



The COW PUNCHER

By Robert J.C. Stead

Author of "Kitchener, and other poems"

Illustrations by Irvin Myers

"HE'S A WONDERFUL BOY."

Synopsis—Dave Elden, son of a drunken ranchman and almost a maverick of the foothills, is breaking bottles with his pistol from his running cayuse when the first automobile he has ever seen arrives and tips over, breaking the leg of Doctor Hardy but not injuring his beautiful daughter Irene. Dave rescues the injured man and starts for the nearest doctor, 40 miles away.

CHAPTER I—Continued.

She looked about the place somewhat hopelessly. Her father read her perplexity.

"It seems as though you would be in charge here for a while, Reenie," he said, "so you will save time by getting acquainted at once with your equipment. Look the house over and see what you have to work with."

"Well, I can commence here," she answered. "This is Dave's room. I suppose I should say Mr. Elden's, but—what was it he said about 'mistering'? It would be splendid if it were cleaned up," she continued, with kindling enthusiasm. "These bare logs, bare floors, bare rafters—we've got back to essentials, anyway. And that's his bed." She surveyed a framework of spruce poles, on which lay an old straw mattress and some very gray blankets. "I suppose he is very tired when he goes to bed," she said, drolly, as though that could be the only explanation of sleep amid such surroundings.

In the south end of the larger room stood a fireplace, crudely made of slabs of native rock. The fires of many winters had crumbled the rock, so that it had fallen in places and was no longer employed for its original purpose. A very rusty and greasy stove now occupied the space immediately in front of the fireplace, the stovepipe leading into the ample but tottering chimney. Near the stove was a bench supporting a tin wash-basin, a wooden pail and certain fragments of soap—evidently all the equipment necessary for the simple ablutions of the Elden household. The remnant of a grain-bag, with many evidences of use and abuse, performed the functions of a towel, and a broken piece of looking-glass gave the faintest intimation that a strain of fundamental relationship links the sexes. By the western wall was a table, with numerous dishes, and to the wall itself had been nailed wooden boxes—salmon and tomato cases—now containing an assortment of culinary supplies. A partially used sack of flour and another of rolled oats leaned against the wall, and a trapdoor in the floor gave promise of further resources beneath. There was a window in the east and another in the west, both open and uncurtained; myriads of flies gave the only touch of life to the dismal scene.

Irene looked it all over, then leaned against the window sill and laughed. Her father had brought her west for holidays, with the promise of changed surroundings and new experiences, but he had promised her no such delight as this. With the Elden kitchen still photographed in her mind she called up the picture of her own city home—the order, the precision, the fixedness; the this-sits-here-and-that-stands-there-ness; the flatness and emptiness and formality of it all; and she turned again to the Elden kitchen and laughed—a soft, rippling, irrepressible laugh, as irrepressible as the laughter of the mountain stream amid the evergreens.

Then she looked again from the open window, this time with eyes that saw the vista of valley and woodland and foothill that stretched down into the opening prairie. Suddenly she realized that she was looking down upon a picture—one of nature's obscure masterpieces—painted in brown and green and saffron against an opal canvas. It was beautiful, not with the solemnity of the great mountains, nor the solemnity of the great plains, but with that nearer, more intimate relationship which is the peculiar property of the foothill country. The girl drew a great breath of the pure air and was about to dream a new daydream when the voice of her father brought her to earth.

"Can't you find anything that will do for a bandage?" he asked.

"Oh, you dear Daddykins!" she replied, her voice tremulous with self-reproach. "I had forgotten. There was a spell, or something; it just came down upon me in the window. The bandage? Dear, no! The only cloth I see is the kitchen towel, and I can't recommend it. But what a goose I am! Our grips are in the car, or under it, or somewhere, I'll be back in

a jiffy." And she was off at a sharp trot down the trail along which she had so recently come in Dave Elden's wagon.

The grips were duly found, and Irene congratulated herself that she and her father were in the habit of traveling with equipment for overnight. Arrived at the house, she deftly wrapped a bandage about her father's injury and set to work at the preparation of supper—a task not strange to her, as her mother considered it correct that her daughter should have a working knowledge of kitchen affairs.

Once during the evening she took a glance into the other room. It was even less inviting than Dave's, with walls bare of any adornment save dirty garments that hung from nails driven in the logs. On the rude bed lay an old man. She could see only a part of his face—a gray mustache drooping over an open mouth, and a florid cheek turned to the glow of the setting sun. On a chair beside the bed sat a bottle and the room reeked with the smell of breath charged with alcohol. She gently closed the door and busied herself through the long evening with reforms in the kitchen and with little ministrations designed to relieve the sufferings of her father.

The sun sank behind the Rockies and a darkness, soft and mystical and silent, stole up the valley, hushing even the noiseless day. The girl stood framed in the open window and the moonlight painted her face to the purest ivory and toyed with the rich brown fastness of her hair and gleamed from a single ornament at her throat. She was under a spell. She was in a new world, where were manhood, and silence, and the realities of being, and moonlight, and great gulfs of shadow between the hills and large, friendly stars, and soft breezes pushing this way and that without definite direction, and strange, quiet noises from out of the depths, and the incense of the evergreens, and a young horseman galloping into the night. And conventions had been swept away, and it was correct to live, and to live!

The first flush of dawn was mellowing the eastern sky when the girl was awakened from uneasy sleep by sounds in the yard in front of the ranch-house.

The stars were still shining brightly through the cold air. In the faint light she could distinguish a team and



The Girl Stood Framed in the Open Window, and the Moonlight Painted Her Face to the Purest Ivory.

wagon and men unhitching. She approached and, in a voice that sounded strangely distant in the vastness of the calm night, called:

"Is that you, Dave?"

And in a moment she wondered how she had dared call him Dave. But she soon had other cause for wonder, for the boy replied from near beside her, in that tone of friendly confidence which springs so spontaneously in the darkness:

"Yes, Reenie, and the doctor, too. We'll have Mr. Hardy fixed up in no time. How did he stand the night?"

How dared he call her Reenie? A flush of resentment rose in her breast, only to be submerged in the sudden remembrance that she had first called him Dave. That surely gave him the right to address her as he had done. Then she remembered she was in the ranch country, in the foothills, where the conventions—the conventions she hated—had not yet become rooted, and where the souls of men and women stood bare in the clear light of frank acceptance of the fact. It would be idle—dangerous—to trifle with this boy by any attempt at concealment or deception.

"She could see his form now as he led the horses toward the corral. How straight he was, and how bravely his footsteps fell on the hard earth!

"He's a wonderful boy," said the doc-

tor, of whose presence she had been unconscious. "Cat's eyes. Full gallop through the dark; side-hills, mountain streams, up and down; breakneck. Well, here we are." The doctor breathed deeply, as though this last fact was one to occasion some wonderment. "Your brother tells me you have an injured man here. Accident. Stranger, I believe? Well, shall we go in?"

Brother! But why should she explain? Dave hadn't bothered. Why hadn't he? He had told about the stranger. Why had he not told about both strangers? Why had he ignored her altogether? This time came another flush, born of that keen womanly intuition which understands.

With a commonplace she led the doctor into the house and to the bedside of her father. When the operation was completed the girl turned her attention to the kitchen, where she found Dave, sweating in vicarious suffering. He had helped to draw the limb into place and it had been his first close contact with human pain. It was different from branding calves and he had slipped out of the room as soon as possible. The morning sun was now pouring through the window and the distraught look on the boy's face touched her even more than the frankness of the words spoken in the darkness. She suddenly remembered that he had been up all night—for her. She would not deceive herself with the thought that it was for her father's sake Dave had galloped to town, found a doctor, secured a fresh team and driven back along the little-used foothill trails. No doubt Dave would have done it all for her father, had her father been there alone, but as things were she had a deep conviction that he had done it for her. And it was with a greater effort than seemed reasonable that she laid her fingers on his arm and said:

"Thank you, Dave."

"What for?" he asked, and she could not doubt the genuineness of his question.

"Why, for bringing the doctor, and all that. I am sure I can't—father won't be able to—"

"Oh, shucks!" he interrupted, with a manner which, on the previous afternoon, she would have called rudeness. "That's nothin'. But, say, I brought home some grub. The chuck here was pretty tame. Guess you found that out last night." He looked about the room and she knew that he was taking note of her house-cleaning, but he made no remark on the subject.

"Well, let's get breakfast," she said, after a moment's pause and for lack of other conversation. "You must be hungry."

Dave's purchases had been liberal. They included fresh meat and vegetables, canned goods, coffee, rice and raisins. He laid the last three items on the table with a great dissembling of indifference, for he was immensely proud of them. They were unwonted items on the Elden bill of fare; he had bought them especially for her. But she busied herself at the breakfast without a thought of the epoch-marking nature of these purchases.

The doctor, who had been resting in the room with his patient, entered the kitchen. During the setting of the limb he had gradually become aware of the position of Irene in the household; but had that not been so, one glance at the boy and girl as they now stood in the bright morning sunshine, he with his big, wiry frame, his brown face, his dark eyes, his black hair, she, round and knit and smooth, with the pink shining through her fair skin and the light of youth dancing in her gray eyes and the light of day glancing on her brown hair, must have told him they had sprung from widely separated stocks. For one perilous moment he was about to apologize for the mistake made in the darkness, but some wise instinct closed his lips. But he wondered why she had not corrected him.

They were seated at breakfast when the senior Elden made his appearance. He had slept off his debauch and was as sober as a man in the throes of alcoholic appetite may be. Seeing the strangers, he hesitated in his lurch toward the water pail, steadied himself on wide-spread feet, very flat on the floor, and waved his right hand slowly in the air. Whether this was to be understood as a form of salutation or a gesture of defiance was a matter of interpretation.

"Visitors," said the old man, at length. "Always welcome, 'm sure. Sh-scush me." He made his uncertain way to the water-bench, took a great drink and set about washing his face and hands, while the breakfast proceeded in silence. As his preparations neared completion Irene set a place at the table.

"Won't you sit down here, Mr. Elden?" she said.

There had been no introductions. Dave ate on in silence.

"Thank you," said the old man, and there was something in his voice which may have been emotion or may have been the huskiness of the heavy drinker's throat. The girl gave it the former explanation. As he took the proffered chair she saw in this old man shreds of dignity which the less refined eye of his son had not distinguished. To Dave his father was an affliction to

be borne; an unfair load laid on a boy who had done nothing to deserve this punishment. The miseries associated with his parentage had gone far to make him sour and moody. Irene at first had thought him rude and gloomy; flashes of humor had modified that opinion, but she had not yet learned that his disposition was naturally a buoyant one, weighed down by an environment which had made it soggy and unresponsive. In years to come she was to know what unguessed depths of character were to be revealed when that stoic nature was cross-sectioned by the blade of a keen and defiant passion.

Mr. Elden promptly engaged the doctor in conversation, and in a few moments had gleaned the main facts in connection with the accident and the father and daughter which it had brought so momentarily under his roof. He was quite sober now and his speech, although slovenly, was not indelicate. He was still able to pay to woman that respect which curbs the coarseness of a tongue for years subjected to little discipline.

Irene takes the first of many rides with Dave.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"FATHER OF POSTAGE STAMP"

Sir Rowland Hill Had to Fight Hard to Get Great Britain to Adopt Scheme He Advocated.

The power of a postage stamp, in unjust taxation, in 1770, rent her American colonies from Great Britain. Viscount Hill, a tough old British soldier, ancestor of Sir Rowland Hill, the great philanthropist, and inventor of penny postage, was born on August 11, 1772. His fighting qualities blustered again in his descendant, Sir Rowland. In 1835 his fearless originality and largeness of view flung itself into the question, "How shall the poor send letters at 1 shilling and 4 pence (33 cents) each?" The government hostile to him, he suffered insults, yet he steadily pressed his scheme—the penny stamp. Every obstacle was thrown in his path. Parliament foamed at the mouth, and declared he would ruin the country, and upset the throne. The official world guffawed when he appeared before a commission of post office inquiry to describe his invention—the penny stamp—"an adhesive postage stamp, a bit of paper, just large enough to bear the imprint of her Majesty's bust, and covered at the back with a glutinous wash."

But the diplomatic ability, and the dare and push of his old ancestor in his veins, carried him through to triumph for the people. On January 10, 1840, penny postage was established. The gross revenue rose from 1,000,000 pounds to 4,000,000 pounds. The business of the money order office multiplied fifty-two fold. He was buried in Westminster abbey, London—the highest honor a grateful nation could accord him.—Kansas City Journal.

Emperor Skillful Engineer.

From imperial times until today the Tiber has been a torment to all governments. Caesar elaborated a system that would have made Rome a rival of the London or New York of today, but his associates found the enterprise too gigantic. When a distant successor, the Emperor Claudius, came to the throne, he took up the scheme, and though he did not embark on it so extensively, he compelled the wonder of the time by the capacious waterway afforded. He was an engineer by taste. His name is associated with the enormous aqueducts, Aqua Claudia and Anio Novus, the wonder of modern engineers. He caused a harbor at Ostia to be dug. The breakwater was not built in the right direction, and the harbor ultimately filled up.

First Handkerchiefs.

Handkerchiefs were in use in England as early as the time of Queen Elizabeth. At first they were used only by women and were not particularly in favor in public places. Silk handkerchiefs embroidered and fringed silk are mentioned in the chronicles of that queen's reign. In this country they were not in favor for public use. Abigail Adams in her "Familiar Letters" says that "an order has been given in this town that no person shall be seen to wipe his face with a white handkerchief in this town."—July 1775, page 87. Their usefulness, however, overcame prejudice and both sexes in time found the handkerchief to be indispensable.

Careless Man.

Smith—I am getting pretty forgetful.

Jones—How so?

Smith—I haven't dipped my pen in the mudlage bottle this week.

Thirty-Two Varieties.

The Bank of England has 32 different methods of detecting forged banknotes.

And Who the "It?"

The thoughtless spender puts the rift in thrift.—Cartoons Magazine.

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Her Preference.

Emily was eating at a restaurant with the family and had finished an order of waffles. She was still hungry and her father asked her if she would have something more—a sandwich, perhaps. She said: "No, I would rather have another set of these than anything else."

If not already acquainted, get to know Garfield Tea, the advance agent of Abounding Health.—Adv.

A salmon has been known to produce 10,000,000 eggs.

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In Cuba the earthquake plant grows wild. It is said to forecast cyclones, storms, and specially earthquakes by changes of color.

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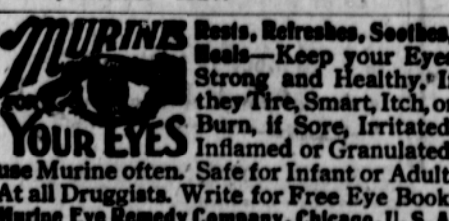
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P. N. U. No. 6, 1920