

# "BUSTING" the Wild Horse in Nevada

CHARLES (PETE) BARNUM, THE "WILD HORSE KING," DESCRIBES THE SECOND STEP IN DOMESTICATING THE BRONCO NATIVE TO THE SAGE BRUSH HILLS



STIFF DUCKING



TRYING TO DISLodge THE MAN



THE FIRST LESSON



THE THIRD LESSON—TEACHING HIM THE FEEL OF THE REINS



INTO THE SADDLE IN A LEAP



FALLEN ON THE RIDER'S LEG



TWISTING AROUND THE CORRAL

By Charles (Pete) Barnum

THE education of a wild horse begins the moment he is captured, for he must be confined, temporarily at least, and in being held he receives his first lesson—restraint. It does not matter by what manner he has been deprived of his freedom; he may have been chased along some of his favorite runways, suddenly and unexpectedly to find himself hedged round by a corral, or he may have been trapped while drinking at some fenced water hole. Naturally, he at once attempts to get out. Each one of the band has different ideas as to how he may escape, and runs wildly and excitedly about immediately trying to put these ideas into practice, their method varying according to the type of the corral which encompasses them.

A stockade corral is constructed of posts set on end as near together as possible. These are generally rough, knotty and tapering, and the corral is strong in the same proportion with the size and height of the posts. The horses can plainly see the top, and there are large crevices everywhere, so the most usual thing they do is to throw their weight against it in an endeavor to get through. Often they escape in this way, especially if they hurl themselves against the top of the stockades, for should they happen to strike a few defective ones enough posts may break to allow the horses to wriggle through or over.

During last summer I caught a big crop eared bay stud two different times at the Cabin trap. He was 10 or 12 years old and exceptionally wild. Whenever I came near the corral which imprisoned him he would race around, looking everywhere for a chance to escape. I have three corrals at the Cabin trap, one of woven wire and two of stockade. For two days he remained with his band, but when we drove him from the wire inclosure into the stockade so that we could catch him and tie up one foot he looked at us with fear and mistrust, then, with a terrific bound, tried to clear the pickets. This he failed to do, but so great was the impetus that he smashed the tops of three posts and went over to freedom. A couple of weeks later I caught this horse again, and as soon as I corralled him he escaped in exactly the same manner.

Many horses dash here and there, looking not at the top, but at the spaces between the posts, thinking that through these cracks they may escape. Any little gap tempts a trial. They will stand back and run headlong at it. If they fail, the shock will knock them down; each successive charge will be less violent until discouragement conquers them. In the heavy woven wire corrals I once used the fatalities were frightful. The horses do not realize the resistance there is in the wire, and dash against it heedlessly—often with disastrous results. They

act as if they do not see the fence and run against it as though nothing were there, the head seeming to be held naturally at just such an angle that the impact dislocates or breaks the neck. Outside of trap No. 4 in Fencemaker wash a grewsome heap of bones is shocking testimony of many such tragedies.

Some years ago we erected a woven wire corral in a gap that leads from Antelope valley to Fencemaker wash. This pass was much favored by mustangs in crossing the mountains. A bunch of wild horses ranged in that vicinity, among them a magnificent 4 year old roan, which, although branded, was very wild. We were desirous of getting him to break him to saddle, and after many trials we finally succeeded in running this band into the corral. Three of us arrived at the gate just as they passed through it. Green eyed with excitement, they dashed in desperation at the wire, and in less time than it has taken you to read this, four of them, including the big roan, lay dead almost at our feet. The only corrals in which these horses do not kill themselves trying to escape are those constructed of canvas; these appear to them like a solid wall, unscalable and impenetrable.

After the horses have learned that they can not escape, our work once more begins, for the shipping station may be many miles away—often 50 or 100, or it may be half that distance to the nearest ranch. To try to take them away without some sort of handling

would mean loss of all. If there were only one horse to be taken away he could be halter broken and led, but the usual ratio is about 15 horses to one man; therefore, methods which are quick and certain must be employed.

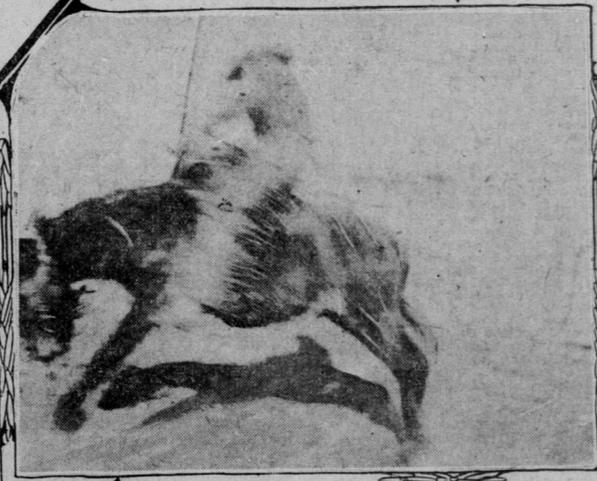
All theories regarding patience and kindness are thrown to the winds. Innumerable experiments have been made, all with the idea of controlling these horses so they can not run away, while allowing them to travel naturally; extreme cruelty has in some instances been resorted to—even in re-

cent years men have sewn up the nostrils with wire, so the horse could not obtain sufficient breath to allow them to run. Also a short rope, truthfully called a "choker," has been tightly drawn across the throat and forehead and tied between the eye and ear. This is tightened until the horse wheezes, when it is fastened and the animal turned loose. Obviously he can not run, for he can scarcely breathe. Many horses were choked to death by this method, others were choked enough to torture them, yet not enough to prevent their escaping—tem-

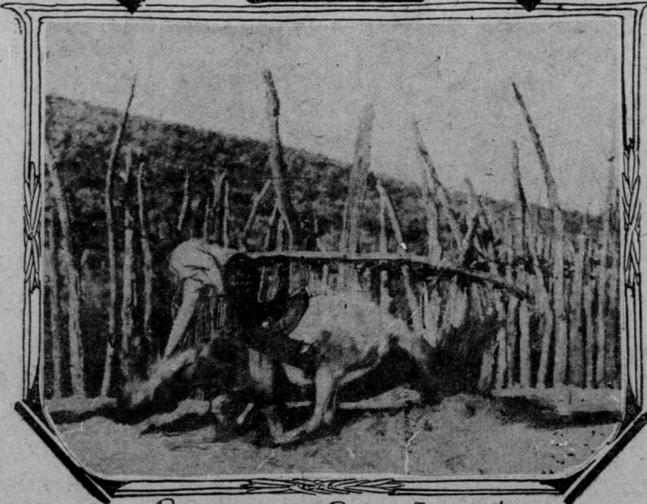
porarily; it does not need much imagination to picture the terrible suffering a horse must endure if he escapes with one of these chokers tied around his throat. Another of the methods often tried was to tie one front foot to the tail, just at such a length as would allow the horses to step, but not to reach out and run. This is not used much now, for it is hard to get the rope tied just right—if too short they can not travel; if too long they run fast enough to escape; even if the length be right they will continually half hitch the hind leg and throw themselves until they become discouraged and refuse to travel at all



BEATING THE BRONCO WITH A SACK TO CURE HIM OF FEAR.



GOING SOME—TOO FAST FOR THE CAMERA



PITCHING THE RIDER INTO A FENCE

At an opportune moment we enter the corral and stand close together in the center, for our proximity has again set the mass of horses fairly boiling with excitement. The alkali dust rises in clouds. We beat the earth with our ropes to keep the half crazy horses from running over us. A faint breeze rises and wafts the dust away, and we see that the horses are quieting.

As he has been standing waiting for the horses to become quieted, Allison has made a large loop in his lariat, he deftly gives his forearm a twist, which causes a writhing, snake like movement to pass along the rope. Again he makes the same motion and the two kinks that were in the loop have disappeared. Rearranging the little coils that represent all of his lariat except the loop, he now prepares to perform a feat which few human eyes have witnessed, yet which is to him an everyday occurrence—his day's work—often his pastime. He will match his strength against that of a matured wild horse, the latter possessing all the vigor and energy his free, unrestrained life in the open has developed, intensified by his fear and desire to escape. With the recklessness and fearlessness characteristic of his kind, with the coolness born of assurance, Allison ties the end of his 50 foot lariat around his body, just above the hips. Hard and fast is the knot, as he will depend upon it to hold when the shock comes, for he is about to put his loop on a wild horse and allow him to run headlong at terrific speed to the very end of his rope, when by exercising that wonderful, superhuman strength he possesses, he will throw the horse to the ground and hold him there.

His keen black eyes have been watching for an opportunity; he selects a big pinto stud, and waits until the horse is about to pass him. Now Allison steps forward. The horse, thinking his antagonist is coming at him, leaps to get away; like a flash, with the precision of a master, Allison has placed the loop just where the stallion can not fail to jump into it. His aim is true. There is a snarl as the honda slides home. The big pinto feels the strain and sting of a rope for the first time in the 10 years of his existence. Terrified he bounds away. Allison has hurled his body backward, so that his shoulders seem almost to touch the ground at the instant the stallion has reached the end of the lariat. The horse's feet are jerked from beneath him—he falls prostrate. Instantly he tries to get up, but Allison has taken slack, and once more gives a jerk which straightens out the legs of the stallion. There in the dust of the corral he lies—a thousand pounds of fiery horseflesh conquered by a rawhide rope and the cleverness of man.

As the stallion hits the ground he struggles I am astride his neck, and after a tussle have jerked his head upward and to one side. Now another battle takes place; the throwing of him aroused his fighting spirit, but the weight on his neck calls forth all of his animal fury. In a final effort to release himself the stallion strikes viciously and kicks wildly with the free hind feet, straining himself at times so that those hard, horny hoofs reach forward almost to his ears. Realizing the inefficacy of his struggles he tries to reach and accomplish with his teeth what he has been unable to do by sheer strength and the wild lashings of his legs. Now he contracts those mighty muscles of his neck, lifting his head free from the ground—even with my weight upon it—passing

Still another way is to pass a rope around the body of the horse, just back of the withers, fastening it between his front legs; then a short rope is tied from this to one front foot, the idea being to prevent the horse from reaching out as he must when running. But the weakness of the system lies in the fact that if it is tied just a little long the horse can run away; if too short the continual jerking rubs off the hair and skin, making a very ugly sore.

Study and practice evolved a plan that is humane, practicable and successful. During the last two years, although we have handled thousands of horses, not one has escaped by running away after receiving his lesson. It is severe, but sure. There is no horse so wild but that he can be made to submit, and the moment he does he is given his liberty. Three good men in two hours' time can make 25 wild horses—no matter what the age, size or disposition—so submissive that they can be driven anywhere, just like a herder drives his sheep. This is accomplished by hard work and a short piece of rope.

The horses are in the corral—20 of them—acting as would 20 antelope if they found themselves suddenly surrounded by a fence they could not jump or crawl through. The inclosures are invariably circular. Round and round the mustangs go, climbing upon each other in their terror; little coils are knocked down and trampled under foot. A distracted old mare or stud makes a headlong dash at the side of the corral—the shock prostrates him and over and over he goes, to be rolled and trampled by the others. For possibly 15 minutes they will act in a manner bordering on frenzy. Outside stands an Indian, Allison and myself. Allison, a marvel in strength and agility, arranges the coils of his rawhide lariat, fairly itching to begin the work.