

Breaking the Western Broncho

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Max McD.

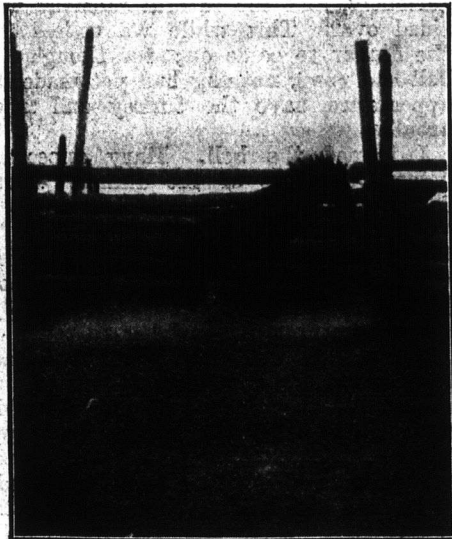
BREAKING the Western broncho is no easy job. It requires all the skill and dexterity of the man of the plains. It has come to be a business by itself, and for years every ranch had its "twister" or "wrangler" or "buster,"



One of the old "Busters" of Southern Alberta

Breaking the Western broncho is no easy job. It requires all the skill and dexterity of the man of the plains. It has come to be a business by itself, and for years every ranch had its "twister" or "wrangler" or "buster," whose duty it was to ride the wild range horses for the first time. Usually when he had ridden them a few times they were ready to turn over to the less nery cow-puncher.

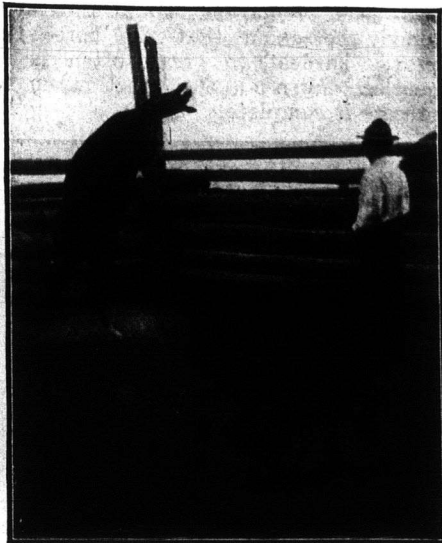
But there is a process of the life of the Western horse completed before the "buster" gets him. He must be halter broken, that is he must know how to wear a halter with grace. The colt at



Halter Breaking 'Eno' Renfrew Ranch, Standoff, Alberta

two, three and four year. is put in a corral. A heavy halter is put on him after he has been roped and thrown; attached to this is a heavy rope, and this is attached to a strong post in the fence of the corral, or sunk in the centre of the enclosure. The horse breaks himself. He at first pulls back, then throws himself on the ground; the next instant he is high in the air; perhaps he gets his foot over the rope and requires to be extricated. All this has a taming effect, and he realizes that he has forfeited the free life of the range, and must conform to a new mode of living. When the broncho will stand without pulling back, or when he will lead by the halter, he is said to be halter broke. Horses are usually halter broke before being sold to dealers.

Few inexperienced riders would, however, care to mount a horse that was merely halter broke. Some have tried and the experience has proven painful in the extreme. Many a broken collar bone and crushed foot has resulted. When the Western broncho has graduated from the halter-breaking school he is next subjected to a saddling process. He is roped again, sometimes thrown to the ground, other times blind-folded, and the heavy stock saddle with bucking rolls is put on his back. This is carefully fastened by the cinche which passes under his body behind his front legs. If he has been thrown, he is allowed to get up after the saddle is secure. Sometimes the pitching begins before the "buster" has time to mount. If the broncho has been blind-folded to put the



Halter Breaking 'Eno'

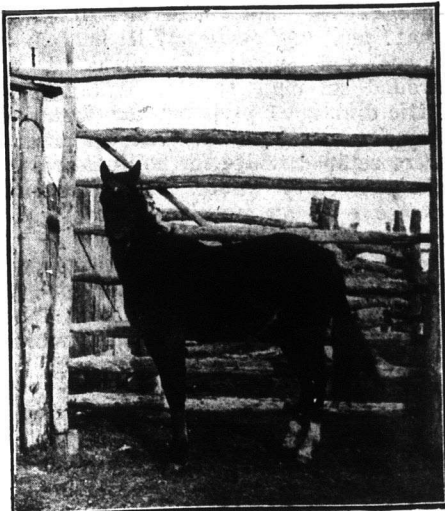
saddle on him, the rag or kerchief remains on his eyes till the rider has mounted. This is suddenly pulled off and the bucking begins. The movement is hard to describe to one who has never experienced it. To sit on a grand stand at a stampede or exhibition and look on does not give any accurate idea of the fearful and wonderful stunts a Western bunchgrass broncho is capable of, while in a state of active eruption. Someone has written that he "has more action to the square inch than a brace of Kilkenny cats with their tails tied over a clothes line."

In describing the Western broncho someone has said: "He kicks, squeals, strikes, bites, jump and bucks all in the one breath. In the next he twists, squirms, wiggles, paws the air, pounds the earth, a roars like a ll buffalo. When broke to the saddle he will travel all



On the Renfrew Ranch, South Alberta

day at a steady lope with less food and water than a tin-can dieting goat could live on standing still. When it rains he merely humps his back and makes an evetrough of his tail. If a blizzard comes his way he merely hunches himself into a snow bank and waits till it's over. After it is over he paws off the snow and makes his meal off frozen grass. When the grass is



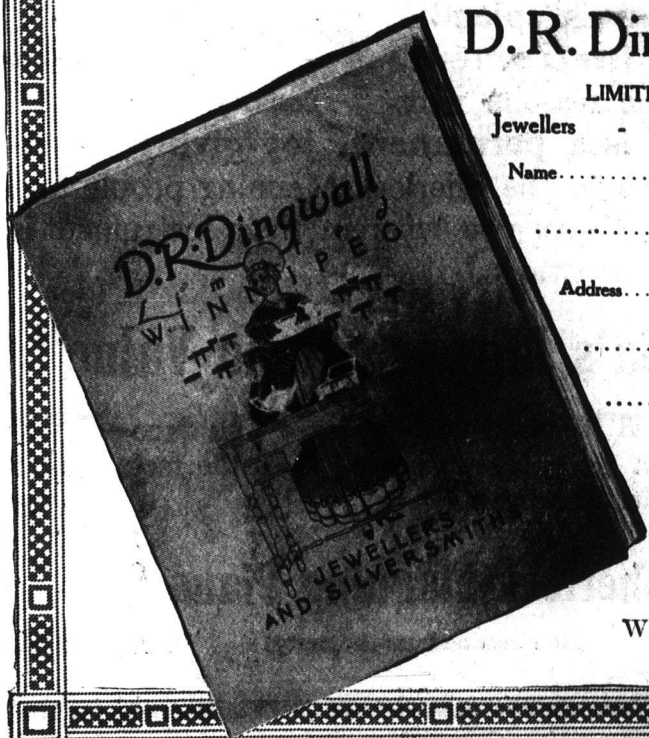
The Colt is put in the corral

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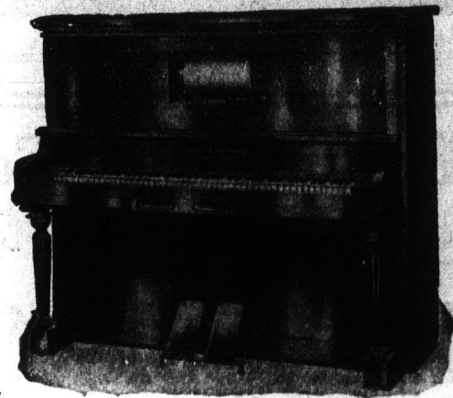
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