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pot; so that altogether they seemed to live happy, well-ordered lives, and were in no urgent need of the refining influence of modern civilisation.

BIDDING farewell to the Indians, we headed due north next morning, being then just half-way round on our circular trip.

We reached campo of a more open character hereabouts, a likely enough place to discover a bunch of straying cattle, and in order to cover more ground Walter split the party up into three sections. Deciding on a distant landmark as a meeting place, he and I made straight towards it while Rufino and the other native acted as skirmishers on either flank. We met and separated again two or three times, and it was getting on into the afternoon when Rufino said he had seen deer. This time our luck was in, for after approaching the place on foot through a belt of timber we came within easy distance of a small herd feeding in the tall grass, and Walter dropped the nearest one without any trouble.

There was water in a creek on the other side of the timber, so we soon had a fire blazing, and were sniffing at the appetising odour of roasting venison. Meanwhile, Walter and I had the "big wash" in the creek, and bathed the horses' backs. Two of them were developing nasty saddle sores, and were bothered by the beastly sticky flies which swarmed over the raw places. We washed them clean, but Walter said they would need attention when we returned to the fazenda.

The venison tasted good. It was the first decent meal we had eaten since killing the turtle two days previously. A feed of this kind, where strips of meat are roasted over an open fire, is called "churrasco," and besides a sharp knife the only other necessary adjuncts are your two hands and a good set of teeth. Evening dress, of course, is optional.

PURSUING our circular course, the route was north-east next day, and after a breakfast of hot maté and cold meat we were away to an early start. Wherever possible we adopted the open formation of the previous day, though this time I made a fourth member in the line and did not stay with Walter. We covered a lot of ground in this way and the Indian on the east flank was able to observe recent tracks of cattle. Walter was riding in the next position to him, and when the native galloped up with his news he signalled to Rufino and me to return.

The cattle tracks were easily followed by the Indians and, possibly by Walter too, but only very occasionally could I see that the various marks he pointed out to me were anything like the imprints of hooves. Eventually we came up with the cattle, a bunch of about 50 all told, and deucedly wild they were too as a result of being on their own for a considerable time. They were quite the liveliest animals I had helped to manage up to then, and it was a good thing we came upon them from behind, as it were, because at sight of us they made a mad dash across the campo, luckily in the direction we intended driving them. Walter called a brief halt while we drank cold maté and ate some meat.

"How are you makin' out, son?" he asked me.

"I'm O.K., thanks, Walter," I replied.

"Well, I hope you are, that's all," was the rather grim rejoinder, "'cos we're all goin' to be pretty beat by the time we git home to-night."

That was news, indeed, for although we had been gradually circling closer to the fazenda since the previous morning we were still a matter of 40 miles away, and it had not been intended to return until the following day.

"The boys sez it's goin' to rain, an' keep on rainin'," Walter continued, "an' as we've got to push these sons-o'-bitches in until we pick up some gentle cattle

we might as well keep goin' ourselves; 'cos if the boys is right, we'll sure be plenty wet enough by that time."

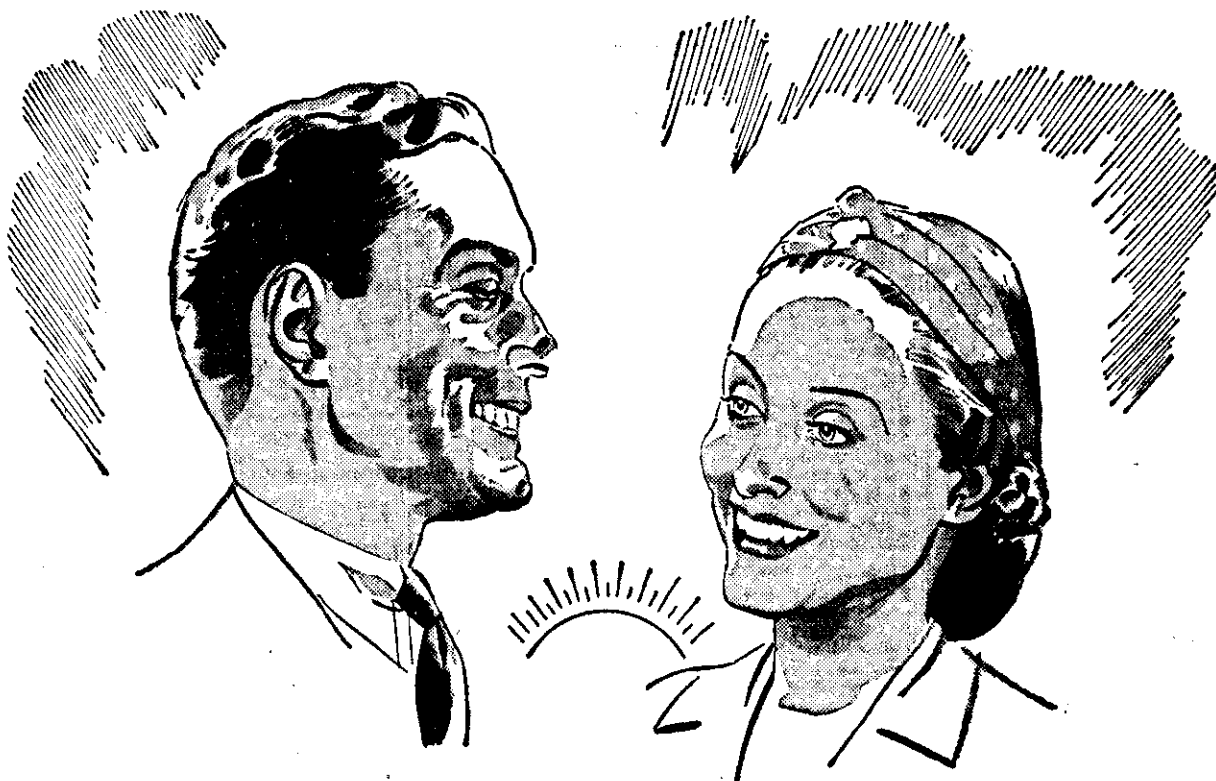
THE boys were right. Unquestionably so! Even then, the odd spots of rain which had been threatening all the morning quickened into a steady down-pour, and we set off in pursuit of the cattle without further delay.

Some of the beasts would charge straight at a horseman, and would not be checked by shouts or waving hands. Then we had to give way, and be quick about it, too; but in most cases the cattle swerved either to right or left, and with a quick turn the horses'

superior speed enabled us to wheel them back in the right direction.

Once more we had the bunch galloping towards home, but their next trick was a sudden plunge to the left where, less than a mile away, was a strip of thickly-timbered campo. This time, as it was on our flank, the job of checking them fell to Walter and me. Had the cattle reached the trees our task would have been hopeless, for 50 horsemen could not have dislodged them from the shelter of the dense undergrowth. Luckily for us they did not get there, although we had only about 200 yards to spare before we turned them.

(To be continued next week)



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