

[J. H. Bennet]

[Folk Stuff - Rangelore?]

This story was told to me by a Mr. J. H. Bennet, 74 years old, and a life long resident of west Texas. Mr. [Bennet?] has been in ranching business for himself, and is still interested in ranching.

About the year 1890 there was a stir in the ranching business caused by Englishmen who came over here to make a lot of money out of cattle. Almost every cowboy was trying to get some easy money, mostly trying to get the job of managing a ranch for a Johnny Bull, and lots of men who owned large spreads were trying to sell out for a big profit. Despite the tales told about them, the English were pretty shrewd traders, and most of the fleecing was done after they had returned to England, and was done by dishonest foremen and managers.

There was one spread up in Fisher County that was for sale at the time, and there had been several parties looking at it, but they had never been able to come to terms with the owner. An Englishman came to look it over, and I don't guess that he was so dumb since he seemed to know cattle, and seemed to realize that water was pretty important in this part of the country.

Naturally his [?] clothes were different to [what?] we had been used to, and were pretty funny to some of the boys, and created a lot of laughter and fun making. However after the Englisher heard a couple of the boys making fun of his costume, and he liked to knocked their heads off with his fists, the fun sort of died out, and most of the fellows got to liking him. He would try anything, and when he made a poor hand at a job, would laugh just as hard as the rest and try again.

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He tried to talk terms with the owner, and was just like all the rest, couldn't seem to come to terms. Now the owner wasn't above taking [?] advantage of a sucker, and he had this man marked down as a chump, so he tried every way from scratch to bait him into a sucker deal but couldn't make a hand at it. Then one day he made a proposition to the Englisher.

It was that he, the owner, for a standing sum of money, would deed over to the Englishman all the land that he (the Englishman) [?] could cover in one day, from sun up to sun down. Now it was specified that the buyer couldn't use a C 12 - 2/11/41 [Texas?] horse buggy, but had to complete the coverage under his own power.

Most of us fellows had seen the Englisher walk, and since he was long legged, and pretty active, we figured that the deal was fair enough but most of us sort of figured that there must be a nigger in the wood pile somewhere. The word spread around about the strange deal, and nearly every person who could make it was there to see the business transacted.

The ground coverage was to take place on a Sunday, and that morning I don't guess any body complained about getting up early. We went in to see the Englishman sign the check for the amount they [?] had agreed upon, and the Englishman said something about having to date the check as of Mondays as it wouldn't be legal if it was dated on a Sunday. After the check and papers were signed, every body went out to where they had decided to start.

Just as the sun came up over the hill the Englishman started out in a tall walk, with most of us yelling encouragements but the owner called him back and said, that he wasn't covering the ground, he was just covering little spots of it where his feet touched, and that if he really wanted to cover it he would have to get down and roll.

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The Englishman just looked at the man and turned to the house, most of us were [mad?] and I quit my job right then and there, but the owner wouldn't change, and the tough luck seemed to be with the Johnny Bull. Afterwards though we found out that the Englishman went to Abilene, and sent word to stop payment on the check. Some of the folks thought that this wasn't sporting, but I never could blame the Englishman, and most of the neighbors lost what respect they had for the chinchy owner, and he really sold out the first chance he got after that.