

ROPING TEXAS STEERS.

A REMARKABLE CONTEST AT A COUNTY FAIR IN THE SOUTH.

Furious Animals Turned Loose for the Men and Ponies to Tussle With—Peculiar Sagacity of the Little Ponies. Men Who Have to Be Quick.

One of the most interesting things I saw while I was in Texas was a roping contest at the Concho county fair. The winner of the first prize—a beautiful cowboy saddle—was to be the contestant who should rope and tie down a steer in the shortest time. The second prize was a gorgeous gold and silver trimmed sombrero, and was to be won by the contestant making second best time.

It is the intention to run up as close alongside or behind the steer as possible, and, while going about his own gait, throw the rope over his horns; then by following along with the rope slack it may be gotten clear under him as he runs; then by taking a turn around the pommel it is secured, the pony suddenly stopped, braced with all his strength, and the steer is thrown clean heels over head literally. By a dexterous jerk and good management a steer may be thrown when the rope has caught but one horn, but it will usually slip off.

If, when he has been roped and the rope made fast to the pommel, a steer suddenly bolts sideways, he is very apt to pull horse and rider over—especially if he be big and the pony little. When the steer has been thrown all right, the rider jumps off and runs to the him, leaving the pony to hold him by keeping the line from the pommel to his horns taut. And this was to me the prettiest picture in the whole panorama. The sagacious little pony standing with his nose to the fallen adversary, straining at the line, and watching the steer with bright, knowing eyes. He realizes that he's in a bad fix if the steer gets up, and he hasn't the least intention of letting him do so.

In the first place, all the wild and vicious steers that can be found on the ranges and ranches about are gathered up and brought, fighting, bellowing and protesting, to the fair grounds and put in a pen there.

HOW THE STEER IS ROPED. When the fair commences the steer is hallooed about with sticks, clubs, whips and whoops, until perfectly maddened, when the outer bars are suddenly withdrawn and he leaps out into the opening. The contestant whose turn it is is stationed close to one side, and is after him like a shot.

The first steer was a big, lean, sorrel colored one with horns about four feet across at the base, and a few inches at the tip. The cowboy was a fine, handsome, keen looking fellow, and his pony one of the best cow ponies in the country, a little white fellow, bearing the favorite name of Possum, with big, bright, black eyes, as quick as a cat, a "regular trump." They got a fair start with the steer, the throw was made successfully, and then came the moment of suspense, when the pony was straining every nerve to keep with the steer, while the rider watched each turn to catch and throw him by an endwise jerk. This he succeeded in doing, then leaping from the saddle to "tie him down," leaving Possum to hold him. He had but touched the ground when the steer made a sudden convulsive effort and rose to his feet. But Possum's eye was on him; he instantly ran backward and jerked him flat. By this time the cowboy reached the steer, jumped on him and tied his feet and the business was completed.

Now recommenced the yelling and whooping, and a big white steer tears into the pen and is half across the bars before he can be beaten back. He finally bursts through the bars before the other steers, and this time it is the deputy sheriff that afterward had the scrum with the Mexicans at Knickerbocker, mounted on the little claybank with silvery mane and tail—Capt. Scott, and a captain he proves himself.

A SAGACIOUS PONY. He quickly overhauls the steer, the throw is made, the rope secured, and then the big brute bolts sideways like lightning, and horse and rider go over in horrible confusion. "Hurrah for the captain! He's up and off! It's he and the steer for it. And now there were screams and roars of laughter and shouts of admiration as the plucky little fellow dodged and tacked and jerked the big animal about till attendants could come up and cut the rope and drive him into the outer regions.

Here comes the next candidate for the rope. This time the roper is a handsome boy of 21 or 22, whose father owns a big ranch, of which the young man is manager. Off they go, the fiery little pony fairly flying over the ground. The steer is roped, thrown—not without a struggle—then only to be tied to complete the job. But the moment he feel the young fellow's weight upon him he rises like a shot. Everybody is breathless—we hardly know whether to laugh or be terrified.

But the pony doesn't debate. He promptly hauls the would-be "ridin' hoss" down with a backward plunge, and keeps dragging him a little as he struggles to rise, until his big animal has him safely tied, and with such little snorts, such tossings of his pretty head, and kickings out of the little slim heels, such sharp neighs and flirtings of his tail as were for all the world like articulate speech.

This was the very cutest pony of all, and when his master got on him after tying down his steer he went off high prancing and swelling with pride in his eyes free.

THE PRIZE WINNER. After this there were one or two failures, one horse falling in a prairie dog hole and one man missing the throw it had taken him long to get close enough to make. And now came an unusually wild, ugly steer, and the funniest kind of a pair to run after him. The pony was a little, ratty roan, and the man was heavy and awkward looking. Everybody laughed when they sailed in close on the heels of the vamoosing, buckskin colored steer. But that little beetle bug of a pony just caught up with the great long legged creature, the big, clumsy looking man threw his rope like a streak of incandescent lightning and his horse, three or four times till he looked to hear his neck crack, then hopped out of the saddle like a little circus boy and tied him with neatness and dispatch. He, out of all the fine athletic looking men on foot ponies, was the one to take the first prize, the saddle, and our handsome boy who was manager of his father's ranch bore off the sombrero, which ought to look appropriate enough on his black curls and shading his brilliant black eyes.

Altogether it was all that fancy pointed eye. Thrilling, exciting, making your heart leap with excitement and stand still with suspense. Such a display of man's mastery of powerful and frantic beasts is a Homeric spectacle, and one which appeals to the original savage which we are told sleeps in every nature.

That Awful Boy. Mr. Hankinson lifted the young lady's little brother in his arms and tossed him up in the air. "Say, Irene," called out Johnny after this performance had been repeated several times, "he's got a little place on the back part of his head just like my china saucer!" And then Mr. Hankinson put little Johnny down.—Chicago Tribune.

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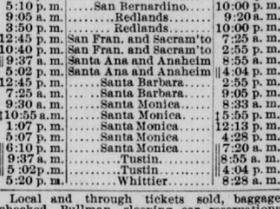
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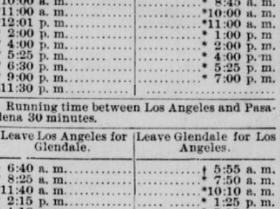
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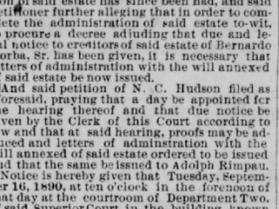
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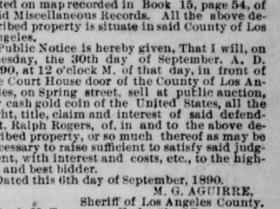
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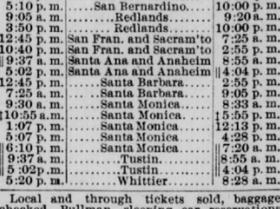
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