



Trails Over the Glass Mountains

By ZANE GREY

*These illustrations were taken
at great risk by Zane Grey and
the members of his party*

IN 1913 John Wetherill, noted scout and Indian trader of northern Arizona, took me to the wonderful Rainbow Bridge. We rode and climbed some of the hardest trails in the southwest, and in so doing suffered the loss of several horses—a heart-breaking experience. Most of these misadventures befell us in crossing a range of low mountains of smooth polished wind-worn rock that we named the Glass Mountains.

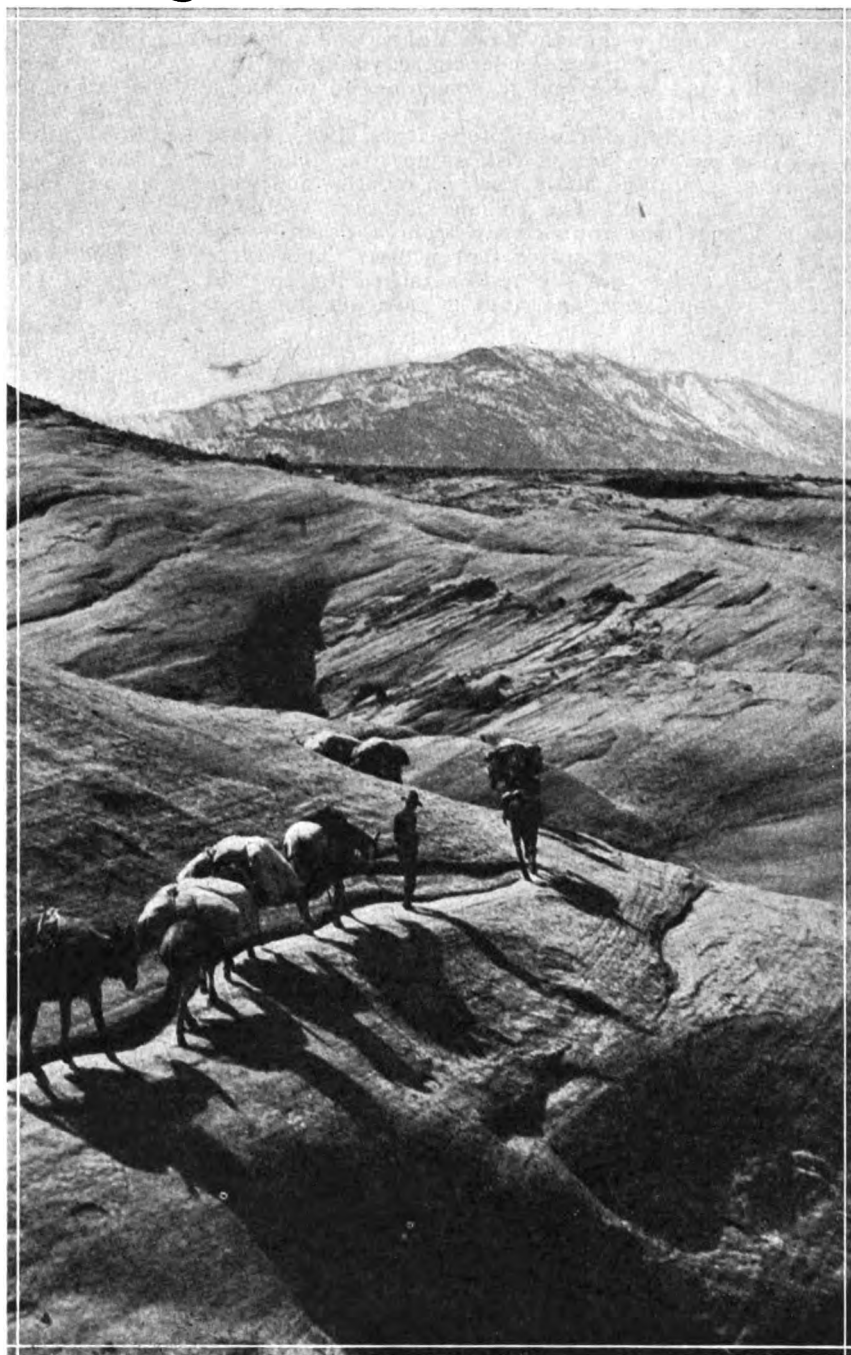
In April, 1922, I undertook the same journey, taking as trail comrades my brother, R. C., and my friend Wiborn. Wetherill, with his Indians and cowboys, had charge of the guiding and packing; and Lee Doyle, son of the old pioneer, Al Doyle, who had been my guide for ten years, had charge of my own horses.

Wetherill strongly advised against taking these horses; and he was wholly sincere in his argument as to the risks. All the horses I have written about, except Silvermane and Wildfire, both wild stallions of the uplands, I have owned. Night, the beautiful charger who raced with Black Star in *Riders of the Purple Sage*, is still living and as noble and spirited and beautiful as ever. Of course I would never risk him on bad trails. He has earned his rest in green pastures and clear waters, where he can graze and whistle and prance and drink to his heart's content. Especially loth was Wetherill to endanger our five favorites—White Stockings, Sarchedon, Cricket, Nig, and Mary Mullen. It would have been pretty hard to beat any of them.

White Stockings was my favorite, a superb bay with white face and white feet. He was spirited, intelligent, and had the easiest gait of any horse I ever bestrode. To ride him was like sitting in a rocking-chair. He was practically tireless. A remarkable feature about White Stockings was the fact that he was built so that a saddle never slipped on him, even on the steepest trails. He could run like a streak. I had tested out

all these good points during three fall hunting trips over the rough timbered country of the Tonto Basin.

Sarchedon was a big dark charger of a horse, hard to manage and ride, but the kind that cowboys chose—which is the best praise of any horse. He had been with us on four trips. Cricket was a yellow bay, rather small in stature, but well built, and a graceful stepper. He had an easy trot, and he would get out in front of the outfit and stay there all day. If any horse passed him he would be restless and fretful until he got the lead again. Cricket did not like cowboys. He had belonged to Lee Doyle's sister, who had ridden him when she was a child and he was a colt; and perhaps that was why he did his best work for a woman rider. But in his eight previous trips with me, he had thoroughly proved his value. Nig was a coal black horse, not particularly remarkable for points. He did not show off. Apparently he was lazy, sleepy. But Lee Doyle declared him the safest horse, the best horse on bad trails that he had ever had any experience with. Nig had chased lions and bears, and kept with the hounds on many of our hunts in the Tonto, and he had a



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reputation second to none. Mary Mullen was a beautiful racer, a dark clean-cut slender horse, young, spirited, rather wild, and as Lee put it, sometimes in too big a hurry on bad trails.

In spite of Wetherill's solicitous fears, Lee advised me to take my own horses, risk or no risk. They had been eating grain and alfalfa for two months, and were in perfect condition. The Indian mustangs Wetherill used had just been rounded up from a desert range where grass had been scarce that winter. They were not in good shape, and Wetherill admitted it. He said each of us could ride one until it gave out and then take another.

So I was rather in a quandary. What decided me in the end to take my own horses was the fact that R. C. and Wiborn had both suffered exceedingly on the long desert ride from Flagstaff to Kayenta. R. C. had started out with a crippled shoulder and should never have come at all. Wiborn's bad legs, overworked in his college athletic days, when he was champion of the track team, had buckled under him. Moreover, we had encountered snow, sleet, icy gales, sand and dust storms, and hot weather, all in that ten days' ride out to Wetherill's. We not only needed but deserved the best of horses. Whereupon I decided the matter.

"Wetherill, we'll take my own horses," I said. "Put R. C. on Nig. Lee will ride Sarch. I'll ride Stockings. And we'll let Wiborn start out on that great mule of yours."

"I wish I had one like him for all of us to ride," observed the trader.

"Why a mule for me?" demanded my friend, loftily. "I can ride Mary Mullen."

"I reckon you could—for a way," I replied, dryly. "But wait till we get over to the Glass Mountains."

Both my brother and friend, new to this upland country, inquired rather dubiously and concernedly about these Glass Mountains. I looked at Wetherill, and he explained that the hills mentioned were some steep slippery slopes of rock where he always lost horses.

"Humph!" ejaculated my crippled brother, glumly.

Wiborn's hazel eyes shadowed with a far-off expression of longing, as if he had suddenly thought of home.

"Wetherill, you once told me about an old Piute trail that led over to Navajo Mountain," I said. "Have you ever taken any one on it?"

"No. I started out with a fellow some years back, but he only lasted one day."

"Then there haven't been any white men on this Piute trail?"

"Shore I reckon not," he drawled.

"Well," said I

grimly, "it's your Piute trail for us—then the Glass Mountains—and then the Rainbow trail, and Nonnezoshe—all in one trip."

"Now you're talking," declared Wetherill.

R. C. uttered a faint groan and sagged back against a bale of wool. Wiborn seemed bereft of that usual radiance characteristic of him.

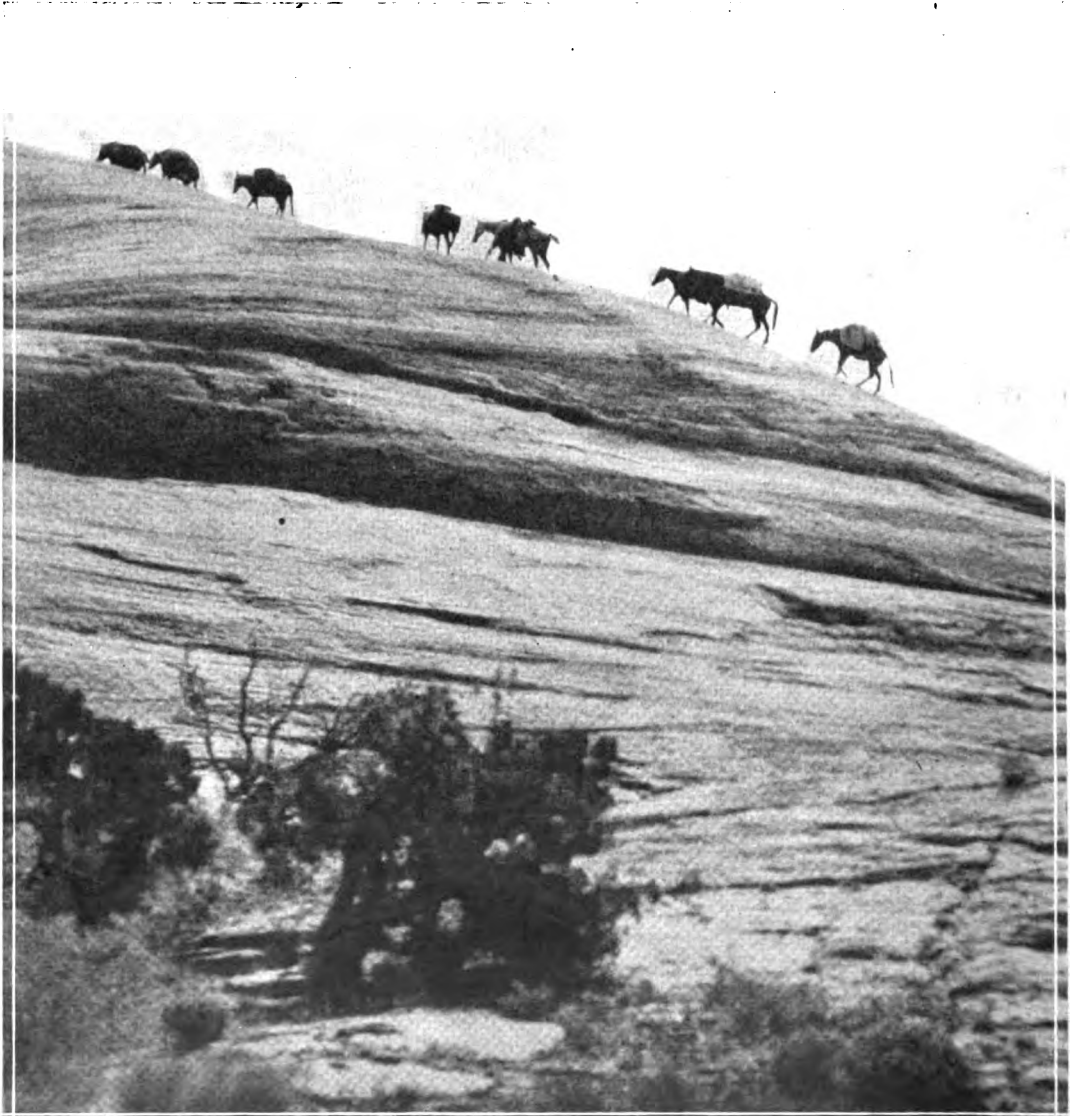
"Never said I'd come on this trip," he declared, wildly. "Never said it!"

"Well, you've both come so far, and you're going to finish," I replied. "When we get down in the canyons out of the cold you fellows will warm up. Don't lose your enthusiasm just because there are no bear or turkey or fish on this trip. It is certainly the most beautiful trail in the west, and worth all the hardship."

This narrative is concerned with the Glass Mountains. What our experience was on Wetherill's Piute trail shall be chronicled elsewhere. Suffice it to say here that our genial guide ran true to western form, inasmuch as he had not represented Piute trail half so heart-breaking as it turned out to be.

From the slope of Navajo Mountain, where the long cedar and pinon bench broke off abruptly and looked down into the vast naked Utah wilderness, there is a scene unparalleled in the west.

It fell to me to name it Marching Rocks. From east and north for over a hundred miles a wild world of wind-worn rocks waved and piled toward us. It bore some semblance to a stupendous flock of gray and yellow sheep with round backs closely pressed together. But every one of these bare stone backs was almost a mountain in itself, and surely in between each one was



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a crevice that was in reality a deep canyon. Piute Canyon was there, and Escalante Canyon, and San Juan Canyon, and the Grand Canyon,—all mere winding dark threads across the leagues of stone. In the foreground the mass broke into stragglers, as if the leaders of the flock were marching ahead. How singularly did the effect of life, of action, strike the eye!

Away beneath us to the west yawned a green rolling plain of cedar across which ran the range of glassy stone hills we had to climb. They looked close, yet were perhaps twenty miles distant. Beyond seemed to spread a chaos of red and yellow walls, ramparts, crags, towers, a bewildering expanse of tilted earth, bare as bleached ribs of bone, extending far as the eye could see. One striking landmark dominated the scene—Wild Horse Mesa—a stupendous red-walled mountain, frowning, black-fringed and isolated. Insurmountable as it seemed I vowed to climb it some day. It was well to gaze at this wind-worn wilderness from so far aloft, for once down there, a true perspective was not possible.

We camped that night under the huge looming bulk of Navajo Mountain, on one of the beautiful cedar and sage upland plains I loved so well. The purple sage spread on all sides, fragrant, colorful, strangest and most beautiful growth of the desert. Piute Indians visited us. We saw the remarkable mustangs of this remnant of a once large tribe. Some were buckskin color, with long tawny manes and tails. One was pure white with black mane reaching the sage, and with longer tail just as black. The Indians left us when darkness fell. At night the sweetness and loneliness and silence of this upland was beyond words to describe.

Next day, early in the afternoon, we reached the base of our Mountains of Glass. At this point the beauty of scenery no longer appealed to me. True, I experienced a keen thrill, but it was one of the cold species, rather chilling to the marrow. Wetherill dismounted and came over to me.

When half a dozen of those laden mules and horses became silhouetted on the sky line, they made a thrilling sight."

"Reckon you remember how we've got to keep on the move," he warned. "I'll go ahead with the boys and the pack mules. And I'll snap a picture when the chance offers. Lee had better hang back with you, in case you might need help. If a horse slips get out of his way, that's all."

The necessity for keeping in action here on these smooth slopes had always made it difficult to get good pictures of horses and men in the most dangerous places. But this time we had five cameras and expected results.

"Now the idea is this," I suggested. "When one of us gets in a safe place he can snap a picture of the other fellow in a bad place."

Wetherill led the way, climbing as rapidly as possible up the first steep incline. The pack train of mules followed him, and it was remarkable to see how precisely they kept in line with him. There really was no trail. When half a dozen of those laden mules became silhouetted on the sky line they made a thrilling sight.

I sent my companions ahead with Lee in the lead, and I took the rear, leading Stockings and holding my camera in readiness. Steep as was this slope, it was easy to climb because of the soft sandstone. The shoes of the horses and the hobnails in our boots cut deep enough to make slipping unlikely. But in my case the ascent was rendered uncomfortable because Stockings climbed so fast. I could not make him slow up. Therefore I had to stay ahead of him. He kept bumping me with his head, and twice he stepped on my heels, once hurting me considerably.

When we got on top the pack train was out of sight. The bare summits of this glassy range resembled the surface of a heaving sea. I was out of breath. We all rested a moment. Stockings knew this was an unusual procedure. He was not excited or scared. But I thought he seemed rather nervous and in somewhat of a hurry to get the business over.

R. C.'s horse, for all the concern he showed, might have been climbing such trails all his life. Cricket lived up to his reputation. But Lee had trouble with Mary Mullen. He had strapped a pack of bedding round Mary and perhaps that annoyed her. Anyway Lee could not lead both Sarchedon and Mary, and so he let Mary go on.

"She'll knock a mule over sure," he said. "Mebbe I'd better ride up these slopes, anyway."

"Don't do it," I said.

But Lee was still a cowboy and bad slopes meant nothing to him. Mounting Sarch he rode on over the summit and down out of sight. Here Witherill's mule answered to the instincts of his species, and while Witherill was snapping a picture he trotted on after the other mules.

We went on to the brow of the hill and suddenly came in sight of the pack train winding round a curve lower down. The mules had gotten ahead of Wetherill. For a moment I lost myself in gazing at the wild strange scene. Then I remembered my camera. Of course we could have rested there as long as we cared to, but



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the plan was to keep in sight of the others for the sake of possible pictures.

We started down after Lee. Wiborn now had no horse to bother him, so he was free to use his camera at will. R. C. seemed perfectly confident of Nig, and I concluded he had every reason to be. Stockings, however, was a different proposition. I followed in the rear of the others. Starting down the rather steep incline I held my bridle out at right angles, and called Stockings to come. Without hesitation he followed me, but instead of paying any attention to the bridle he kept at my heels. I saw at once that my walking gave him confidence. Where I walked he could certainly go. He did not mind this in the least. But he would not follow me slowly. I had to go fast, and I could not keep from directly in front of him. The peril to me lay in the possibility of his slipping and knocking me down the slope. But as there was no precipice on this particular hill the danger was not great.

Once down off this summit I drew a deep breath of relief and fortified myself for what lay ahead. After I had threaded my way in and out and around a maze of curves, corners, and slopes, I came abruptly upon the others. It was not a bad place, but a sort of bowl in the hills. The outfit was scattered along the depression, and in the middle somebody was having trouble. I hurried on, and when I got where I could see I was much concerned. Wetherill was running down towards a cowboy below. This individual was holding to a mule that appeared in danger of sliding over.

"Assistance! Assistance!" yelled this cowboy, lustily. His use of the word inclined me to the opinion that he was in fun, but his voice was convincing enough. Nevertheless we laughed. Wetherill reached him, and together they held the mule until the other boys got there. When the mule was rescued from his precarious position and the cavalcade had straightened out, I asked Lee what had happened.

"Mary Mullen tried to force her way past that mule and knocked him off the trail," replied Lee. "The mule fell and turned clear over twice. How he ever escaped sliding over the cliff I can't understand. Wetherill said goodbye to that mule and so did I."

We went on, somewhat sobered by this incident. And as we climbed and descended and wound our way onward the conformation and substance of the rock hills

changed. The slopes led down more steeply to abrupt precipices; and the soft sandstone gave way to something nearly as hard as granite. It was easy for a horse to slip, and they all slipped here and there. But for a horse to slip with one foot was not particularly serious. It was when he slipped with both front feet at once, or one front and one hind foot that he was in danger.

At last we came to what Wetherill considered the worst turn of the trail.

Here he had lost most horses and mules. It was a narrow foot-wide trail round a corner projecting over an abyss. The rock was hard as flint, and the width of this trail slanted perceptibly toward the precipice. The instant

I saw the place again I regretted that I had subjected my horses to such risks. Here there was little danger for a man, so long as he kept free of his horse. I watched the pack mules creep cautiously round the bend and pass out of sight. Wetherill yelled for me to wait to be the last. Wiborn remained behind with me, intending to photograph me crossing the bad place.

Here Stockings grew restive and pounded the hard rock with his hoofs. I tried to calm him. But he tossed his head and snorted. There was fire in his eye. And I grew alarmed.

Lee, who stood across the declivity with Wetherill, yelled to me. "Come on quick. Stockings thinks he's being left behind. Don't wait. He'll make it like a breeze. Only hurry."

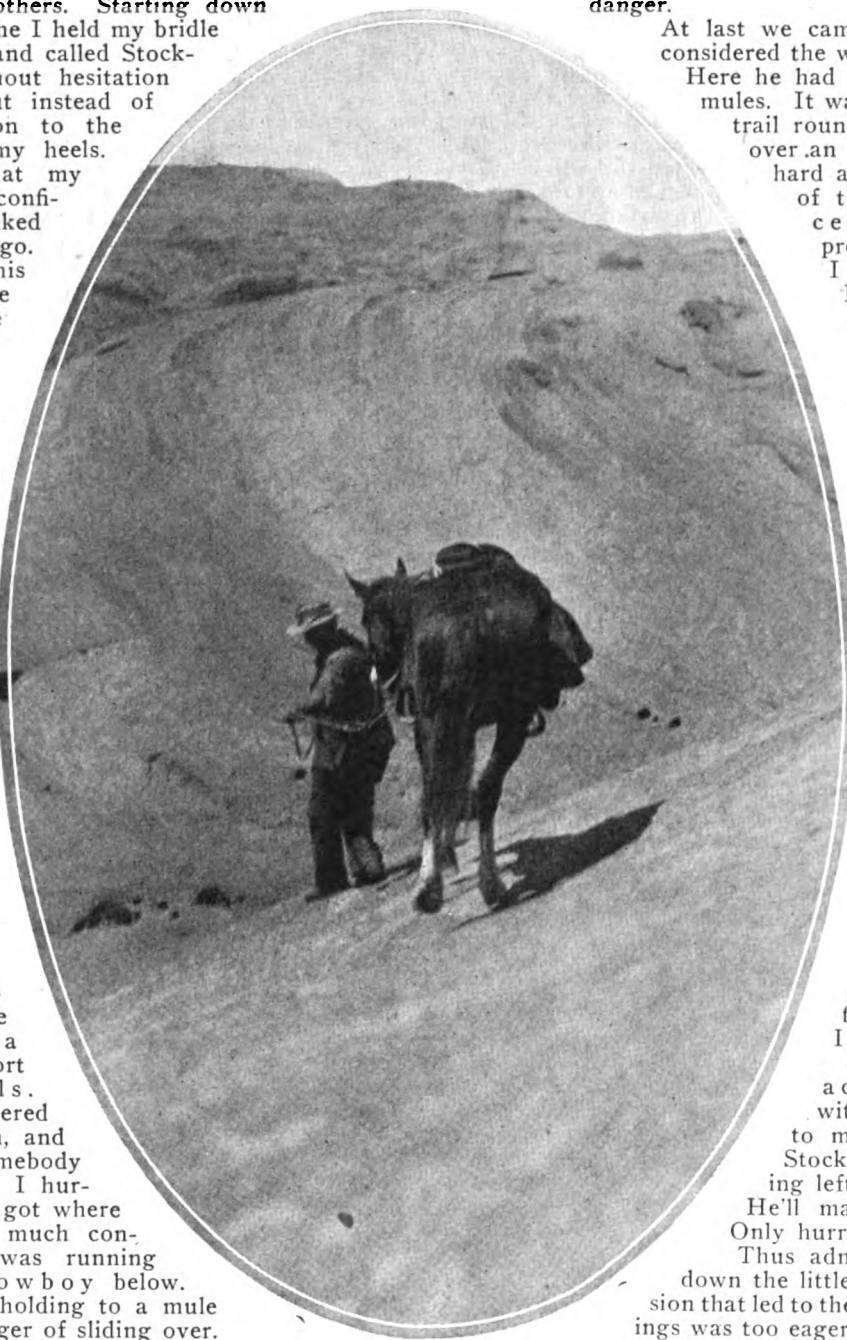
Thus admonished I started down the little bowl-shaped depression that led to the narrow trail. Stockings was too eager. He slipped with all four feet and fell on his side. I held to the bridle, but I was suddenly paralyzed with fear for him. Stockings slid a yard or so, then luckily stopped on the last level of this bowl.

"Pull him up!" yelled Lee. "Talk to him! And come on!"

I did as I was bidden, and it seemed that I was more frightened than my horse. Once on his feet, he shook all over and he snorted. His fine dark eyes seemed to take me in, and the abyss and his narrow escape and the trail ahead. He knew. And at the moment I believed a great deal depended on me. I rose to the occasion.

"Come on, Stockings," I called, and climbed up the slight slope and walked out on the narrow trail as if it was no different from any other place. I saw only

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"Stockings stepped so that only the upside slope of his shoes touched the rock.... If he had slipped he would have fallen a half a thousand feet to his death."



Trails Over the Glass Mountains

(Continued from page 270)

the white nicks in the hard stone made by the iron shoes of the other horses. I did not look up or to right or left. Yet I seemed to see that deep yawning gulf at my side. I heard Stockings pounding close at my heels. I did not feel any strain on the bridle. I walked as fast as I could to keep ahead of him. What an endless time before I bumped into Wetherill and found myself on level ground!

"By Golly! that was a close shave for him," exclaimed the trader, with relief. "I'll say he acted fine."

"Stockings did not want to be left behind," said Lee.

"Whew! I'm glad that's past. . . . But we have to come back!" I replied, finding a place to sit down and compose myself. I was wet with cold sweat and had a constriction in my throat. To have seen Stockings slide over that cliff would have been terrible. As for him, the incident was past. He whistled for the other horses and pawed the rock impatiently.

We went on and had a long respite from chills up our backs until we came to the descent on the far side of the glass mountains. This I knew would be an ordeal. The slope was steep and smooth, almost as polished as marble. Wetherill had cut nicks in the rock in the zigzag trail that led down. We watched the pack-mules start down with the Indian in the lead. In a few moments they were out of sight.

"I'll lead with Sarch," said Lee to me. "You come next, with Nig behind. That'll steady Stockings. I'm shore glad Mary Mullen is down."

We started about fifty feet apart. To my mind, in view of the years of experience I have had since my first passage over these mountains, no fine and spirited horse should ever be put to such trails, unless on a mission of vital importance. I was thrilled and ashamed at once.

This was a long slope that had to be zigzagged down with neither haste nor pause. Stockings followed me precisely as before, no slower nor faster. Sometimes I had to slide to keep out of his way. But I kept his hoofs on the nicked trail in the hard rocks. Sometimes I walked sidewise, looking back at him. He would step so that only the up slope side of his shoes touched the rock. He could not place his hoofs on a level. There was no level. But so far as I could see he did not show the slightest fear. I grew certain that my walking ahead of him made him feel safe. As a matter of fact he was in great peril. If he had slipped as before he would have slid half a thousand feet to his death.

Experiences like this prove what intelligence and courage horses have. Like dogs they are the friends and helpers of man. If I had not treasured White Stockings before this time I certainly would have done so now. He might just as well have balked on that treacherous slope. But because I bade him follow and talked to him and led him, he came willingly, eagerly, for that time at least, dependent upon me.

Step by step, close together, we made the long crooked descent without a single slip. When I edged off the last steep slant of rock I was surprised to find all the others waiting for me. R. C. with Nig had made a boulevard of that descent. They had passed me without my knowing.

"Fine and dandy," declared Wetherill, in hearty relief. "Shore they're some horses! It's much safer going home, because the bad places are mostly up hill."

R. C. had evidently been stirred by this successful and thrilling conquest of the range of slippery hills.

"Lead me to your Wild Horse Mesa," he said, dauntlessly. "I'll ride Nig up that."

Wiborn looked around for the mule which had deserted him.

"You long-eared ass of antiquity!" he retorted. "You put one over on me,

huh? Well, I was tickled to death to lose you. And I got here first!"

After a rest we mounted and rode on, happy that the danger to horses was past for the present, and glad once more to be free to look ahead at the winding cedared valley and up at the lofty walls. We were to camp in Surprise Valley, that wonderful canyoned maze. And as we worked down deeper the air grew warm and still, the colored walls lifted higher. Indian primrose and paint-brush bloomed under the cedars. Running water made music under the silent walls. Sunset was gilding the towering crags when we climbed to the one portal of Surprise Valley and gazed down into this marvelous niche of solitude and beauty. Wind-sculptured towering walls of red and gold! And far above them, and far away, loomed Wild Horse Mesa, shrouded in the lilac haze of sunset, calling me, bidding me sometime to surmount it. In this strange desert country there was always a larger experience. Not enough had been conquest of the Piute Trail and the Mountains of Glass! Wild Horse Mesa presented a sterner obstacle. To toil, to endure, to seek, to find, and not to yield—that was the lesson of the desert.

The Question Box

Editor, Outdoor America:

Dr. Robert Ridgeway in his interesting paper, "The Bobwhite as a Valuable Ally," in your November issue, says:—

"Before the advent of the white man on this continent, quail were many times more numerous and just as vigorous as at the present time."

In making so positive a statement Mr. Ridgeway must have been sure of his ground, but some of us not so well informed would like Mr. Ridgeway to name the authority upon which he bases this statement.

What records do we possess that show quail were "more numerous before the advent of the white man?"

T. A.

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