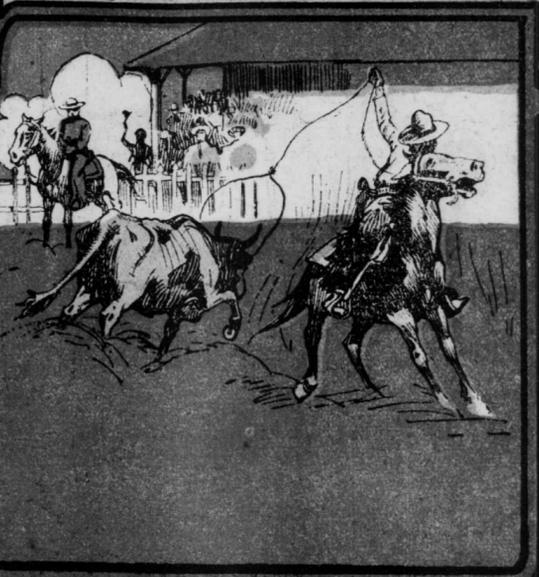




# THE ROPING AT PASCO'S

BY RAY STANNARD BAKER.



A LITTLE FELLOW FUMBLING HIS ROPE, HE WAS HOPELESSLY BEATEN.

a snap, and the steer turned a somersault in the dust; but the strain on the single-cinch saddle was too great, and it turned. Halversen, still clinging to the rope, was jerked to the ground, his horse leaping to one side and kicking himself wildly clear of the saddle. For a single instant Halversen was able to regain his feet, and then he went down and the steer dragged him in the dust, rolling him over and over with the saddle. The crowd was shouting its excitement; the judges, the flagman and most of the cow men came riding hard to help. Halversen, grit to the backbone, sprang to his feet, still clinging to the rope. At that instant the steer, headed off, turned sharply to the right, and Halversen, instantly seeing his opportunity, ran to the left; then, suddenly, he snubbed hard on the rope, jerking the steer's feet from under him. It is a thing that the best cowboy can do only occasionally. Halversen darted

"We're betting on you, Bud Oliver!" came other shouts. The Texas men were not overpopular in Arizona, and yet it was a sportsmanlike crowd. The babel of voices ceased sharply. A wiry little steer, red and white, shot into the field as if catapulted. Turk McGlory observed how like an antelope it ran—long-legged and as easily as the wind blows. The flag fell, and Bud was off; the judges riding after him were blurred in his dust. There was no rope like Bud. He waited long before raising his rope, bending close to his saddle and riding hard; then in what curious, loose, slow coils he swung it! Would he ride clean over his steer? There! he had reached out as if to catch the steer by the tail, and the rope had gone over his head like a hoop, horns and all. Now he was paying out to trip up the steer. How they were running! Turk McGlory rose suddenly in his saddle. "Look out for the fence," he roared. But Bud had seen it, too, and the little roan squatted like a rabbit. The steer reaching the rope's end, doubled up and fell—but fell against the fence. There had not been quite room enough. Bud was off saddle, and the little roan, knowing well what was going on, walked away like a man, pulling hard on the rope to keep the steer down. If it had been a larger steer, or a fatter one, there would have been no trouble; but this one fought like a cat, now on its knees, now on its feet. Bud seized it by the tail, and with a single fierce toss he laid it flat; then he tied—and arms up. Turk McGlory waited with hands clenched to hear the time. "Fifty seconds."

So Bud was beaten by a second, and beaten because he didn't have a fair field. How the crowd howled for the Arizona champion. Bud came up smiling and unconcerned. "Now, McGlory," he said, "you must make a showing for Texas." "What am I offered on Turk McGlory against the field?" shouted the pool-seller. "Now's your last chance." "Hurrah for the kid from Texas!" shouted other voices. Turk McGlory was at the line, astonished to find himself coiling his rope with so much ease. He felt that he wasn't doing it himself, but that some one else was working in him. The sun blazed hot on the field, but everything seemed dim and indistinct. To him all the voices went shouting. "Turk McGlory! Turk McGlory! Turk McGlory!" "Hurrah for Texas and the calico horse!" came a shout from the grand stand. "Wait till they see you run, Pinto," Turk said between his teeth, and the pinto stirred nervously under him. "Ready," called Turk McGlory, though not in Turk McGlory's voice. He gave one glance behind him. The grand stand was a picture of a girl in blue and white; she was the picture, all the rest was frame.

There was a clatter at the pen, and the steer shot past him. Instantly he saw all its points—horns, legs, tail—and they spoke to him with the meaning of familiarity. So must the old knight have looked for the points of his adversary's armor. Now that he was off, Turk's head cleared to his work. The steer ran with hind feet swinging sideways, hoglike. He remembered a steer in the Lazy A outfit that had the same habit, and a bad one it was, too. How strange that he should think of such things at such a time! The steer was swerving swiftly to the left. The pinto, nose forward and dilating, instantly slackened pace, swerving in the same direction and cutting off distance. It was much to have a horse pinto both in the head and the spots to him with the meaning of familiarity. So must the old knight have looked for the points of his adversary's armor. Now that he was off, Turk's head cleared to his work. The steer ran with hind feet swinging sideways, hoglike. He remembered a steer in the Lazy A outfit that had the same habit, and a bad one it was, too. How strange that he should think of such things at such a time! The steer was swerving swiftly to the left. The pinto, nose forward and dilating, instantly slackened pace, swerving in the same direction and cutting off distance. It was much to have a horse pinto both in the head and the spots to him with the meaning of familiarity.

And so, one after another, the contestants rode forward to the fall of the flag—it was a Homeric list—but one by one they failed to equal the record of Buster Graham, although a little red Scotchman named Moore came within six seconds of it. Turk McGlory lost all hope for himself, but he still felt brave for his hero. But Oliver would do it if any one could. And it was now Bud's turn. He and Bud had been left to the last. The nearer his time came the oftener he glanced up to the grand stand, to the girl in blue and white. The pool-seller was now crying his name and Bud's together. "What am I offered on Bud Oliver, champion of Texas? Who will give me even money on Turk McGlory against the field?" It would all have been said to Turk's ears, and embarrassing, too, if he hadn't been so excited. There was luck in roping; probably after all it would go against Bud and Texas. Have you ever seen a cavalryman, preparing for a charge, turning to tie his coat to his saddle, rolling up the sleeves over his muscular arms, drawing saber and twisting his wrist in the saber cord, then setting his face grimly forward? If you have you know how Bud Oliver looked cleared for battle; but no cavalryman ever sat his horse with the oneness of Bud Oliver. To an unschooled observer the little roan pony seemed undersized for so large a man; but the cowboys, whose alphabet is horses, knew well the prowess of that cat-fanked, ragged-necked roan with his ears laid back and his eyes gleaming half wild. "Look out for the Tehanna' man!" called a voice from the crowd.

"Tehanna; greater name for Texas man."



INSTANTLY HE SAW ALL ITS POINTS - HORNS, LEGS, TAIL AND THEY SPOKE TO HIM WITH THE MEANING OF FAMILIARITY

"REMEMBER SHE SAID."

Copyright by the S. S. McClure Co. THERE was to be a roping at Pasco's. Turk McGlory came riding a painted pony with his blanket tucked up under the brow of his saddle cantle and his big wheel spurs tinkling to every ambling step of the pinto. All the signs proclaimed that Turk was from Texas. His saddle was double cinch, his rope was of hemp as thick as your thumb and only half as long as the Arizona rawhide riata, and there were Colorado eyerhos on his bridle and a silver spade bit that cost more than the pinto himself. He had ridden far, for his eyebrows were powdered with fine white dust, and his flannel-clad canteen rubbed light against his saddle flank. Turk McGlory was whistling "La Paloma," and calculating what he would do with the prize—which he already regarded as won. Turk had big innocent blue eyes that looked straight out at you from the desert wrinkles of his brown face, a little white mustache, the first fruits of manhood, and good-humored, firm lips. There was something so irresistibly new about him that Carver, the head judge of the roping, instinctively called him "the Kid."

You shall see Pasco's: Brown 'dobe huts in the midst of a wide gray plain, tufted in the foreground like upholstery with knobs of sage brush; a railroad gleaming across it like a chalk line; dim blue mountains, ragged along the top, set up in the distance. Out from the town, on the right, a dusty road led to a huge corral used for a race course, with a green pen in one corner. Cow punchers were saddling, tightening cinches, mounting and riding up and down in bustling confusion; a crowd was gathering to the grand stand at one side; a tall fellow in a white sombrero was bawling for bets on the contest; and over all glared the hot white Arizona sunshine. Pasco's was hard at its favorite sport. Steer roping is the fine art of the cattle ranges; it is also the chief business of the cowboy. No other great sport is so closely linked with the daily work of the soil, no other work has in it so many of the elements of wild sport. Turk McGlory, riding into the corral, felt all the eyes of Pasco's heavy upon him. It gave him a sense of heat and too little air. He felt somehow that they knew, especially the women knew, that this was to be his first public roping. He wished that they also knew of his wild riding and tying with the Lazy A outfit, and then he was glad they didn't. Out on the plains he had felt the strength of every muscle in his lanky six feet, and he was certain of winning; but now he felt needlessly large, loose, obstructive, and for one panicky second he was riding away, prizes to the wind. Then he clapped his teeth shut and dismounted. "By —," he said, "I'll stay."

Here at the pen, where a dozen wild steers were crowding and panting, were knotted the cowboys and their admirers, Carver and his judges, and the small men who were betting. With a throb of the heart Turk recognized Bud Oliver, to him the greatest man on the cattle range. No man between Texas and Los Angeles was his equal for roping and tying. Turk McGlory would rather have been Bud Oliver than Governor of Texas. Turk was the champion, receiving his friends like a king, giving them an offhand word or a clap on the back—a hopelessly inimitable perfection of good-fellowship. And then there was Buster Graham, the champion of Arizona, and Halversen, a square man with a jaw like a bulldog's;

Doc Mason, who had roped with Buffalo Bill, and a number of others whose names were great in the roping field. Turk's heart went down and down when he thought of competing with men like these, and then it suddenly leaped up with the realization that he was in such company, a part of it, and he resolved that he would never leave the field until every man in it recognized him as a roper, too. Little groups of people were drifting by to the grand stand. Here and there, from the corner of his eye, as he bent to adjust the saddle cinches, Turk McGlory caught the glint of a white skirt or of a flowing ribbon. Sometimes the girls stopped to discuss the contestants; he heard them talking of Bud Oliver and Mason and Buster Graham. Suddenly, as he tightened a fatigue strap, a saucy, smiling face looked up at him. Her sister was evidently trying to pull her away, but she said, half teasingly: "I'm wearing your colors, Mr. Texas. You must win." He saw nothing but deep black eyes, and he felt the blood in his face. He couldn't have spoken if he had known that it was to save his life, and he knew that he was smiling foolishly. She looked back over her shoulder, raising a mischievous finger. "Remember," she said. Turk took two steps after her and then went back to his saddle. She was in blue and white; he wore a blue and white silk handkerchief knotted loosely, cowboy fashion, about his throat. Whatever else he saw he also saw her until she was in her place in the grand stand.

Some one shouted, a flagman rode out from the pen on a sleek city horse, the admirers and the bettors slowly worked away, leaving the cowboys and the judges around the pen. The contest was about to begin. Turk observed that every contestant except Bud Oliver and himself was an Arizona or New Mexico man—single cinches, white sombreros, rowel spurs and all that. Turk himself wore a big black-crowned hat, trousers sagging so low as to make

him appear extraordinarily long waisted and big shouldered, high heeled Mexican boots and a vest, unbuttoned, but no coat. He stepped with a peculiar roll, seen only in these dwellers on horses, to whom walking is an uncouth exercise to be avoided. An attendant was dropping one of the bars of the pen twenty-five feet in front, where a log marked the starting place. Denny Hughes, the first of the contestants, was sitting his horse, bridle rein down, coiling his rope and fitting the rings to the proper places between his fingers. In front of him, a hundred feet from the pen gate, the flagman sat stiff and still with flag in air. The steer was to have a hundred feet start and the cowboy was not to give chase until the flag dropped. As befitted a natural sport, the rules were few and simple. It was to get the steer, throw him, and tie him so that he could not get up, and the puncher who made the best time was the winner. It is the everyday task of the cow man on the range; it is the way all cattle are caught, either for branding or killing. Three bars were down. A splendid big steer stepped out with raised head and horns high, paused a moment and looked regally about him. In the hush, Turk McGlory heard, with a thrill, the coarse shout of the pool seller: "What am I offered on Turk McGlory of Texas against the field?" There was dead silence, then dust rising in the hot air, and the steer was off, a brown streak across the field. Down dropped the flag. Denny Hughes gave his horse the spur and went forward with a leap, his rope gyrating in long slow sweeps about his head. Oh! but it was beautiful to see. The steer swerved like a bent bow to the right and Denny was almost on him; there was much dust and an occasional shout from the stand. Denny leaned forward and cast, the long rope uncoiling in graceful curves through the air. Denny drew in his horse sharply, the steer wavered as the rope struck him, then with a shrug he threw it aside and dashed onward.

"Get him, get him; try him again, Denny," roared the crowd. The steer had turned and Denny was after him again, riding at full speed and drawing in as he coiled his rope at the same time. Round and round swept the coil, and then it shot straight forward, the loop in the air like a flattened O. Denny's horse went back on his haunches, the steer leaped high in air, and fell full length. Denny was off, pulling the short tying rope from his belt as he ran. He stooped over the steer, trying two front and one rear legs—hog tying they call it—in incredibly short time. Then he sprang to his feet, arms in air. It was the signal that the work was finished. The judges came up and declared the steer properly tied. The timekeeper called out: "One minute, fifty-eight seconds." "Denny is out of it," observed Bud Oliver. "He should have made it in one throw." Denny came in, hot and grimy with dust. The grand stand was buzzing again like a trombone heard afar off. The pool-seller bawled his bets and Turk McGlory saw a girl in blue and white in the grand stand. Turk was shaking with excitement; he felt that he never could throw his rope. What a fool he was to compete with these old ropers! How they would laugh at him! A little fellow with silver spurs, and a feather in his hat, came next, and he fumbled his rope so that it was past two minutes before his steer was down. He was hopelessly beaten, and he came in bedraggled, but grinning. When Buster Graham went to the line there were shouts of encouragement, and acquaintances from the stand and the pool-seller frantically ran up his bets. Buster and Bud Oliver were plainly the favorites, with a little leaning toward Bud, as Turk observed with rising pride. After all, there was no man like Bud Oliver of Texas. Buster Graham was a handsome fellow, slim and tall, with long black hair and the smallest feet that ever went into \$20 Mexican boots. On his horse he was a very Centaur, swaying and flowing with every motion like the

animal itself. Turk never had seen a man ride so easily before. It was a splendid big steer, too, and it ran as if with a feeling of the sport—a wild straight charge across the corral, swerving neither to right nor to left. How still the crowd was! Buster seemed in no especial hurry. There was little sign of confusion or dust. When his horse's nose was nearly over the steer's lying tail, he swerved easily to the left and cast his rope. The steer seemed to set a front leg in the noose as if the performance had been rehearsed. An instant later Buster was tying, with inimitable swiftness and deftness, and then his arms were up and his long black hair was loose in the wind. What a gift it is to do a thing like a young god! And how the crowd roared. "Buster—Buster Graham!" "The timekeeper could hardly make his voice heard." The people were standing up now and roaring, while Buster came in as cool and undisturbed as if he had been riding for an airing. Bud Oliver was a good job, Buster," said Bud Oliver heartily, and the boy in Turk McGlory spoke out in his eyes at this big friendliness of a rival, and he crowded up to Buster to shake hands, and drew back before he had done it. The betting was now all against Bud Oliver; but that he cared not in the least, though he knew it would require the greatest skill and luck to beat such a record as Buster had made. When Halversen came up to the line Bud Oliver observed that he was tying his rope, Texaswise, to the pommel of his saddle. The Arizonian ordinarily uses a long rope, sixty feet at the least, and throws it free, at the last giving the end a hitch around the saddle pommel, so that he can let go in case of accident. The Texan burns his ships behind him; he uses a short rope, ties it fast, and takes the consequences. "Look how you tie that rope!" shouted Bud good-naturedly. Halversen paid no heed, and when the flag went down he was off like a flash. It was a runty red steer, and the rope, opening from Halversen's hand like a coil spring, settled over the steer's horns. There was a wild, scrambling rush, Halversen's horse turning to one side to trip the plunging animal. The rope pulled taut with