

HAUNTED HOVEL

There was a base camp in a canyon near the foot of the Sierra Madres, with a big corral and a couple of shacks--one a small adobe house, with one room, one door, and one small window, that I slept in.

There was a full moon one night. After I had lain down to rest, the door was darkened. I looked up, and there was a ghost in the door. I laughed and thought that I, too, would have some fun. My hand gun was hanging on a peg at the head of the bed. I got it in my hand and said, "All right, start talking," but the ghost said nothing and took a step or two into the room. I aimed high at the first shot. The ghost caught the bullet and threw it back to me. I said, "All right, catch these," and aimed the other shots dead center. The ghost passed them all back to me. Things were getting serious by then.

My thirty-thirty was under the blanket I was lying on. I levered a shell into the firing chamber and said, "Catch these," but the sheet was in the middle of the floor and Nichols was on his way out, saying, "Don't shoot, Louis. Don't shoot--it's me."

If he had caught just one thirty-thirty, I would have run him down or got wedged in that twelve by twelve inch window. There was a lot of ribbing when I went out to supper. Mr. Nichols had pulled the bullets in my gun and replaced them with wads.

HUNGRY HANDS

After the roundup I started to school, but had to drop out in April. The only full year I had was when I was six years old. In mid-harvest there was a rumor that General Obregon was coming to take all our work stock to move him to Chihuahua. So we got all the work stock together, packed some grub and bedding on one horse, and Melvin Nichols and I took to the hills. There is quite a large valley that opens out at the head of a box canyon and is rimmed all around with cliffs. We headed out for Hidden Valley, a good night's ride from San Jose. We were in the valley by sunrise the next morning. We built a fence across the canyon, went up about midway to some cottonwood trees, made camp, and slept until about midafternoon. We butchered a large calf, and for our stay, we had meat--roast meat and half-dried meat. Then some of it got by us. It was about all we had to eat.

In about ten days, Bill Skinner rode in and told us to come back home. So the next morning, we rounded up the horses, tore down the fence, and went back to San Jose.

General Obregon was defeated at the battle of Agua Prieta. There is a story about the arm he lost in the battle and couldn't find on the battlefield. A soldier asked him for the loan of a peso. He rode out over the battlefield, and when he came up to the arm, it reached up for the peso.

VAMOSÉ

The exodus took place in September. The Mexicans said, "Vamos," and we got. Mr. Nichols sold five hundred head of cattle to Mr. Slaughter of San Bernadino, eighteen miles east of Douglas. We had to go to Douglas to cross the line. All stock leaving Mexico had to be dipped for ticks, and that was the nearest dipping pen. We gathered the cattle in about a week. It was about noon when we started the drive, and we only made it about ten miles up into the foot hills and bedded the cattle down. About ten p.m. an electrical storm blew up, so we were riding all night. There were four of us and the Mexican, Slaughter, sent to supervise the drive. He had the big head. All during the drive, he didn't turn a hand. He was more a hindrance than a help.

Our route was west, a two days' drive, and then north to the line. Our second night we had a corral for the cattle and got a good night's sleep. The next night we herded all night long. Henry Foster and I took the first shift; Jim Hall, the man in charge, and Zery Van Luvan took the last shift. The ones having the last shift had to get breakfast and break camp. No lunch. At night Jim would call off the night herders. I said, "How about the superintendent?" Jim just shrugged his shoulders and said, "We don't need him." So the third night we herded. The next night we corralled at the Encinos ranch--nobody there but a caretaker. We were slow driving, letting the cattle graze as much as possible. We were in the cedar country heading north. We were expecting to make the adobe corral that night, but the creek fooled us.

There was a four-wire fence running north, and the creek made a big bend to the west. While we were crossing the bend, a freshet came roaring down, due to a heavy rain the night before. What with swimming water and a fence on the lower side, we night herded in sight of a ten foot adobe corral. By morning the creek was down, and we started on. We were now paralleling the railroad that went down to the Nacosarea mine.