

WITCHO'S LAST RIDE....

A STORY OF THE WEST.

As the railroad terminated at Gilroy in the early seventies, a stage was dispatched from that place once a week to carry the mail to San Miguel, a distance of one hundred and thirty miles. Four small postoffices were stationed along this line for the accommodation of the scattered stock ranchers who lived in the fertile valleys watered by the Pajaro, San Antonio and Nacimiento rivers.

One of the early settlers—I will call him Mr. Smith—was engaged in sheep farming among the hills of southern Monterey county. He and his small family, consisting of a wife and two sturdy daughters, were entirely isolated from civilized society. They had no near neighbors except the Indians, who watched the strangers with a kindly interest, their hatred not yet aroused by the fear of losing their hunting grounds.

"Let paleface be," they said, "plenty for all." And so the squaws ground their maize and acorns in peace, and the braves hunted the antelope with some but friendly feeling for the white intruder. In fact, the youngest child so won the heart of the old chief that hardly a day passed but he had her with him at his camp.

Here she soon learned to ride the ponies almost as well as did the braves themselves. The chief was so proud of her achievements under his supervision that he presented her with a fine pinto colt, just broken, together with a handsome Mexican bridle and saddle.

Witcho, for such was the pony's name, was very docile, and soon learned to love his little mistress, and was never happier than when she was seated on his back. He was always ready for a gallop over the hills, or a race with any Mexican vaquero who might be passing through the valley.

Because the child was so splendidly equipped, and was such a good horsewoman, it became her duty and delight to carry the mail between her home and the little postoffice nine miles away. She had been making these weekly trips for a year or more when, one Saturday afternoon, her father called her to him and said:

"Madge, I expect the stage to bring the money to pay the sheep shearers this evening. The package will be very heavy, and it may be dark before you can get home. Do you think you can bring it safely? I would go myself, but cannot leave the corral, and there is no one else I dare trust."

"I am sure I can bring it all right, papa," answered Madge, delighted to have a chance to carry such a valuable package.

"Very well, then. Run along and get ready, dear, but be sure not to say a word about the money to anyone."

As Mr. Smith walked back to his wool tying he saw one of the Mexicans sharpening his shears on the grindstone just outside the kitchen window, but it never occurred to him that he might have overheard the conversation, nor did he feel alarmed at all when, later, this same young man complained that he was sick and said he would go home.

In the meantime Madge arrived at the office. Attracted by her beautiful horse, several of the bystanders gathered around him. They looked at his teeth, felt his joints, remarked on his straight limbs and glossy coat, and made small bets as to his weight, his strength and his staying powers.

"My, but this is a stiff gale," said the postmaster, who stood at the door of the office with his hands in his pockets. "I say, Tom," he went on, "you'd better put the little gal's horse in the shed, out of the wind. The stage won't be along till 7 o'clock or after."

So Madge dismounted and they led her horse away. She soon became interested in the stories of robberies and holdups which were being told by an old stage driver, so the time passed quickly. Half-past seven came, but no stage, and most of the men started for home.

"Do you think Jim could have been held up?" queried anxious Madge of the postmaster when the place had been deserted except by these two.

"Oh, no, little one. Such stories belong to bygone days. But I think you had better not wait any longer, for it will be very late by the time you reach home, and your folks may get worried."

"No, father told me to be sure and wait for the stage. I am not afraid, for Witcho will take me home all right, I know," answered Madge.

A few minutes later they heard the rattle of the stage, and by the time Madge had untied her horse and mounted him the driver was handing over the mail bag, saying as he did so:

"Is there anyone here from Smith's? I have a package for him."

"At this Madge replied: 'I am Mr. Smith's little girl. I will take the package.'"

"You," said Jim, staring at the small figure, you can't tote this all the way to Smith's."

"You, you I can. Please give it to me. Witcho is in such a rush I can hardly hold him."

"Well, here you are, then," and Jim handed her a sack of money.

"Good night," cried the girl, as she rode with a swinging center down the road.

"I will tell you," said Jim, as the postmaster handed him back the mail bag, "that just the name I was looking for. You see, the name is Smith's little girl. Now, she can't tote this all the way to Smith's."

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twelve, but if she is, she's small for her age," answered the postmaster. "That's a fine horse she's got," he continued. "I don't think there's anything in these parts that can hold a candle to him, unless it's that black colt belonging to the young Mexican up the creek. They say he stole it somewhere around Sacramento, and I shouldn't be surprised. I think he's that kind of a fellow. I should like to see the two horses come to a race some time. I would lay a pretty good wager on the pinto, but I might miss it, as I've heard some wonderful tales about the black."

"'Twould be nip and tuck between them, I guess. Well, so long. I'm sorry to leave you, but it's getting late, and I've got a good many miles to cover before I can put up for the night."

A few minutes later the stage and its driver disappeared in the gathering dusk.

Madge had galloped across the flat meadowland and was now walking along the trail which wound through the brush-covered hills. It was rapidly growing dark, and the wind whistled mournfully through the tall pines. Madge, though not a timid child, could not but wish the road more open, so that she could ride faster.

To keep herself from thinking of the stories she had heard an hour or two before, she began talking to her pony, but soon relapsed into silence, because her voice seemed so small and strange in the vast solitude. Once she almost dropped her reins in fright as a large owl flew from the branches of a tree under which she was passing. She had barely recovered from this alarm and had urged Witcho into a gentle gallop before a coyote slunk across the trail just ahead of them and so startled the pony that Madge, good rider as she was, had to clutch the stirrup leathers to save her balance. As she regained her seat and let the leathers flap back into position, she thought she saw a small object gleam in the saddle skirts. Knowing it could not be a silver ornament in such a hidden place, she examined the spot and soon drew out of a well concealed pouch what seemed to be a small dagger.

"Whose can it be?" she said to herself, turning it over and over in the dim light. Then the thought came to her that it might belong to the former owner of the saddle. "Well, anyway," she added, half aloud, "I'm glad I found it, for it will make a good hunting knife for papa."

Just then Witcho gave a little neigh and, glancing up, she saw a dark object disappearing behind a big rock that stood close by the path about one hundred yards ahead. It looked like a horse and rider, but she could not be sure. Instantly all the tales of the holdups she had heard flooded her memory, but, although terribly frightened, she pushed on, knowing it would be useless to turn back or to leave the path and try to make any headway in the dense brush. As she tremblingly approached the spot she strained her ears to catch the slightest sound. Once she thought she heard a footstep. Then all was silent.

She had almost passed the rock when suddenly a man sprang out from its shadows and seized the bridle rein. With a loud snort Witcho reared and plunged forward, striking the man full in the chest with such force that he was thrown violently to the ground. Feeling himself free, Witcho jumped over the prostrate body and tore along the path toward home.

With an oath the robber scrambled to his feet and shook his fist after the fleeing pair.

"On, Witcho, on!" It is our only hope, for he'll be after us in a minute," exclaimed Madge, leaning forward and striking the pony's neck with her open palm. The horse, seeming to feel the danger of his little mistress, increased his speed, and soon the pair had cleared the timber and were tearing along the smoother road. It was much lighter here, and Madge, glancing over her shoulder, saw to her great dismay that the man, now mounted upon a black horse, was rapidly gaining upon her.

"It must be Juan Machado," she thought, for she knew no other horse could catch Witcho but his black colt. She was even more frightened at this discovery, for, knowing the man's passionate nature, she was well aware she could expect no mercy at his hands. Again she encouraged Witcho, but, although he did his best, the black still gained. The man was uncoiling his riata. She wondered whether he would try to catch her or her horse's feet. His horse was coming nearer and nearer, rapidly narrowing the space between them under the maddening prick of the cruel spurs. To escape being caught, if such a thing were possible, Madge lay nearly flat on the horse's neck. The lance came whizzing through the air. Thank God, it fell short. The Mexican had missed in the dim light. Some seconds more elapsed before he would be ready to throw again.

"Oh, Witcho, can't you go faster?" cried Madge in desperation.

As if inspired, the noble animal seemed to fly over the ground, but he could not leave the black behind. The black was again circling round and round. Then Juan threw straight at Witcho's unstruck head. This time he did not miss his mark. In scorching glare he uttered a wild yell as the coils whirled over the horse's glancing neck. Madge reined in Witcho, for the new escape was now impossible, and there sat at their present pace

the jerk of the riata would break his neck.

"Give up the money, or I'll choke the pinto," called Juan, knowing the girl thought more of the pony than she did of herself.

Witcho, thoroughly frightened, was snorting and plunging so violently that Juan could not slack the rope, nor did he dare get off his horse, for it had not yet been trained to hold a creature alone.

Madge was in despair. She knew Witcho must soon go down. His nostrils were dilated and his breathing painful to hear. What should she do? It was no use crying for help, for she was five miles from any house. Something must be done, and done quickly. She could not, would not, give up the money. Then it flashed into her mind—the knife. That was the very thing. She seized it and drew its keen edge across the taut riata with all the strength of her little arm. The riata snapped, and Witcho, with all the agility of his race, wheeled, and was off like a shot.

The receding lariat struck Juan a stinging blow in the face. Vexed at losing his prize, and smarting with pain, he sank the spurs deep into the heaving flanks of his horse, and, cursing and swearing, rained blow after blow on its sensitive skin.

"I must catch them. I will have my revenge," he muttered between his clenched teeth. "I'll kill them both. The devils shall not escape me a third time."

With this thought he arose in his stirrups, took his revolver from his pocket and fired. Still the pinto kept up his wild pace. He must get still nearer. He spurred and lashed more furiously than before. Five minutes and he was at Witcho's heels. Once more Juan took aim and fired. He saw the horse in front give one leap into the air, stagger for a moment, and then dash on and on. At every jump he widened the distance between them. In vain Juan plied his whip. In vain he halloed and swore. His horse's gait was becoming uneven and slower; blood was streaming from its nose. Seeing that there was now no hope of overtaking Madge before she reached safety, he wheeled his horse and made for the hills.

On and on sped Witcho, faster and faster. He seemed to gather strength as he neared the pasture gates. No need of encouragement from Madge now. For a mile they kept up the mad gallop. Then the foaming animal slackened his pace. But the girl still feared the pursuer, although he was not in sight, and urged him to fresh efforts.

"Witcho, dear Witcho; we must get home," she said.

The beautiful beast, seeming to understand her fear, made one more mighty effort, although his labored breathing told how plainly how sorely it was distressing him.

But home was not far off. All were at the gate, just organizing a searching party, as Madge raced up. The faithful horse stopped, and she fell fainting into her father's arms, murmuring: "The money—safe."

All was hubbub and commotion. Mrs. Smith wrung her hands, declaring her darling was dead, and begging the men to go and find the murderer. The men uttered violent threats of vengeance on the one who had dared to molest their little lady.

Madge soon opened her eyes and looked for her horse. He staggered, then fell to his knees. With a wild scream she sprang to his side, moaning, "Witcho, my darling Witcho." The horse raised his head, struggled as if to rise, then fell back—dead.

Madge buried her face in his long, mane, matted and tangled with sweat and dust, and burst into passionate weeping.

"See! He has been shot," said Bill, the shepherd. "Look at the bullet hole in his side, and the blood pouring out."

"Who has done this?" the others cried. "Let us just get our hands on him!"

Then they started toward the corral for their horses.

"Boys," called Mr. Smith. "Wait. Madge has fainted again. So wait until she is able to tell what happened before you go."

They carried Madge into the house and laid her tenderly on the bed, and while her father and mother were watching and caring for her stout men dug a grave for the horse who had so nobly given his life for his mistress. When she was able to tell all that happened, several of the men started for Juan, but they were not able to find any trace of him after he entered the hills.

Mr. Smith never forgave himself for letting his little daughter go alone on that terrible night, but thanked God from the bottom of his heart for her wonderful preservation through the endurance and speed of her Indian pony.

Many years have passed since then and Madge is the proud owner of several fine horses, but she often sheds a few silent tears on the mound under the old live oak where lie the remains of her first true possession, Witcho, the pinto pony, that saved her life on one never-to-be-forgotten night.

The delay of the English government in the publication of the October and November returns from the concentration camps in South Africa was apparently due to the government's desire to accompany the announcement of the pitifully high death rate with some kind of official explanation. The blue book just issued shows 1,114 deaths of whites in October, of which number 1,000 were children, and 1,077 deaths of whites in November, of which 1,071 were children. This makes the total number of deaths by the last six months 2,191, or a total death rate approximating 200 per 1,000.

Makes Record in Organizing.

JOHN SCHULTZ has made Belleville, Ill., a stronghold of organized labor, possibly the very strongest in the country. It has more union workers than voters, due to the unionization of many minors and of miners who live in its suburbs. In nine months Schultz organized twenty-three unions, and in two years he has organized twenty-two. He has organized men and women, workers skilled and unskilled, persons without the semblance of a trade.

Officers of the American Federation of Labor have congratulated Schultz upon having made his community without an equal in organization in the country among cities of its size. He did his most effective work while president of the Belleville Trades and Labor Assembly.

Belleville has 3,643 voters. The Belle-

ville Trades and Labor Assembly, counting three unions in neighboring towns, has 4,200 union men.

Schultz has been a resident of Belleville fourteen years, being first a steel worker and then a miner. He began organizing unions for the American Federation of Labor two years ago, and he has increased the number of unions in the community from 19 to 51, organizing 23 in the first nine months.

If Alton is the Dardanelles of unionism in Illinois, Belleville is the Gibraltar. It is not the butcher, baker and candlestick maker alone who are organized in Belleville, but the followers of every craft having the dinner pail in the day's work. The list of trades represented in the central organization is not only comprehensive, but remarkable. It includes bakers, barbers, bartenders, brewers, brewery workers, brickmakers, butchers, carpenters, electrical workers, cooper-unionized laborers, glass workers, painters, clerks, both male and female, stove menders, street railway men, tailors, steam engineers, stationary firemen, hodcarriers, machinists, cigar makers, miners, musicians, plumbers, steamfitters, teamdrivers, team owners, tanners, powder workers, moul-

ders, metal polishers, well, cistern and shaft sinkers, blacksmiths, boot and shoe workers, bottlers, garment workers, pressmen, hoisting engineers, bricklayers, printers, livery stable employees, cut nail workers, metal polishers and garment workers. Associated with these is the Ladies' Aid Federation, which is made up of the wives of the men in the unions.

Belleville has more union workers than voters because there is a close organization among the young men who are not yet of legal age. Their organization illustrates the thoroughness with which Schultz has done his work. Wherever he has found men of a similar craft, regardless of their numbers, he has organized them and led them into affiliation with the Belleville Trades and Labor Assembly.

Schultz has a good field for his or-

ganizing. There are 1,200 miners alone. Belleville has, in addition, a glass factory, four flouring mills, a boot and shoe factory, four brickyards, two breweries, eight foundries, four machine shops, two wire nail mills and one cut nail mill, with many lesser industries. The fact that it has more union workers than voters, even though many of the workers are minors, illustrates how large a proportion of the men of the city are daily workers.

Schultz has been assured by officers of the American Federation of Labor that there is not another city of its size in the United States with a union labor organization so strong as that at Belleville. The miners are the chief contributors to its strength. The glass workers probably rank second. Many union labor workers who have visited Belleville have expressed their astonishment over the thorough organization of the working people of the city, declaring they had never seen anything to equal it.

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Room Filled With Microbes.

CAREFULLY guarded and tended in one room in London there are enough microbes to kill every man, woman and child in the world. The room is in the Institute of Preventive Medicine building, situated in one of the most densely populated districts of the big city.

The microbes are there in thousands, millions, and even billions, and they are just yearning to be at their fell work upon human beings. They represent almost every known disease and are classified and kept in bottles, fed and developed, and surrounded by an atmosphere best suited to them, and they are nursed with as much care and tenderness as is given to the fairest and rarest of flowers.

The microbe establishment is maintained for the purpose of enabling medical men to become familiar with these "mighty atoms" of destruction. Here they have every opportunity to make a close study of the precise character, appearance and disposition of the different bacilli; to discover, in fact, everything that can possibly be discovered with a view to the prevention and cure of diseases that are caused by microbes. And one can easily conceive what a fascinating study bacilli are.

An uninvited stranger might walk through the incubator room of the institute without dreaming for a moment that he was in a hotbed of disease. He would more probably imagine that he was in a novel kind of bakery, where small bottles of various colored liquids were stored to be kept in an oven temperature, for around

the room are arranged numerous oven-like incubators, with glass doors, through which one can perceive the long glass tubes containing the bacilli, whose way of egress from the tubes is barred by nothing more impenetrable than small wads of cotton. There, quietly, almost invisibly, reposes a power great enough to sweep the earth of human life.

And the bacilli demand the greatest attention, the most delicate feeding. Almost every different kind of microbe has particular tastes and distastes, which have to be carefully studied. One kind of bacilli likes to dine off horses' blood, another off broth, while a third will touch nothing but a peculiar kind of jelly, and so on right through the list of diseases represented, though, luckily for the catering department of the establishment, a few agree in having similar tastes.

It has been repeatedly said that President Roosevelt is the youngest man that ever occupied the White House, yet there are at least nineteen of the most noted rulers of other nations of the world who are younger than President Roosevelt. Among these are the Russian Czar, the German Emperor, the Emperor of China, the King of Italy, Spain, Portugal and Siam, the Queen of Holland, the Khedive of Egypt and the King of Serbia and Bulgaria.

The Broadway tabernacle property, New York, has been sold. It brought \$1,000,000. A large hotel is to be erected on the historic site.

FALLS OF FASHION.

Fashion has established Norfolk plaids as a salient feature of winter blouses and fancy waists either with front or back buttonings.

The renouveau a black dress or coat that has worn glossy, sponge with equal parts of ink and strong tea. This method had been recommended as infallible.

As a curtain for an odd window drapery material that suggests stained glass is particularly good. The design comes in old gold, red and blue, outlined with a corn of darker blue.

All the tendencies of fashion still incline toward the avelte clinging effects in gowning, with little or no means of disguising an defects of figure by former clever manipulations of drapery.

Fathers, brothers and husbands have everywhere and constantly given expression to their private favorable opinion of the neat and natty blouse waist, which has so long held its place in the world of fashion.

Glazed chints, with its gay floral decoration, is just the thing for the wall covering in the general sitting room or even in a nursery, for it is washable and its brightness is not easily dimmed. The designs are showy and small and the background a soft cream tint.

The smart little tricorne hats are more fashionable than ever this winter, and they are formed of every variety of fabric from Angora panna and rich velvets and satins to camel's hair, felt, long napped beaver—shaded breast feathers and cloth being matched to the smart fur trimmed tailor costume.

Raglan, newmarkets, French surtouts and other styles in long coats for street wear are more generally worn this winter than they have been in years. These enveloping wraps can come as near the making or marring of a woman's appearance as any garment in her wardrobe. Unless it is of the very best material, well cut and carefully fitted, it is the least attractive of all wraps.

A fascinating costume gown just sent to this country, made by one of the famous Parisian houses, is cut with a princess foundation of heliotrope satin. Over this is a slip of chiffon in a paler shade of heliotrope. Above the chiffon is built a gown of ring-dotted point d'esprit in a delicate mauve color. The skirt portion is finished with an accordion-plaited bounce of the point, the joining seam covered with a scroll design done in chenille embroidery, showing the three shades of heliotrope used in the foundation and the point d'esprit. The flowers in the embroidery design are made of spangles, shading from the palest mauve to the deepest heliotrope. This embroidery borders the decollete and trims the band of short puff sleeve.

TALK ABOUT WOMEN.

Mrs. E. Burd Grubb of Edgewater Park, N. J., has had conferred upon her by the queen of Spain the order of Noble Ladies of Marie Louisa, an honor which no American woman has ever before enjoyed.

Mrs. Octavia Dancy of St. Louis served her turkey Thanksgiving day on a platter 400 years old. It was brought to America in 1700 by John De la Pryme, in whose family it had already been more more than 300 years.

The little town of Marmaton, Kan., is practically run by women. It has a woman school teacher, a woman telegraph operator, a postmistress, a woman pastor in charge of its only church and a woman letter carrier.

Miss Helen Hyde of San Francisco won the first prize in a Tokio art exhibition, in which her work, done in the Japanese manner, came into competition with that of the native painters. She began her studies of Oriental folk in San Francisco's Chinatown.

Mrs. Leslie M. Shaw met the governor of Iowa, now appointed secretary of the treasury, when they both became interested in the Methodist Sunday school at Denison, Ia., in 1871. They were married three years later and have three children, Enid, Earl and Erma, the eldest of whom is just out of college.

Mother Catherine, formerly Miss Drexel, has engaged to raise \$75,000 of the \$140,000, chief contributors being members of the Drexel family, well known in Philadelphia business and social life.

Mrs. Charles M. Schwab, wife of the president of the United States Steel corporation, has traveled extensively and has a large and valuable collection of miniatures, of which she is an enthusiastic collector. She assists her husband in his establishment of industrial schools and is personally educating many young ladies.

With her increasing years Mrs. Betty Green seems to take on more crystalline. She visited Boston a few days ago on legal business connected with her father's will and was asked by an old friend as to the cause of her visit. The multimillionaire made answer thus: "Same old cause. The lawyers know I am rich, and so they make trouble for me."

Seicher Atayo, a comely Pueblo Indian maiden, has graduated at the head of the class of professional nurses at the Woman's hospital in Pennsylvania. Miss Atayo chatters generally accepted ideas as to the personal appearance of Indian women, being petite and quite good looking. She was educated in the Carlisle Indian school and has lived in the east for a dozen years.