

[Looks Are Sometimes Deceiving]

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MAR 5 1937

W. M. Emery

2/26/37 cl 910 words

FOLKLORE - FOLKWAYS

LOOKS ARE SOMETIMES DECEIVING

We were moving cattle to pasture down below Hayden. It was nearly a three day trip, and we tried to make it to some ranch to stay nights. The second night out we stayed at the comfortable, modern home of the Old Cattleman.

The Old Cattleman is a pioneer in this country. In the early days he worked for some of the larger ranches; first as cowpuncher, later as wagon boss and then foreman. After the Old Cattleman married he went into business for himself. He bought a ranch in the southeastern part of Colorado and settled down to raise a family. When the children were old enough to go to school he sold out and took them to Texas, where he put them in school.

But he was never happy away from his old trampin' grounds, and his old friends, so he drifted back to New Mexico, and bought the ranch where he now lives.

He has buffeted the storms of drought, depression, and the more tangible storms of dust, but thro'ugh it all has hung on with grim tenacity characteristic of men of his calibre, and is once again coming to the top.

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I was glad to have an opportunity to stay with the Old Cattleman. He had been a good friend of my father's, and I had known him since boyhood, but it had been years since I had really visited with him.

After eating a hearty supper, we settled into comfortable chairs around the fireplace, and lighted our pipes. Gradually the conversation [?] changed from topics of the day to cattle, and then to the Old Cattleman's favorite topic - horses. C18 - 6/5/41 - N. Mex.

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The Old Cattleman was in a reminiscent mood and told various interesting stories of experiences he had had, and men and horses he had known. Finally the talk switched to cowboys trying to kill one another's horses on long rides, and the following story is one the Old Cattleman told of one of his experiences.

"I was down at one of the Bell camps on the Canadian, and was preparing to go to Clayton the next day.

"About sundown a stranger rode in to camp. We invited him to come in and have supper and spend the night. The next morning, when he found that I was going to Clayton, he said he was going that way, too, and would ride along with me.

"He was riding a fine looking, close-built, trim made bay horse. I was riding a big, [?] [raw-coned?] , consumptive looking black horse, whose neck was not much wider than your two hands; he didn't look like he could travel any distance at all.

"Well, we hadn't gone far when the stranger began making fun of my "consumptive" and "old plug", as he called him. Then he kicked his horse into a run. I didn't see any sense in hurrying so — we had all day to make the trip — but I wasn't going to be left behind by that stranger, so I kicked my horse into a run, too.

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“We went faster and faster, up hill and down, over rough and smooth ground; slowing only to cross creeks and arroyos, where it was too rocky to lope our horses, then back to the same old grit.

“The miles flew past and the sun rose higher in the sky, but the stranger showed so signs of slacking his pace, so I didn't either. I knew the staying qualities of my horse, even if he didn't look like anything.

“At last the buildings of Clayton could be seen in the distance and we were still going strong.

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“When we got nearly to the Perice creek, I noticed that the ears of the stranger's horse were beginning to flop, and his tail was bobbing up and down like it was going to bob off.

“I just tho'ught to myself, ‘Well, that old boy's horse is about done for and he don't know it.’

“We reached the bottom of the creek, and the horse stopped dead still. He refused to budge an inch. It wasn't quite three miles to town, so I just went on in.

“When I reached the livery stable, I gave my horse a good rub-down and rinsed his mouth and nostrils out with cold water, but didn't give him a drink. I walked him around, and worked with him over a half hour before I fed and watered him.

“When I was satisfied that he would be alright, I went to the hotel for my own dinner, as it was noon then. I visited with some of the men on the street, and loafed around town about two hours before I started back to the stables to get my horse.

“Just as I reached the stables I met the stranger coming slowly down the street on his exhausted cayuse. I walked up to him and told him I'd been waiting for him as I was going on to Kenton, and tho'ught maybe he wanted to ride that far with me.

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“H—I no! I don't want to go to Kenton with you, and I don't ever want to see you again,” he barked at me.

“I laughed at him and went on and got my horse. I rode on to my ranch north of Kenton, that afternoon. It was about six thirty when I got there. I had made the trip from the Canadian to the ranch — a distance of about 105 miles in about twelve hours, and my horse was still in good condition, even tho'ugh he did look like a “plug and a consumptive”.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

1. Zurich, Jack, Stead, New Mexico. This story was told to the writer by Mr. Zurich, on a recent visit to the Zurich Ranch, which is about 45 miles south of Clayton. Mr. Zurich is “The Old Cattleman” of the story.