

# OUTLAW HORSES of the NEVADA RANGE



THROWING A WILD ONE.



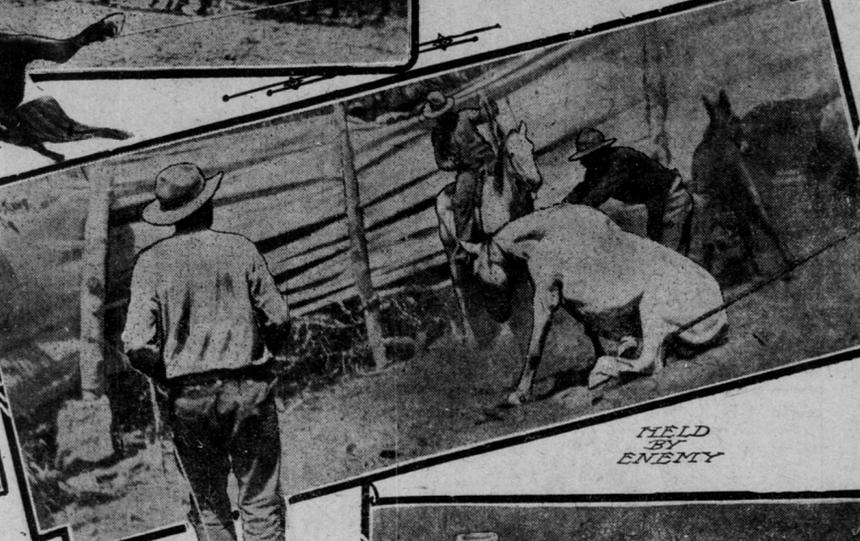
BRING ON THE SADDLE.



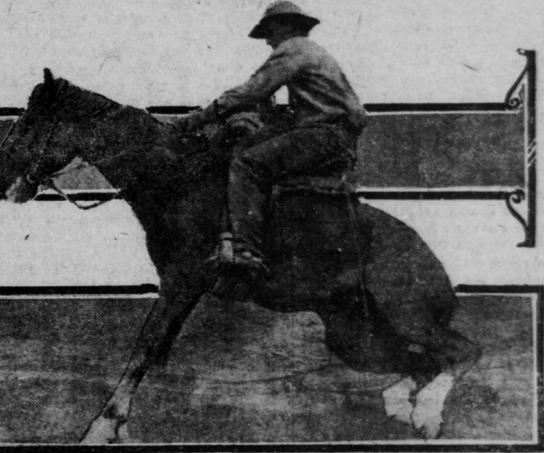
A HARD ONE TO MOUNT.



THE BUCK JUMP.



HELD BY ENEMY.



OFF HIS FEET.



PUTTING THE RIGGING ON.



BETWEEN ROUNDS.



AT THE END OF HIS ROPE.

By Charles (Pete) Barnum

**R**UNNING wild and free upon the ranges in the Nevada horse country are many horses that we have as yet been unable to capture. Among these are some that may never be caught. Generally they are big, muscular fellows, fearless when in close quarters, headless, determined and capable, possessing such endurance that it alone serves many times to keep them out of the hands of man and thus maintain their liberty. From the very day they were born they have been constantly developing their lungs and muscles climbing up and down the slopes and ridges of the mountains in which they live, scampering nimbly over the uneven ground, traveling many miles each day after their food and water, always running upon sight of a small human being. But they do not depend solely upon endurance for their safety, for combined with it are extreme caution, constant vigilance and wonderful alertness. Acting entirely upon the impulse of the moment they have often fairly outwitted collections of their enemy—man. No matter how new a plan may be nor how well executed, certain horses invariably get away. Loose upon the ranges, they are a constant source of annoyance and loss to the mustanger, not because of the monetary loss sustained when they escape, but because they influence others to evade the traps and tricks of the men whose work it is to catch them. Hence the watering hole they have been accustomed to using for years, and they will leave and go miles away to another range—at least for as long a time as that water hole is watched. Hide a corral in some pass in the mountains or on some favored trail and they will refuse to run in that direction or else go over or under or through the long, extended wings and make a gap through which the rest of the band blindly follow. Try to run them down, and they will quit the bunch and strike out alone where no man cares of follow—unless it be with a rifle. If by accident—for it would only be by accident—you should stumble upon them while they are drinking or feeding, or possibly sleeping, and you should make a dash and rope one of these old renegades you will find that your troubles upon earth have only just begun. He will run around trying to ensnare your horse, or he may run toward you, giving slack faster than you can take up the coils in your hand; then, without warning, he will run headlong on your rope, endeavoring to break it. Before you have finished with him you will think that you have tied on to part of hell itself and in the end you will perhaps be cursing everything in sight because he has escaped and because, with him, you lost the best riata you ever owned. These are the outlaws.

Endowed by nature with exceptional powers, which they have by constant exercise developed to an unusual degree, they present a problem to the horseman which is hard to solve. With a keen feeling of shame I must confess that more than once while suffering the first humiliations of defeat, in a fair contest, the problem has been solved with a rifle.

**They Test the Buster**

However, we do occasionally catch the outlaws, and if we are lucky (or unlucky) enough to hold them after capture, these are the ones that try the skill of the "buster"—skill and strength, for the outlaw's battle is always a battle royal. Frequently we find it impossible to master them, some preferring death to association with man. The few that do outlive the strenuous first lessons and still continue the fight can generally be divided into two classes—those actually refusing ever to yield even in the slightest degree, and the ones that surrender conditionally, only to renew the fight at any and every opportunity. Among the first class are some whose heads are unshapen, showing an apparent lack of or disarrangement of brain. The second class is made up of horses that surpass by far in intelligence the average equine. If caught, they all have one quality in common—violence. These are the horses that climb upon the backs of the rest of the band when they see their captor approach the corral which holds them. It is the outlaws that hurl themselves with reckless abandon at the woven wire or stockade which may surround them.

It is these same outlaws that charge a mounted man, if necessary to escape, often knocking down both horse and rider. In a fight with rope and ropers they use teeth as well as hoof; more than once they have escaped at the last moment by severing with a snap of the jaw the riata which it was impossible for them to break. Their actions when captured are like the struggles of a violent maniac multiplied by 10, and when an attempt is made to subdue them, necks are broken by blindly running against obstructions, while ruptures, broken bones and dislocations, caused by hurling themselves upon the ground are common occurrences—almost a rule. Doubtless it is a condition akin to insanity that causes these horses to fight in this way and to continue it to utter exhaustion, their struggles generally being renewed as quickly as they regain their strength. Some sections of the ranges are famous for the outlaws that have been there in the past or are to be found there now.

The southern part of Fish Creek valley, near the Eureka-Nye county line, is a country that has produced many of these horses, and the greater number of them can be traced as descendants of that same spotted mustang stallion, which successfully defied every attempt to capture him. He weighed about 900 pounds and was peculiarly marked—his body color being very light, almost white; yet from cheek to tail he was covered with innumerable irregular splashes of black. He always carried his head very high, and possessed a long white mane and tail which flowed gracefully in the breeze. Invariably he fed on high ground, watching every approach most carefully. Through my glasses I often observed that he would crop a few mouthfuls of grass, then raise his head and scan the horizon. Did he discover any object—a freight team slowly working its way amid a cloud of dust, or a lone horse far away in the distance—he would immediately gather his band and led them on a run to safety. He was always a disturbing element. For in some unaccountable manner he refused to communicate to the other mustangs a feeling of uneasiness, which kept them continually on the alert. Often we have chased his band, and occasionally caught some of them, but the spotted stallion in the lead rarely followed. He was a constant irritant, which earned him his liberty many times. No matter how closely he was pursued, regardless of the proximity of his enemy, and with no thought of his physical condition, he invariably refused to turn from any man, run he would, but once started upon a course he never changed it. This trait, combined with his wonderful endurance, enabled him to live a free life in his own wild way, for 10 or 15 years. He was a constant irritant to every one who rode the range, for his "meanness" was so thoroughly a part of him that it was noticeable in his coils; so cautious and crafty was he that, although the sentences of death were passed upon him nearly three years ago, and though since that time men have hunted him as diligently as an Indian hunts his venison, it was not until last August that the deadly deed was accomplished. His work—and then it was unfair, for he was drinking at a little spring in a deep canyon, on a strange range, where it was impossible to detect the approaching man who slaughtered him. Not until after his death did we learn that the black spots with which he was so completely covered were but marks of battles with other stallions, when, during those furious rushes, they fastened their teeth upon him to tear portions of his skin and hair, which nature replaced with hair that was black instead of white, the original color of his body.

**Nailed at Last**

For many years, in those rugged mountains which divide Antelope and Monitor valleys, there ranged a big, blood red, bay stallion which successfully opposed every effort we made to capture him. The section he chose for his range was so rough and so thickly studded with cedars that merely to find him was a difficult task. Whenever we tried to run him down he invariably eluded us in the timber; the trap corals which were effective on many other horses were always discovered and evaded by him, but during the hard winter of 1905, when the snow became so deep in the mountains that he could no longer paw through it to the grass underneath, he came down into the

valley, mingling, for the first time since we knew him, with other bands of horses. He was so long of back and limb and so prone to leave his band and run alone when any person or object appeared that he often put himself in evidence when, under natural conditions, he would have been unnoticed. The long battle with the elements, unnecessary exertions to which he subjected himself, weakened him. We noticed that he soon tired of leaping through the snow as he ran, so one day in early spring three of us started out, mounted on strong, eager saddle horses, and after locating the big old bay, we divided. One man made a long circuit, and by leading his horse slowly he managed to get within a few hundred yards of his game without being discovered. The stallion scented the man before he saw him and immediately started away at a furious pace. After a grilling run of two miles the second man joined in the chase, and half an hour later the third, armed with a 60 foot riata, dashing in, made a throw the entire length of his rope, "nailing" the wily old outlaw, but leaving less than 18 inches of rope to snub around the saddle horn.

Just at this instant, if it had been possible for the game old stud to have leaped a little more vigorously against the rope which encircled his neck, he might have been a free horse today; but he had strained four more inches of the gradually slipping end through the hand of his captor he would surely have escaped. For we had no other rope. In his weakened, exhausted condition he made a wonderful fight, rearing and surging against the riata; once he got astride the rope and bucked and lunged; as the rope cut into his flesh he roared with rage and pain, endeavoring to shake rider and riata from their backs. A moment later, perhaps, finds them stampeding recklessly through country where a misstep may mean death, disregarding canyons, gulches or even perpendicular precipices; the next instant down goes their head between their front feet, they arch their backs, buck, jump forward, then sideways, and if the place they particularly had, they may put forth all their efforts there, for they always seem to jump the hardest in the most dangerous places.

In this western country men are always willing to match their skill and risk their lives in trying to conquer these renegades, not alone because of the inner gratification they derive in subduing one of them, but because in our "mustang work" which is doubtless the most arduous work a saddle horse is ever called upon to perform we need in them just those qualities possessed by an outlaw—unusual determination, exceptional endurance and agility; many times the result justifies the tremendous effort put forth to trap them, for if they are ever broken, or even half broken, they will carry a man on a long, steady, tireless lope for hours after the average horse has given up.

end was as tragic as his career, for in making an attempt to escape by jumping out of a stockade corral he miscalculated the distance and became involved on a large, jagged, pointed post, which, by his struggles, was driven completely through his body, and a 44 was turned loose upon him to end his suffering.

Skill and persistence on the part of the mustanger seldom bring the most intelligent of these horses into their hands. If they are captured at all it is by accident, and accidents of that sort rarely happen. Occasionally, however, we get them, and when the attempt is made to teach them the ways of civilization they present a harder problem to solve than do those possessing less intellect. Their insane or semi-crazy brooding, their stubborn resistance, their stubborn, continued resistance of the never let up no matter what happens kind, and so steadfastly they hold to the rule that nothing else is ever looked for by the man whose duty it is to "tame" them. But the wily fellows, these overintelligent, old equine renegades, are the ones that start the perspiration at the roots of the hair and cause that creepy, cold, air and needle sensation to vibrate back and forth from your sombrero to your saddle. Yes, they will fight with the fury of an enraged tiger, sinking their wicked teeth into your flesh, striking sledge hammer blows with lightning rapidity, with their steellike front feet, while with those horny hoofs, made like flint by constant use in the mountain country, attached to those ever active hind legs, they deliver a pliedriver shock with the precision of a sharpshooter. For variation they throw themselves, or perhaps sulk, refusing to move out of their tracks; and then suddenly rear, endeavoring to shake rider and riata from their backs. A moment later, perhaps, finds them stampeding recklessly through country where a misstep may mean death, disregarding canyons, gulches or even perpendicular precipices; the next instant down goes their head between their front feet, they arch their backs, buck, jump forward, then sideways, and if the place they particularly had, they may put forth all their efforts there, for they always seem to jump the hardest in the most dangerous places.

**The Story of the Stampede**  
The big chestnut stud we named Stampede was an example of how good a horse may be in one way and how bad or mean in another. Being reared

in an exceptionally rocky section of the mountains bordering Cortez valley, wild and rough enough in themselves, early in life he developed remarkable surefootedness, plunging down the rock strewn slopes at speed which was appalling, never halting or stumbling, no matter what the obstacle. In fleetness he was never equaled by any horse known to have been bred upon these mountain ranges. The mare that raised him was a very ordinary mustang, but her colt had the conformation, markings and many of the traits of a thoroughbred; it was believed by the In-

dians and ranchers who knew him that he was sired by one of Old Joe Deen's blue blooded stallions. The marked difference between mare and colt caused them to be noticed and recognized immediately among the hundreds of wild horses seen in that part of Eureka county. Until maturity he ran free and unharnessed, for no vaquero ever rode a horse that could run swiftly enough to get within a rope's length of him, and the narrow sculled mare that reared him showed her colt early in life how to avoid the tricks and traps of the mustangers.

It was late in August when this stallion was an 8 year old, after the grass had browned and withered, that Nookie, a Shoshone Indian, secreted himself among a mass of boulders just below a mountain spring to which Stampede led his band to drink. Soon the stallion came, and while he stood there with lowered head filling himself with the cooling water the Indian, riata in hand, dashed at him. Before the stud realized his danger, the rope of rawhide was about his neck. As he felt its sting and restraint he threw his weight against the rope with such force that the Indian's horse was jerked to its knees. Taking advantage of this, the stallion, who had attempted to escape by running up the mountain side, now whirled and ran straight down, and had not the rope caught under the root of a big pine stump he would either

have broken the riata, jerked it from the hands of the Indian, but it tightened under the root, then snubbed around the stump, and although he pulled and tugged until his breath came in gasps and wheezes and his eyes seemed about to pop from his head, he could not get away, while not 40 feet distant stood the Shoshone Indian with the glow of success playing over his countenance, for he had captured all alone the racehorse stallion which had escaped from the mustangers for eight long years.

Stampede was never a difficult horse to mount or to ride; he allowed the saddle to be thrown carelessly upon his back and as carelessly removed, but to bridle him required the services of two good men—one to hold him down upon the ground, the other to buckle the leather into place. Until he died he refused to stand tied by halter, bridle or neck rope, but if hobbled would never attempt to get away. Unless heated by contest, he would obey the rein, but in a race with other horses he could not be controlled. Start him after a bunch of mustangs and he would easily overhaul the band, then continue right past them—pulling and jerking on hackamore, spade or ring bit had absolutely no effect upon him.

Looking down into Cortez valley is a low, bald flat, known locally as French mountain. Here fed many bands of mustangs that had escaped innum-

erable times only because we had no saddle horse feet enough and surefooted enough to outrun them down the jagged, precipitous side of that mountain. As we sat around our campfire one night Nookie, who had been very quiet all the evening, said that he had, unaided and alone, lassoed Stampede, the horse that every one had said never could be caught, and that upon that same horse he would go alone to the summit of French mountain, and not only scare out the mustangs, but come down with them and be among them from the start, provided that the rest of the men would station themselves upon the trails in the foothills to intercept the mustangs before they reached the valley. The day arranged for the run Nookie left camp early. Stampede was in an ugly mood, having bruised one of his eyes badly by striking it upon the ground while fighting the men who were bridling him. But as he started down the summit amid a cloud of dust and mustangs he ran with the ease of a deer. Nookie, shouting and yelling and swinging his quirt, did not attempt to restrain his runaway horse, who was bounding down the ridges like an immense rolling boulder, gaining impetus every moment. A run of two or three miles brought the mustangs to the brink of a deep canyon, the sides of which were perpendicular walls of porphyry; here they turned to the left, following the ridge overlooking the canyon. Right among them as they approached the chasm ran the crazy horse, Stampede. There was no further necessity for speed—those mustangs could not run any faster, nor could anything turn or hold them back, yet on came the Indian, straight for the mouth of the yawning gulch, now pulling, straining, first on one rein, then on the other, desperately attempting to check his horse.

But the run down grade among the leaders of the other band had again placed old Stampede beyond the control of man, and as he neared the edge of the cliff instead of turning away, instead of slackening his speed, he increased it, and with a mighty leap jumped toward the wall of the other side, and down into the rocks and brush and cactus, hundreds of feet below, he went, and under him died as plucky an Indian as ever climbed into a saddle.