart local naturalists were able to tell.

Mr. Hallstead's dog pitched into the four-footed corneaters, and the fierce rats pounced upon him, bit his nose and ears till the blood ran, and sent him yelping down the stairs. The farmer went at the rats with a shovel, and they jumped up his clothes and scurried his flesh clear out. They bit him on the ears and neck before he could shake them off, and he decided to let them alone. At dusk that night he saw two owls flit through the window and sail out with four rats. The hawks continued to dart into the barn several times a day, and they always steered for the woods with their claws full. When the useful birds of prey ceased to come not a rat was to be seen in the barn, although a lot of the pop corn still remained on the floor.

A barn belonging to Edgar Putnam of Sugar Loaf Hill burned in the fall, and the next day an army of rats flocked into Mr. Putnam's house and attacked the baby in the cradle. Mrs. Putnam was working in the buttery, and the cries of the infant were so different from what they generally were that she rushed to it in great haste. She found rats climbing and pushing one another all over the cradle. A tame hen hawk named Dick was doing his best to protect the baby by catching the rats right and left, giving each a squeeze and then dropping it. Mrs. Putnam seized her little one and started for the next room. The ravenous rodents clung to her skirts, and the hawk pulled them off and pinched them fatally, working as though he knew that the infant was in danger. Dick flapped and hopped and flung the rats around until Mrs. Putnam got out of the room without any of them clinging to her clothing. The helpless little child was badly bitten on the face and hands, and Mrs. Putnam said afterward that the bloodthirsty rats would surely have killed the baby if the watchful hawk had not sailed into them almost as soon as they swarmed into the house. When Mrs. Putnam returned to the room Dick was still killing rats, and he didn't let up until more than thirty lay dead on the floor.

When cold weather set in a pair of red squirrels took up their abode in Erastus Felker's residence on Pleasant Stream. At times they made a great racket over the ceilings and between the partitions, but the nimble little fellows were nice to look at when they skipped and chattered in the trees, so the folks in the house decided to put up with the annoyance through the winter. Early this month one of the family fell sick, and the noise of the playful squirrels made her very nervous and wakeful every night. A pair of black walnut trees in the front yard had been the means of causing the squirrels to settle in the house for the winter. Mr. Felker found more than a bushel of the nuts under the second-story floor, and beneath a plank walk between the house and street the provident little animals had stored up a peck more. The neighborly squirrels were not contented in any one part of the dwelling. They scampered all over the house between the rooms, their nightly capering and barking finally becoming unbearable to the invalid, and Mr. Felker decided to sacrifice them for her sake.

He set three traps in the garret, but the squirrels had so much natural food laid away that they wouldn't touch any kind of bait. The cats couldn't get at the cunning little nut gatherers, the use of poison was out of the question, and the sportive squirrels continued to vex the sick person nights by rolling nuts around overhead for hours at a stretch. The noise was like that made by a kitten with a spool on a bare floor, and there was no way of stopping it, they all concluded.

Finally one of the neighbors brought a pet blue hawk to Mr. Felker's and placed it on a beam in the garret. The bird hadn't been fed in two days, and it was a big, good natured. It sat still, though, and when Mr. Felker went up at sundown to feed it, it was in the same position. But it hadn't stayed on its perch all the time, for the skins of the squirrels lay on the floor, the hawk's crop was chockful, its eyes were bright, and it was in the very best of humor. The annoying noises ceased at once, and the patient began to recover right away.

Casey and Tommy Dunne the Winners.

The members of the Brooklyn Handball Club spent another enjoyable day in the court yesterday. Among the many visitors were Adonis Terry, the old Brooklyn pitcher, and C. W. Wheelock of the Denver A. C. Terry says there is no better exercise than handball to condition a baseball player, and he is playing daily in the Brooklyn Y. M. C. A. gymnasium.

One of the best games at the court yesterday was a four-handed contest, in which William Schmidt and James Dunne, Jr., undertook the task of beating Thomas J. Casey, the big champion, and Thomas Dunne. The latter amused the young and ambitious pair to the extent of suffering a defeat in the first game. After that, however, the "champ" and his "southpaw" partner put on a little more steam, and drew out ahead in both games. This is the score:

P. Casey and T. Dunne	21	21	42
J. Dunne, Jr., and W. Schmidt	21	17	38

Other games played were:

Major Carnody and W. Jones	21	15	36
S. Gillen and C. Wheelock	14	27	41
S. Gillen and W. Jones	21	19	40
E. Keller and J. O'Brien	7	21	28
W. L. Jones			
T. Slocum and C. Smith	21	21	42

DUELS FOUGHT BY INDIANS.

One Was with Rifles and One with Knives and Both Were Deadly.

From the Cincinnati Enquirer.

"A duel which I witnessed in 1876 at Standing Rock Agency, Dakota," said an old scout, "between Scout Shave Head and Chief Crooked Neck of the Hunkpapa Sioux, was a performance that would have called for applause from the most critical audience that ever witnessed a Spanish bull fight. Shave Head, it will be remembered, was one of the Indian police who was killed while attempting the arrest of Sitting Bull in the fall of 1890. In 1876 I was interpreter and chief of scouts at Fort Yates, near Standing Rock Agency, where I had thirty Sioux Indian scouts under my command, who were selected from the friendly bands and quartered at the military post with their families. The military authorities issued rations only to the scouts, while their families drew from the Indian agent. The beef was slaughtered on the east bank of the river, the Indians crossing in boats.

"I usually accompanied the scouts when they went for their beef. About 150 Texas steers were killed every two weeks. These were parcelled out to the several bands, beginning with the larger, who would receive twelve or fifteen head as their share, the next ten or twelve, and so on to the smaller bands, who would get two or three, according to their number. Lastly, single families, not members of bands, were given beef by themselves, one steer to four families, or a quarter to each. The scouts, half breeds and squaw-men, were among this number. The trouble which terminated in the duel between Shave Head and Crooked Neck began over the issue of beef.

"Shave Head, Crooked Neck, Charley Pappan, a half breed, and the Widow McCarty, a squaw who had been married to a white man, were given a quarter each in the last beef issued. Shave Head, Pappan, and the widow immediately began skinning the beef, when Crooked Neck approached the scout, and, placing his hand on his shoulder, pushed him violently aside, saying: 'You belong to the soldiers; you have no right here; go to the fort for your beef.'

"I stood not more than fifty feet away. Shave Head cast one look of defiance at his assailant and then came to me and said, pointing at Crooked Neck: 'That man has driven me away from my beef. If I was not under your command I would know what to do, but now I await your orders. If you leave me free to act he is not man enough to keep me away from my beef.'

"I answered that since the agent had given him a quarter of that beef that it was, therefore, his, and he had a perfect right to take it.

"'Then,' said he, 'tell that man to keep away from me.' I answered that Crooked Neck did not belong to my company and I had no authority over him.

"'Very well,' said the scout. 'I shall take my beef,' and rejoining the others he again offered to assist in dressing the beef, only to be again thrust away by Crooked Neck. This time he gave utterance to that savage growl, which, once heard, can never be forgotten, and climbing out of the slaughter pen on the north side, and taking his rifle from his wife, he turned to the left, coming out on that side of the corral facing the river. Crooked Neck, seizing his rifle, went out of the corral on the south side, and, turning to the right, the two combatants met face to face on the west side of the corral. Between them was the agency wagon, which was backed up to the fence to receive the beef. The first shot was fired by Chief Crooked Neck over the rear end of the wagon. The driver, supposing that he was the object of attack, frantically whipped up his mules, leaving a clear field between the two enraged warriors, who were not more than ten yards apart. Talk about an Indian war dance! Here was executed a dance that surpassed anything of the kind I ever saw. Shave Head was the most agile of the two, jumping from side to side, yelling, firing high in the air, and again bending low down to the ground, all the time keeping his eye fixed on his foe and his gun ready for use. The corral had been surrounded by not less than 1,000 Indians, men, women, and children, but when the firing began they had surged to one side, leaving the space in the rear of each combatant clear.

"The second shot was again fired by Crooked Neck, but he again missed his mark, and during the instant required by him to throw another cartridge into place, Shave Head, who was still as a statue, took aim and fired. The ball struck Crooked Neck in the hip, which crippled him so that he had but one leg to dance on. As soon as Shave Head fired he resumed his dancing, keeping it up until his antagonist fired again, when he repeated his former tactics, pausing in his dance while he took aim and fired. This time he brought Crooked Neck down with a bullet through his breast. He fell forward on his face, his gun under him. His friends pressed forward, holding up their hands and calling upon the scout to desist—he had killed his man.

"But Shave Head was determined to make it a sure thing. First pointing his gun toward the crowd to warn them back, he advanced to the prostrate Indian and, holding the muzzle of his gun within two feet of his victim, fired three shots into his head. He then resumed his dancing, and facing the crowd he moved backward to the river, and leaping into a boat was rowed to the west side, where I found him later away out on the prairie performing the Indian rite for purification after shedding blood.

"The last duel of which I was a witness was fought with knives. It was in 1879. A party of tourists were visiting the agency at Standing Rock, Dak., and wishing to see an Indian camp by night they applied to me for an escort.

"I gave them three of my best scouts, and soon after dark they started for Wolf Necklace's camp, four miles up the river. They had been gone about two hours when a warrior came down from the camp and reported that the tourists were giving the Indians whiskey. I mounted a horse and rode swiftly to the camp. Tying my horse to a tree, I stole softly among the tepees, in one of which I recognized the voice of one of my scouts urging an Indian for the tourists. Entering the tepee, I found the scout Good-Toned Metal, sitting with his back to the door, his face to the fire, which was burning in the middle of the tepee. There was but one other occupant, Kill The Bear, who sat directly opposite the scout, the fire between them. A quart bottle half filled with whiskey stood on the ground near the fire at the scout's right hand. Turning to the right as I entered, I took a seat facing the fire midway between the two Indians. I had exacted a promise from all of my scouts not to drink whiskey, so I said to Good-Toned Metal, 'Is this the way you keep your promise?'

"'The son of a great man in Washington,' he answered, 'gave me this whiskey, and I felt bound to honor him by drinking it. It is good whiskey. Take some yourself.'

"'No,' I replied, 'I will not drink from this bottle, nor will any one else;' and reaching over I took the bottle in my hand and tapped it sharply against a stone which lay near the fire, breaking the bottle and spilling the contents.

"Not a word was spoken for fully a minute, when Kill The Bear broke the silence by saying to Good-Toned Metal: 'I thought this white man was your friend.'

"'He is my friend,' responded the latter.

"'Your friend destroyed your whiskey.'

"'He has a right to do as he pleases with my whiskey.'

"'Huh!' contemptuously. 'I thought you were a brave man.'

"Kill The Bear no doubt said this with the intention of turning the scout against me, but he made the greatest mistake of his life. Good-Toned Metal had imbibed just enough whiskey to make him a dangerous man, and the sneering words of Kill The Bear aroused all the demoniacal savagery of his nature. His face expressing all the ferocity of a wild beast, his eyes flashing defiance upon Kill The Bear, he answered: 'I am brave! Are you?'

"'Yes,' came the reply.

"'Are you brave enough to die?'

"'Yes.'

"'Then draw your knife.'

"Two bright blades flashed in the firelight. Without rising to their feet they came together, fighting over the fire and scattering coals in