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My Friend the Bull

BY

MORLEY ROBERTS

It is not everyone who can make friends with a bull, and it is not every bull that one can make friends with. Yet, next to one or two horses about which I could spin long yarns, El Toro, the big brindled bull of Los Guilucos Ranche, Sonoma County, California, is certainly nearest my heart. He was my friend, and sometimes my companion; he had a noble character for fighting, and in spite of his pugnacity he was amiability itself to most human beings. His final end, too, fills me with a sense of pathos, and enrages me against those who owned him. They were obviously incapable of understanding him as I did.

When I went up to Los Guilucos from San Francisco to take up the position of stableman on that Ranche, I had little notion of the full extent of my duties. What those were is perhaps irrelevant in the present connection. And yet it was because I had to work so incredibly hard, being often at it from six in the morning to eight or nine o'clock at night, that I made particular friends with El Toro, to give him his Spanish name. In all that western and south-western part of the United States, there are remnants of Spanish or Mexican in the common talk, for California was once part of Mexico. El Toro became my friend and my refuge when I was driven half-desperate by having ten important things to do at once, he often came in and helped me to preserve an equable mind. I have little doubt that I should have discovered how to work this by myself, but as a matter of fact I was put up to some of his uses by the man whose place I took. He showed me all I had to do, and lectured me on the character of the hard-working lady who owned the place, and when I was dazed and stood wondering how one man could do all the stableman was supposed to accomplish between sunrise and sundown, Jack said—"And besides all this there