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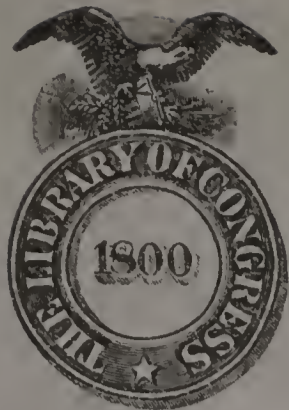
OF THE DIAMOND TAIL

By

M. GAUSS

C. W. GAUSS





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Of the Diamond Tail





C. W. GAUSS

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Of the Diamond Tail

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BANG

A WILD black colt without a name was playing near his mother on a mountain mesa. Red and blue flowers blossomed in the grass. The little colt felt so gay that he kicked up his little heels, and made a noise like “He, he, he!”

The mother horse had a diamond and tail on her flank. This was a brand to show they both belonged to the Diamond Tail cattle ranch. The wild colt did not know he belonged to anybody.

His mother was a cow pony and knew how to work. The colt did not want to work. He wanted to play. He jumped around and made funny noises — “He, he, he.”

Soon two cowboy riders came their way.

One of the riders was Jack West. He was too young to drive cattle, but he wore cowboy chaps and a wide hat.

Soon Jack saw the mother horse. He knew her because she was spotted brown and white. "Dina has a new colt," he said to the cowboy beside him.

Dina was a nickname. The real name of the mother horse was Dynamite.

"Daddy gave the colt to me," said Jack.

"What is his name?" asked the cowboy.

Just then, the colt's heels hit a log, with a bang. "I shall call him Bang," said Jack.

They had come to catch Dynamite and put her to her work.





"Dina has a new colt," he said

The cowboy threw a rope and caught Dynamite.

Bang was surprised. His mother kicked and squealed like a bad cow pony.

She was only playing. She really liked to work.

There was a big bull near by. He did not want horses and cowboys on the mesa. He did not like horses, so he ran at Bang with his long horns.

At once the cowboy rode Dynamite between the bull and little Bang. Dynamite stood still until the bull was near, then she danced away.



The bull could not stop himself. He ran straight on right past Bang and bumped his head against a rock.

The bull ran away making an ugly noise — “Brr-r-umble!” Dynamite and the cowboy dashed up a mountain path.

Soon they found some cows with calves. Each mother cow had a large white face. Each calf had a small white face. Each mother cow had a diamond and tail marked on her flank. Not one of the calves had any kind of mark.

The cowboy pointed Dynamite’s head at a cow. “Cut her out, Dina,” he said. This meant to drive that cow out of the herd.

Dynamite understood. She chased the cow into a path which led to the ranch. Then she and the cowboy went back for another cow. The cowboy could not drive cows without Dynamite.

Soon all the cows were running down the path toward the ranch. All the calves followed. They did not know what else to do. Bang followed too, as he did not know what else to do either.

Not one of the cows wanted to go to the ranch.



Not one of the calves did either. They all wanted to run away so Dynamite had to watch them every minute.

When they came to the ranch not one of the cows wanted to go into the corral. Not one of the calves did either. There was a great deal of dust. There was a great deal of noise. But soon Dynamite had them all in the corral.



Jack asked his father why the mother horse was named Dynamite.

“Because she works fast,” said Mr. West. “Dynamite always does things quickly.”

That day, Dynamite was working hard and fast, driving the wild cows. When Bang looked over the corral fence she did not look at him.

Bang was more than two months old so he could

play alone. He did not like the noise and dust so he went a little way off on the mesa. There he played alone and made funny noises and kicked up his heels.

At last he grew tired. He thought he would find his mother and see whether she was through working, so he trotted up to the corral.

There he had a big surprise.

Mr. West came around the corral with a rope on his arm. He shouted, "Come, Jack. You must brand your colt."

Bang did not see Mr. West throw the rope but it fell around his feet. He could not run. He fell down instead, and Mr. West sat down on him and held him.

Jack came running with a branding iron in his hand. Bang squealed very loud when Jack stuck the branding iron on his flank. It did not hurt very much but it made Bang angry.

Jack had branded him so that the Diamond Tail cowboys would know he belonged to the ranch. Bang did not understand this. Besides he did not want to belong to anybody.

When Jack let him get up Bang ran away out onto the mesa. But it was getting late in the day, so he came

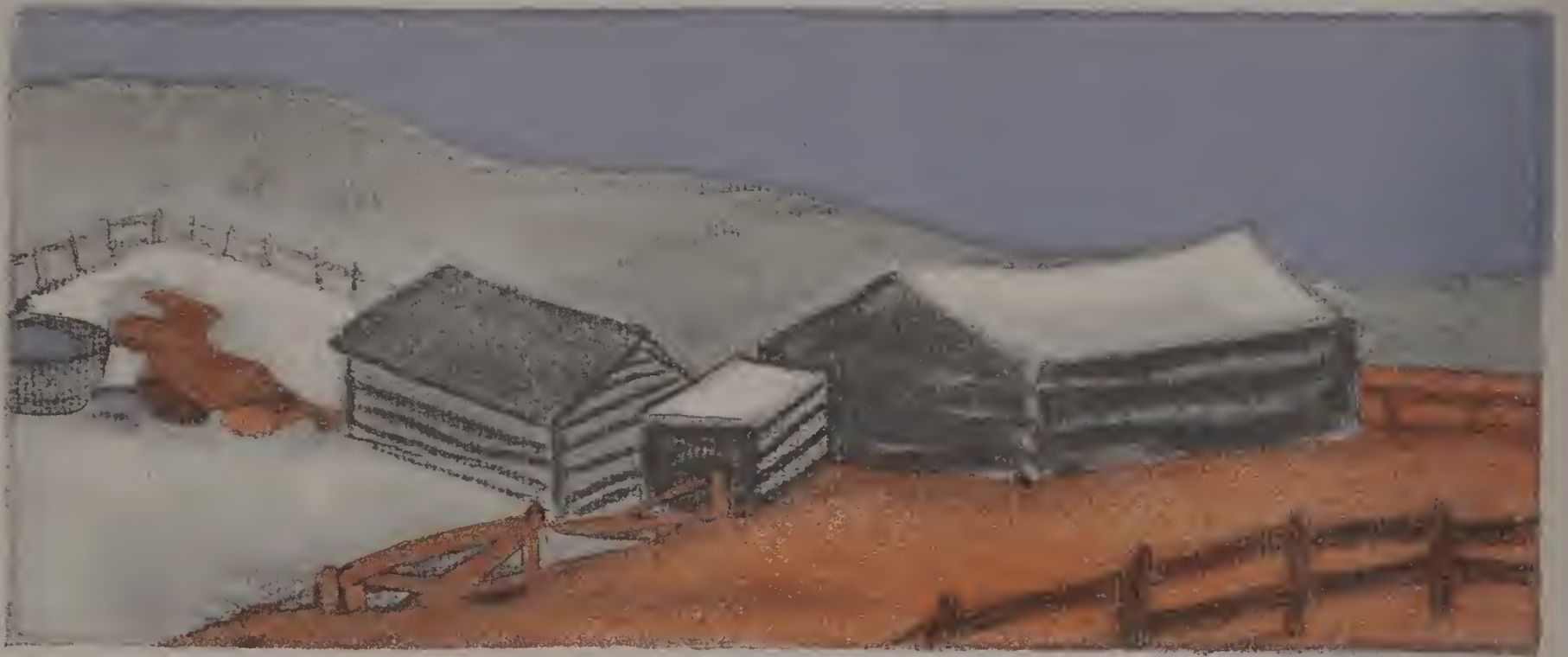
back soon and began looking around for his mother.

At last Bang saw his mother helping the cowboys to brand calves. Not one of the calves wanted to have a brand.

Not one of the cows wanted her calf to have a brand. The cows were angry with Dynamite and shook their horns at her.

It was Jack's duty to open and shut the gate of the corral. When a calf had been branded he let it out.





Then the cow would come too. Each calf had been marked in the same way with a diamond and tail.

Bang did not know there was now a diamond and tail on his own little flank.

Dynamite worked fast. The cowboy pointed her head at a big calf, then threw his rope and caught the calf. The calf fell down. The cowboy jumped off Dynamite and fixed his rope to the saddle.

“Hold the calf, Dina. Smart girl!” he cried.

If the rope became loose, the calf would get up, so Dynamite held it tight. Soon the cowboy came running with a branding iron, and Dynamite dragged the calf to meet him.



Dynamite held the rope tight



He stamped a diamond and tail on the calf's flank. Then Dynamite let the branded calf get up and run to the mother cow.

Next day the cowboys let Dynamite go back to the mountain, so Bang went too.

They lived in a valley with a beaver pond. The grass was thick and juicy. Dynamite liked it so much that Bang tried to eat it. Soon he liked grass better than he did his mother's milk. He was not a baby any more.

The beavers slept all day. They came out when the water grew pink at sunset and played all around the pond.

In the autumn the pond began to have a queer smell, so Bang and Dynamite went to the ranch and drank with the work horses.

At the ranch Bang saw a colt named Kicker. Kicker was three years old and it was time he learned to work.

Kicker did not want to learn anything. When the cowboy got on him he started bucking. This means that he put his head down and kicked out with his hind legs.

Many good ponies buck. When they see they cannot throw their riders they go to work. Bucking is partly fun on their part.

Kicker was bad-tempered. He started to lie down and roll and the man jumped off. Dynamite thought rolling an ugly trick. A horse that rolled could not drive cows.

But Bang thought Kicker was clever because he would not work.





Dynamite helped the cowboys with what is called the autumn roundup. That is when wild cattle are driven from the mountains to the ranch.

She was busy all day. Bang played alone and saw many new things. One was a large bird that jumped on the fence and said, "Cock-a-doodle-do."

Once Bang was thirsty and found that there was no water in the trough.

Suddenly the wind began blowing. A wheel far above him turned around and around. A pump went up and down till water rose from underground. Soon water ran into the trough and Bang had a nice drink.

He thought it was fine to have the wind work hard and pump water for him.

Jack said, "I don't want Bang to grow up like Kicker. I'll get a little bridle and teach him to work."



Bang had a nice drink



Bang did not want to work. He ran away and away until he came to the beaver pond. He thought he would find his mother there, but she was gone.

The gay flowers were gone. The beavers had no time to play. They were busy cutting trees for food. If a beaver did not work, the others drove him away.

Soon snow would fall. Cattle and horses would find food at the ranches where they belonged. Wild animals did not belong to anyone so they worked hard for themselves.

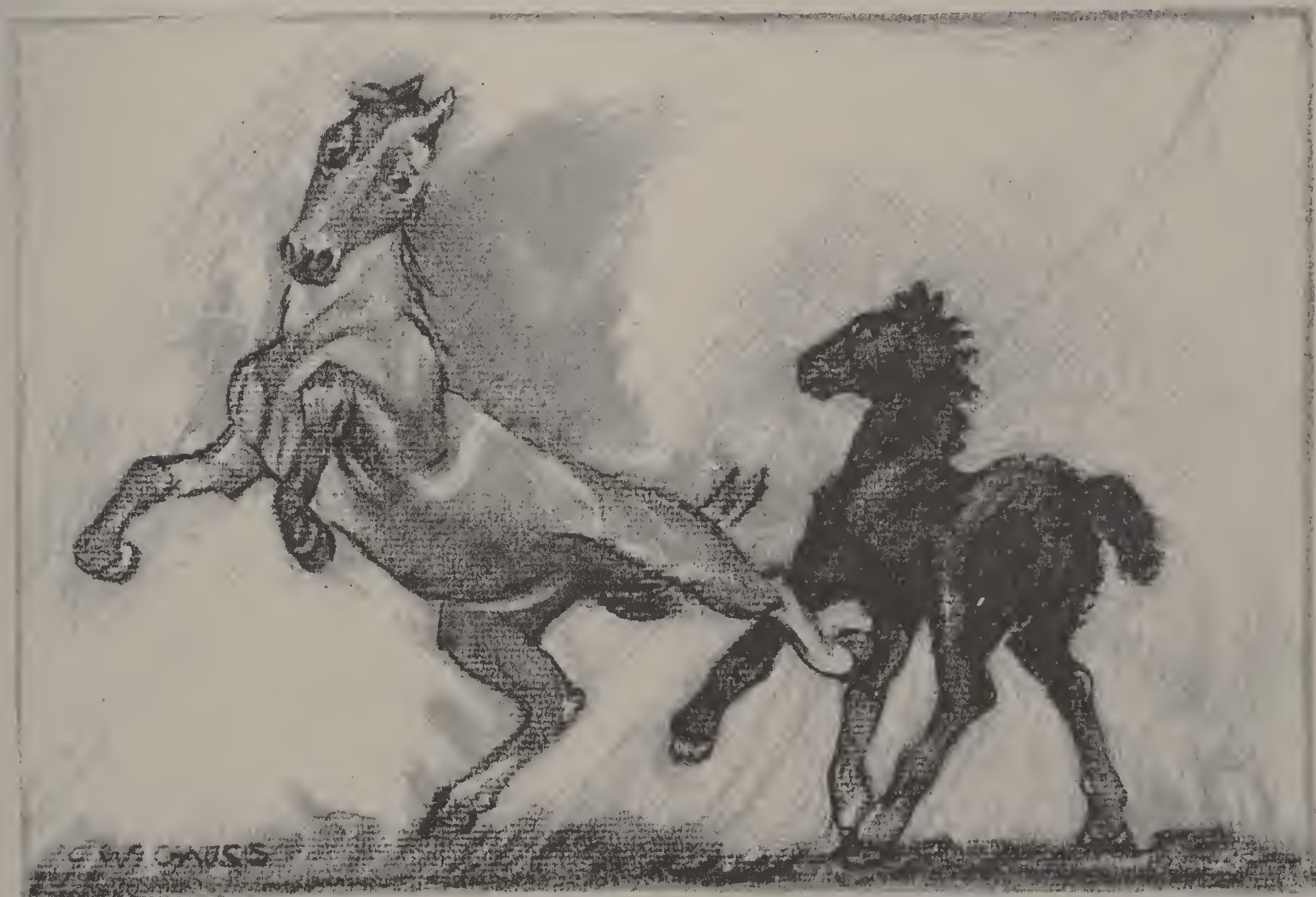
Bang did not care. He played and kicked up his heels.

Night came. When it was growing dark Bang heard some coyotes barking. He was afraid of coyotes so he went into a grove of trees and lay very still.

Suddenly he saw Kicker not far away. The cowboys had let Kicker go because they could not use a horse with ugly tricks.

Bang thought he and Kicker could be friends. They could sleep together and if coyotes came, Kicker could fight.

So Bang got up and ran to meet Kicker.



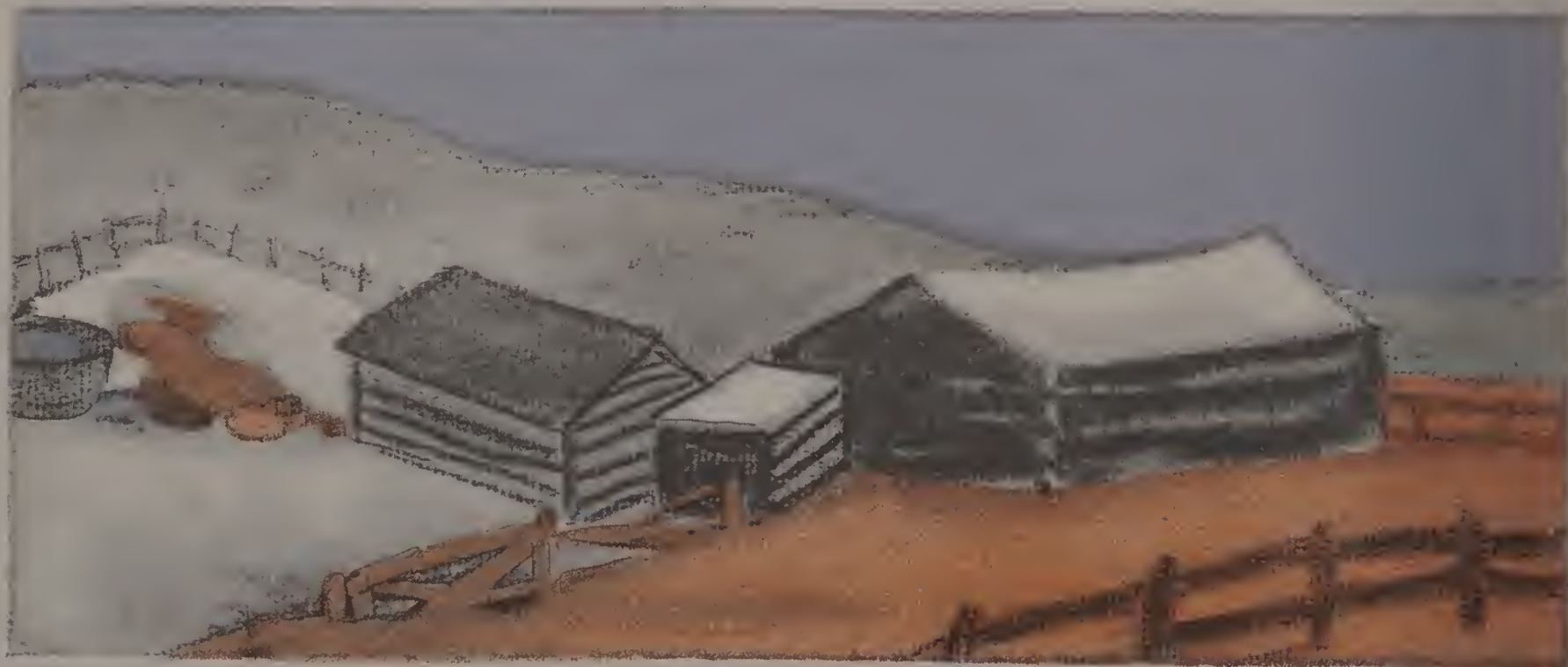
But Kicker did not wish to make friends with a baby horse. He kicked Bang in the stomach. Then he ran away.

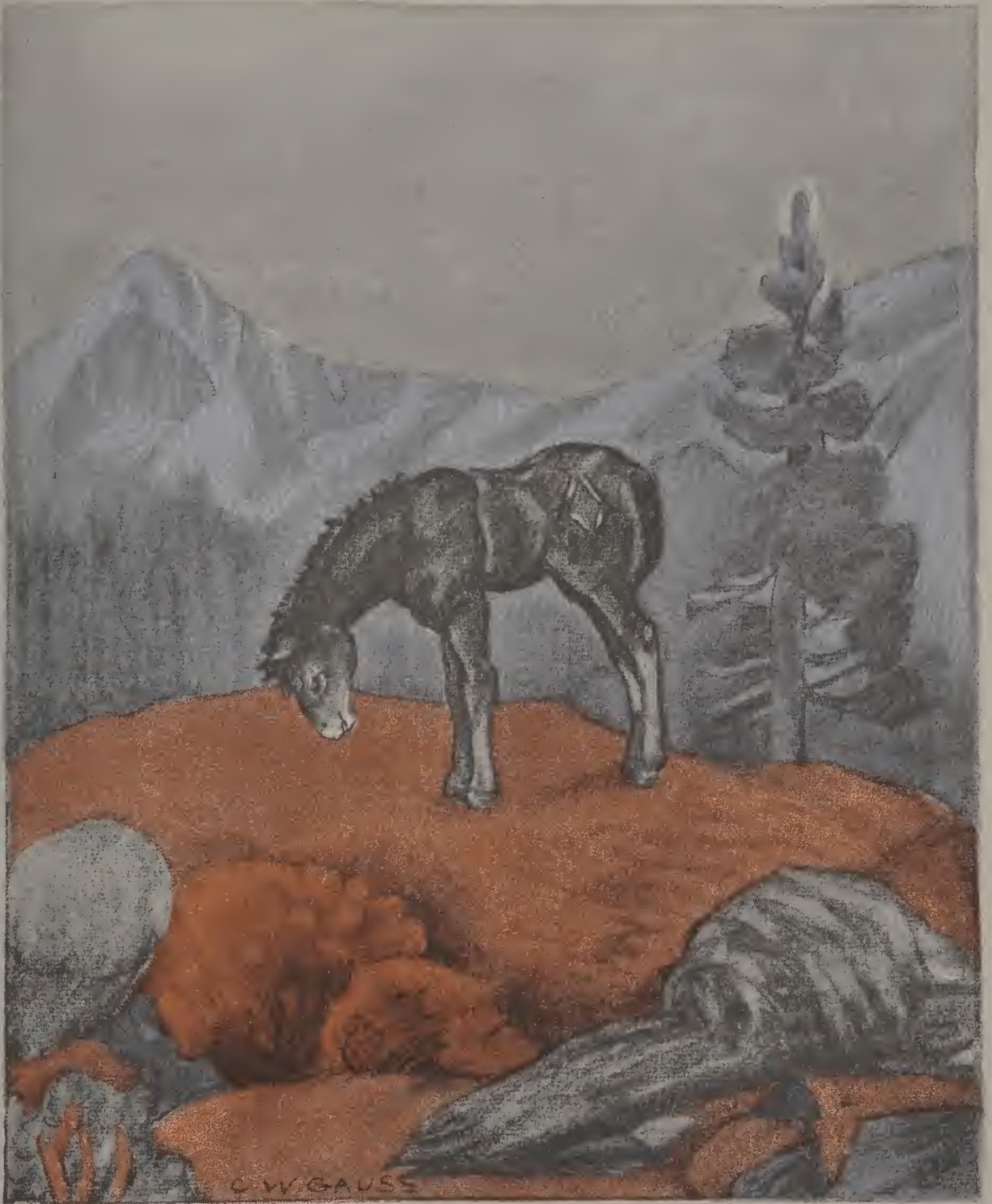
A long time passed. The grass became dry and sharp. Bang could hardly chew it. Since he was very hungry he swallowed it without chewing.

One day he climbed a hill and ate some ugly weeds. Soon he began to feel very sick.

When cattle eat hard dry grass, they bring it up from their stomachs and chew it over again. A horse cannot do this. He has to be careful.

Bang hung down his head. His legs trembled. There was nobody to care that he had a bad pain in his stomach. A magpie came near and squawked as if to make fun of him.





Bang hung down his head

Bang was wilder than a farm colt. His great-great-grandfather had belonged to a wild herd that had run loose in Texas. The Indians used to catch these wild horses and make them work.



Many cow ponies are great-great-grandchildren of these Indian ponies. That is why they like to wander away.

When Bang got over his pain, he started off, trying to find a better place to live.

Bang crossed a stream where the mud was sticky and black.

When he reached the other side he was in a wild place. There were tall, dark rocks. The river made a noise like thunder. Far away, a mountain lion yelled.

In his fright, Bang ran and ran until he did not know where he was. He was lost.

The grass was as bad as the grass in Beaver Valley. Deer flies stung his eyes and nose, and made them sore.

The wind grew cold and the sky was dark. Soon Bang felt cold flakes on his little back. Snow was falling.

Before long the snow was so heavy that all the grass was covered and Bang could not reach it. His feet were cold and his back was all white.

Two cowboys rode up, looking for lost horses. The cowboys came from a ranch which had a star for its

brand. They saw that Bang did not wear a star, so they rode away without him.

It was quiet on the snowy mountain. The coyotes went away to a place where they found more food. The song birds had gone to Texas or Mexico for the winter. Bang could see no birds except a flicker hunting beetles' eggs on a tree.

There was no food anywhere for a horse, so Bang thought he would try to go back to the ranch.

He traveled east, he traveled west. Each path he tried took him farther from home. Each day was colder than the day before.

Bang grew thin. His bones stuck out. His eyes and





nose were swollen. He looked like nobody's horse.

Bears were asleep in their warm dens. Beavers were asleep in their houses. They only waked up to eat aspen bark under the ice. Chipmunks were asleep in their holes. They waked up only to eat nuts and seeds.

At the Diamond Tail ranch, the cowboys had a fine dinner with plum pudding, for it was Thanksgiving Day.

The work horses had dinner in their sheds. Some cow ponies stayed outdoors and slept under the cedar trees. These had dinner at a hayrack kept full by the cowboys.

At dark the cow ponies came near the ranch house and saw its lights.

Bang had no Thanksgiving dinner. He was nobody's horse.

The day after Thanksgiving was very cold. A crust froze on the snow, so Bang could walk on top of the big drifts.

He went to a place known as Lion Valley. Here some big deer, called elk, were having a fine dinner of hay.

Each year kind people brought loads of hay to Lion Valley, to keep the elk from starving.

Bang tried to get a little hay but a big elk chased him away.

After that he gave up trying. Cold, hungry, and all alone, he stayed under a pine tree in Lion Valley.



That afternoon, Jack met a cowboy from the Star Ranch.

“Have you seen a lost colt?” asked Jack.

“I saw a lost colt near Lion Valley,” the cowboy said, “and he had a diamond tail brand.”

“He must be my colt,” said Jack. So he rode until he came to Lion Valley, and there was Bang under a tree.

When Jack came to catch him, Bang did not kick up his heels. He did not even try to run away.

Jack put a little bridle on him and started to lead him home by a rope tied to the bridle.

Jack did not ride fast because Bang was very weak. They went along until they found a road that led to the Diamond Tail ranch.

It was dark when they reached the ranch. The work horses were eating their supper of oats and hay. The dogs had worked hard driving coyotes away and they were now very busy eating their supper of bread and meat.

Suddenly Bang saw his mother. She had worked hard all day driving some wild cattle. Now she was eating her supper of hay and corn.



She did not wait to finish. She ran to meet Bang and rubbed her nose on his.

Soon Bang was eating his supper of good dry mash.

“I must teach Bang to work,” said Jack. “Maybe that bridle hurt him. Since he did not like it I will make another.”

When Bang grew strong again, Jack put a new bridle on him, and a piece of cloth across his back that was like a saddle.

Bang did not like the new bridle. He raced around the corral and tried to get it off. He did not like the little saddle either. But Jack was very kind to him, so in time he grew used to the saddle and bridle.

He was too small to drive cows. He was too small



Jack put a new bridle on him

to carry a person on his back. All he could do now was to learn to work.

Jack taught him well. His back grew strong. His legs grew long.

When he was three years old he had learned to work. Now he could carry Jack, so they both went on the roundup.

Then Jack thought he would take him to the rodeo. A rodeo is a show. Each year the cowboys bring their best horses to the rodeo. A prize is given for the best working pony.

That year the judges put a blue ribbon on Bang's bridle, for he was the prize cow pony. Nobody knew that when he was small he ran away so he would not have to work.

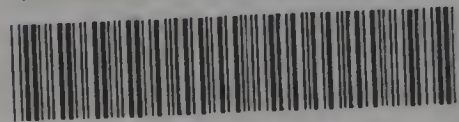






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