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Outlaws--Dalton Gang

Cattle--ranch driving

INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES MUNSON.
TALALA, OKLA.

FIELD WORKER MARY JANE ST COTTON.

Charles Munson was born in 1870 in Arkansas, his father being a Union Soldier (who served under General Sheridan) while his mother was a southern lady. The father enlisted in 1864 at the age of 16 and served until the strife was over-- in the cavalry without suffering from any wounds.

Mr. Munson remained in Arkansas until he was 20 years old, at which time he went to Kansas for a time, later drifting down into the Indian Territory where the life appealed to him and he has remained here ever since. He has been, in turn, farmer, ranchman, wolf hunter and Indian scout.

Mr. Munson was working on a farm a few miles from Coffeyville, Kansas, when two of the Dalton boys and as many companions were killed in a spectacular bank robbery there in (or about) 1892, and he viewed the dead bodies after the battle was over. The story of that battle is a matter of written history but a few incidents related by Mr. Munson add to the interest of the story, one of them being about a farmer who was driving into the city when

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the "boys" (whom he knew personally) rode up beside the wagon and engaged in pleasant conversation. The farmer asked them where they were going and one of them, Grat Dalton, laughingly said "We are going into Coffey town to rob the bank." Taking the matter as a mere joke the farmer drove on, only to learn when entering the city that they had meant what they said, had tried to carry out their plan and had suffered humiliating defeat at the hands of organized and armed citizens. He says the four dead bodies in the morgue made a gruesome sight.

Mr. Munson looked over the Cherokee strip with a view to making the "run" and securing a claim but a pioneer citizen, in whom he had much confidence, advised him to save time and money as well as avoid disappointment as "the whole bloomin' strip is not worth a dollar." Mr. Munson later woke up to the fact that his friend was badly mistaken. He later made several trips into Texas and returned, usually accompanied by droves of cattle which were to fatten on Indian Territory grass prior to shipment to the St. Louis and Kansas City markets.

On one of these trips he had the pleasure of seeing a

large diamond rattle snake, the largest he had ever seen (or ever did see, for that matter) come to a sudden and tragic death. He, with several companions, were riding along in the southern part of the Chickasaw Nation--a trail which skirted a range of low mountains, when his snakeship attempted to cross the road, or trail, immediately in front of them. An older and more experienced companion instructed Mr. Munson, (who was then familiarly known as "Charley") to jump down off his horse and hit the snake with a rock. He promptly obeyed, hit Mr. Snake a broadside with a rock "about the size of a goose egg." Obeying the first impulse of nature, the venomous reptile threw himself into a coil, sang a tune with his 'rattlers' and raised his head something like a foot from the ground. At this stage of the game the older companion drew a faithful Winchester from the saddle scabbard and fired; the shot, or rather series of shots, completely severed the snake's head from the body; the "rattles" eleven in all, were appropriated by the slayer and they rode on as if nothing had happened.

A few weeks later they returned, bringing with them something like a thousand long-horn cattle. One night they encamped on a broad range somewhere near the present town of

Caddo, had supper and retired for the night, but sometime near midnight a stampede started. Mr. Munson has no idea what started this stampede. He had heard experienced cowmen talk about "killing a herd" but this was the first time he saw it really done - and he had a thrilling part in it. Clouds had arisen in the Northwest and a stiff gale was blowing while frightened cattle were running wild, stopping for nothing. He says men would take turns about, riding rapidly in front of the fleeing cattle. Little agitation would cause the leaders, usually a large bull with very long horns, to "take in after" the horseman, who would ride rapidly in a circle, followed by the frightened cattle - thus leading their leader right back into the herd. At intervals another rider would "relieve or spell" him and in due time the entire herd would be running, as Mr. Munson puts it, "around and around" until they were completely tired out and ready to lie down and rest. It took several hours to get the job done; several cattle and occasionally a horse or rider were injured but, he says "the operation was a pronounced success."

About forty years ago Mr. Munson married - his wife still survives. They settled in what is now Nowata county and lived

there until about 20 years ago when they moved to a farm near Talala, in Rogers county, where they have lived ever since. He is in excellent health, says he can do as much heavy work as any man of his age, takes an active interest in politics, being a democrat with "many socialist proclivities". Is a close student of social and economic problems, has considerable oratorical power, always having a collection of "entertaining, amusing and instructive stories on tap"-and he knows how to tell 'em. Charles Munson is one of the substantial citizens of his community.