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TRAILING 20,000 SHEEP

THROUGH HOSTILE COUNTRY

"For the cowman loves the sheepman,
And loves him mighty well,
And the sheepman loves the cowman—
He does, like —!"

The chorus to a song heard often in the sheep camps of the west quavered out in the crisp winter air of the Rockies. It was sung by a camp cook—a man whose humorous cast of eye and mouth was at variance with the grim looking belt of cartridges about his waist and the Winchester propped against a tree near at hand. There were other men moving restlessly about, mostly Mexican herders, and all of them had the same full cartridge belts and the same ominous looking guns. On the surrounding hills were men standing sentinel-like. They also had cartridge belts and guns. And all about were sheep, and more sheep, and the tinkle of sheep bells and the "ba-a" of lambs filled the air.

It was the great "sheep army," moving from the summer range in the Rocky mountains in western Colorado to the winter range on the high plateau of eastern Utah. And the sinister looking cartridge belts and the ominous looking guns and the vigilant guards on the surrounding hills were all evidences of the fact that this great mass of 21,000 sheep was being trailed through a hostile cattle country, where the cowmen had sworn to exact vengeance from any sheepman who crossed the "dead line."

No such daring move has ever been made in the history of the west. For years the unorganized sheepmen have suffered depredations at the hands of the well organized cattlemen. The country, divided by the Colorado-Utah line, has been one of the battle grounds between these conflicting interests of the open range. Time after time, when herders have crossed "dead lines" drawn by the cattlemen, cowboys have visited the camps of the offending herders and have killed the sheep, burned the wagon and driven the men back with stern messages never to return. The climax was reached in April of last year, when one night on Indian creek, in western Colorado, Peter Swanson, a young sheep herder, was murdered. Swanson was accompanied by his brother and a man named Gourlay. These two men were in camp with Swanson when a band of armed men rode up and called to them to surrender. Gourlay and Peter Swanson's brother were bound hand and foot without resistance, but Peter hesitated. But before the herder had a chance to draw a weapon he was shot, one of the horsemen getting down out of his saddle in order to get a better shot at the herder. After shooting the man the horsemen rode away in the darkness, leaving two of the herders bound hand and foot and another fatally wounded. Finally the men who were bound managed to work themselves free and carried Swanson to the nearest ranch house, but the young herder died in a few hours—one more victim of the terrible feuds that have sprinkled the sheep ranges with blood.

Swanson's killing roused the sheemen of Colorado to frenzy. The Western Wool Growers' association offered \$4000 reward for the apprehension of the slayers of the herder. A strong organization was affected among the sheepmen, and in January of this year, when it was determined to move the sheep from the summer range to the plains where they feed in winter, the sheepmen decided to adopt strenuous methods for mutual protection.

The sheep feed in summer on the slopes of the Rocky mountains, but in winter they are moved back to the plains, where they find subsistence until the spring suns melt the deep snows from the mountain ranges. It is necessary to trail the sheep many miles across a country where the cattlemen are strong, and where many sheep killings have occurred. So the sheepmen hired 100 of the best gun-fighters that could be secured in all the western country to act as guards while the herds were being moved. The sheep were divided into three divisions of 7000 each. Generally sheep travel in bands of not over 2500. The massing of over 20,000 was a sight not soon to be forgotten. The divisions moved slowly down the mountain road from Montrose toward Grand Junction. Everything was done with the utmost precision, and vigilance was not relaxed an instant. Guard mounts were changed with military regularity. Scouts were sent ahead and at night there were armed watchers surrounding every division to guard against surprise by cattlemen.

Everything showed that the sheep-

men were in deadly earnest. The camping outfit for the "army" was of large proportions. Scores of burros carried the provisions, tents, etc. The packers, herders and guards swelled the total number of men to over 200—and every man was armed to the teeth and ready to do battle to the death.

When the sheep men reached the scene of the Swanson murder an impressive scene was enacted. The young herder is buried where he fell, in a wild and lonely spot in the mountains. The sheepmen erected a great monument of stones over the herder's grave. On this monument they posted a notice, offering an increased reward of \$10,000 for the apprehension of the men responsible for Swanson's death. Leaving this notice on the monument the cavalcade passed on. Swanson's brother was one who assisted in putting up the monument over the grave of the young sheep herder.

On Monday, January 13, the "sheep army" camped across the river from the thriving town of Grand Junction, Colo. Next day it moved across the Grand river bridge and through the town and out toward the ranges of Utah. After leaving Grand Junction it was in frankly hostile territory, as this part of the range is all given over to the cattle business. But, undaunted, the sheepmen kept on. The divisions moved along in perfect order in charge of the herders and the dogs. The dust from the great herds rose high in the air and the sight was picturesque and stirring. Sheep move slowly under the best of circumstances, and it was possible for the cavalcade to make only 12 miles a day. It took five hours for the procession of sheep to pass a given point.

No demonstration was made by any hostile interests, and the sheepmen reached their summer range without incident. Indeed, it would have taken a small army of cattlemen to defeat such an organization of well armed and determined men. Had the bands been marched across the country singly and without any guards save the usual herders it is claimed that all the sheep would have been slaughtered.

Sheepmen are determined to prevent the repetition of the sheep killings that have been disagreeable and expensive features of range life where the stock interests have conflicted. A few months ago, when a sheep camp was raided in northern Wyoming, it was rumored that other camps would be visited and the bands of sheep destroyed. The sheepmen employed armed guards, who were stationed about the threatened camps. By this means trouble was averted, as no attack was made.

Cattlemen claim that the sheep "feed out" the cattle range, and that they are helpless against wandering sheepmen, who do not pay local taxes, but who run their flocks where they will, and who have ruined many a cattleman by their actions. "Dead lines" have been drawn and sheep have been slaughtered by the thousands, in some instances herders killed for their temerity in disobeying the mandate of the cattlemen.

The cattlemen are not of the material that "lies down," and even though the sheepmen organize and guard their bands of sheep, as in the case that has been described, the end of the cattle and sheep war is not yet. It may mean that armies will be met with armies, and that there will be battles between these conflicting interests that will make all other wars pale in comparison.—San Francisco Chronicle.

State of Ohio, City of Toledo, Lucas County, ss.

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FRANK J. CHENEY,
Sworn to before me and subscribed in my presence, this 6th day of December, A. D., 1886.

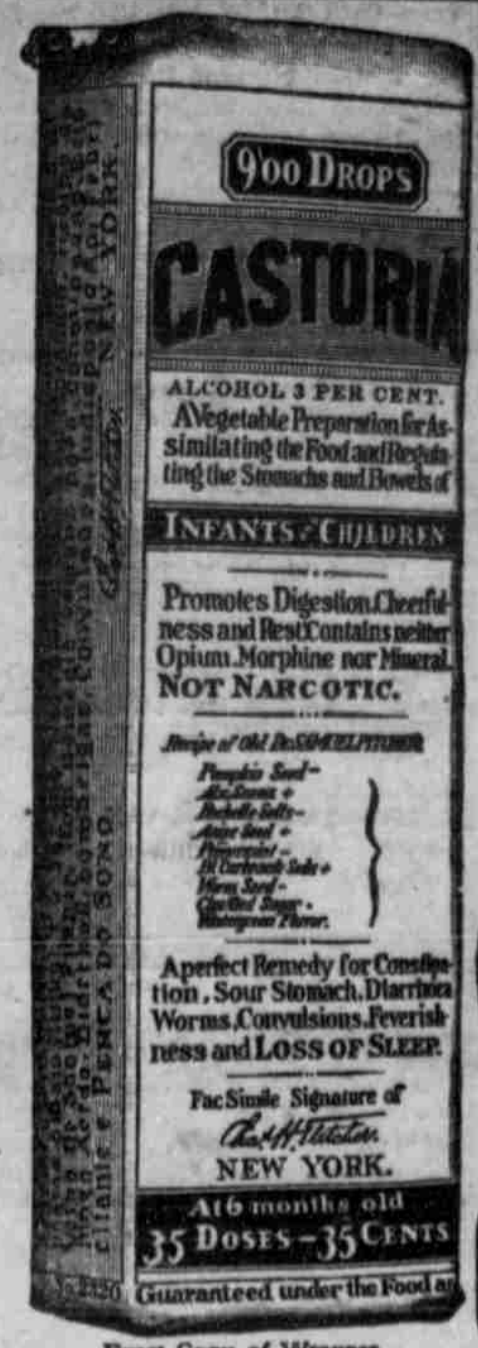
(Seal.) A. W. GLEASON,
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