

The Cow Puncher

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CHAPTER IX.—Continued.

Back in Conward's office, while the agreement was being drawn, Irene was possessed of a consuming desire to consult with Dave Eiden. She was uneasy about this transaction in which her mother proposed so precipitately to invest the greater part of their little fortune. "I think I would hesitate, mother," she cried. "If you buy this house we will have only a few thousand dollars left. Your health may demand other expenditures—"

"My health was never better," Mrs. Hardy interrupted. "And I'm not going to miss a chance like this, health or no health. You have heard Mr. Conward tell how many people have grown wealthy buying property and selling it again. And I will sell it again—when I get my price."

"It is as your mother says," Conward interjected. "There are very rapid increases in value. I would not



"There Must Be an End Somewhere," Irene Murmured, Rather Weakly.

be surprised if you should be offered an advance of ten thousand dollars on this place before fall."

"There must be an end somewhere," Irene murmured, rather weakly.

But her mother was writing a check. "I shall give you five thousand dollars now," she said, "and the balance when you give me the deed, or whatever it is. That is the proper way, isn't it?"

"Well, it's done," said Irene with an uneasy laugh which her excitement pitched a little higher than she had intended.

In an adjoining room Dave Eiden heard that laugh, and it stirred some remembrance in him. Instantly he connected it with Irene Hardy. The truth was Irene Hardy had been in the background of his mind during every waking hour since Bert Morrison had dropped her bombshell upon him. And now that voice—

Dave had no plan. He simply walked into Conward's office. His eye took in the little group and the mind behind caught something of its portent. Irene's beauty! What a quickening of the pulses was his as he saw in this splendid woman the girl who had stirred and returned his youthful passion! But Dave had poise. He walked straight to Irene.

"I heard your voice," he said, in quiet tones that gave no hint of the emotion beneath. "I am very glad to see you again." He took the hand which she extended, in a firm, warm grasp; there was nothing in it, as Irene protested to herself, that was more than firm and warm, but it set her finger tips a-tingle.

"My mother, Mr. Eiden," she managed to say, and she hoped her voice was as well controlled as his had been. Mrs. Hardy looked on the clean-built young man with the dark eyes and the brown, smooth face, but the name suggested nothing. "You remember," Irene went on, "I told you of Mr. Eiden. It was at his ranch we stayed when father was hurt."

"But I thought he was a cow puncher!" exclaimed Mrs. Hardy.

"Times change quickly in the West, madam," said Dave. "Most of our business men—at least, those bred in the country—have thrown a lasso in their day. You should hear them brag of their steer-roping yet in the Ranchmen's club."

Irene's eyes danced. Dave had already turned the tables; where her mother had implied contempt he had set up a note of pride.

"Oh, I suppose," said her mother, for lack of a better answer. "Everything is so absurd in the West. But you were good to my daughter, and to poor, dear Andrew. If only he had been spared. Women are so unused to these business responsibilities, Mr. Conward. It is fortunate there are a few reliable firms upon which we can lean in our inexperience."

"Mother has bought a house," Irene explained to Dave. "We thought this was a safe place to come"—A look on Eiden's face caused her to pause. "Why, what is wrong?" she said.

Dave looked at Conward, at Mrs. Hardy, and at Irene. He was instantly aware that Conward had "stung" them. It was common knowledge in inside circles that the bottom was going out. The firm of Conward &

Eiden had been scurrying for cover, as quietly and secretly as possible, to avoid alarming the public, but scurrying for cover, nevertheless. And Dave had acquiesced in that policy. His position was extremely difficult.

"I don't think I would be in a hurry to buy," he said, slowly turning his eyes on his partner. "You would perhaps be wiser to rent a home for a while. Rents are becoming easier."

"But I have bought," said Mrs. Hardy, and there was triumph rather than regret in her voice. "I have paid my deposit."

"It is the policy of this firm," Eiden continued, "not to force or take advantage of hurried decisions. The fact that you have already made a deposit does not alter that policy. I think I may speak for my partner and the firm when I say that your deposit will be held to your credit for thirty days, during which time it will constitute an option on the property which you have selected. If, at the end of that time, you are still of your present mind, the transaction can go through as now planned; and if you have changed your mind your deposit will be returned."

Conward shifted under Dave's direct eye. He preferred to look at Mrs. Hardy. "What Mr. Eiden has told you about the policy of the firm is quite true," he managed to say. "But, as it happens, this transaction is not with Conward & Eiden, but with me personally. I find it necessary to dispose of the property which I have just sold to you at such an exceptional price—he was looking at Mrs. Hardy—and naturally I cannot run a chance of having my plans overturned by any possible change of mind on your part."

"I am entirely satisfied," said Mrs. Hardy. "The fact that Mr. Eiden wants to get the property back makes me more satisfied," she added, with the peculiarly irritating laugh of a woman who thinks she is extraordinarily shrewd and is only very silly.

"The agreement is signed," said Dave. He walked to the desk and picked up the documents, and the check that lay upon them. His eye ran down the familiar contract. "This agreement is in the name of Conward & Eiden," he said. "This check is payable to Conward & Eiden."

Conward's livid face had become white, and it was with difficulty he controlled his anger. "They are all printed that way," he explained. "I am going to have them indorsed over to me."

"You are not," said Dave. "You are charging this woman twenty-five thousand dollars for a house that won't bring ten thousand. The firm of Conward & Eiden will have nothing to do with that transaction. It won't even indorse it over."

A fire was burning in the grate. Dave walked to it and very slowly and deliberately thrust the agreement into the flame.

"Well, if that doesn't heat all!" Mrs. Hardy ejaculated. "Are all cow punchers so discourteous?"

"I mean no discourtesy," said Dave. "If my behavior has seemed abrupt, I assure you I have only sought to serve Doctor Hardy's widow—and his daughter."

"It is a peculiar service," Mrs. Hardy answered, curtly.

"I can only apologize for my partner's behavior," said Conward. "It need not, however, affect the transaction in the slightest degree. A new agreement will be drawn at once—an agreement in which the firm of Conward & Eiden will not be concerned."

"That will be more satisfactory," said Mrs. Hardy. She intended the remark for Dave's ears, but he had moved to a corner of the room and was conversing in low tones with Irene.

"I am sorry I had to make your mother's acquaintance under circumstances which, I fear, she will not even try to understand," he had said to Irene.

"Oh, Dave—Mr. Eiden, I mean—that is—you don't know how proud—you don't know how much of a man you made me feel you are." She was flushed and excited. "Perhaps—I shouldn't talk like this. Perhaps—"

"It all depends on one thing," Dave interrupted.

"What is that?"

"It all depends on whether we are Miss Hardy and Mr. Eiden or whether we are still Keene and Dave."

Her bright eyes had fallen to the floor and he could see the tremor of her fingers as they rested on the back of a chair. She did not answer him directly. But in a moment she spoke.

"Mother will buy the house from Mr. Conward," she said. "She is like that. And when we are settled you will come and see me, won't you—Dave?"

When the Hardys had gone Conward turned to Eiden. "We had better try and find out where we stand," he said, trying to speak dispassionately, but there was a tremor in his voice.

"I agree," returned Eiden, who had no desire to evade the issue. "Do you consider it fair to select inexperienced women for your victims?"

Conward made a deprecating gesture. "There is nothing to be gained

by quarrelling, Dave," he said. "Let us get at the facts. When we have agreed as to facts, then we may agree as to procedure."

"Shoot," said Dave. He stood with his shoulder toward Conward, watching the dusk settling about the foothill city.

"I think," said Conward, "we can agree that the boom is over. We have done well, on paper. The thing now is to convert our paper into cash."

Dave turned about. "You know I don't claim to be any great moralist, Conward," he said, "and I have no pity for a gambler who deliberately sits in and gets stung. Consequently I am not troubled with any self-pity, nor any pity for you, and if you can get rid of our holdings to other gamblers I have nothing to say. But if it is to be loaded onto women who are investing the little savings of their lives—women like Bert Morrison and Mrs. Hardy—then I am going to have a good deal to say." Dave went on with rising heat: "If business has to be done that way, then I say to h— with business!"

"I asked you not to quarrel," Conward returned, with remarkable composure. "I suggested that we get at the facts. Now, granting that the boom is over, where do we stand? We are rated as millionaires, but we haven't a thousand dollars in the bank at this moment. This"—he lifted Mrs. Hardy's check—"would have seen us over next payday, but you say the firm must have nothing to do with it. And which is the more immoral—since you have spoken of morality—to accept labor from clerks whom you can't pay or to sell property to women who say they want it and are satisfied with the price? We have literally thousands of unsettled contracts. We must keep our staff together. We have debts to pay, and we owe it to our creditors to make collections so that we can pay those debts, and we can't make collections without a staff. Why, on the property we are now holding the taxes alone will amount to twenty thousand dollars a year. And I put it up to you, if we are going to stand on sentiment, who's going to pay the taxes?"

"I know; I know," said Dave, whose anger over the treatment of the Hardys was already subsiding. "We are in the grip of the system. Still—in war they don't usually kill women and noncombatants. That is the point I'm trying to make. I've no sentiment about others who are in the game as we are. If you limit your operations to them—"

"The trouble is, you can't. They're wise. Most of them have already moved on. A few firms, like ourselves, will stay and try to fight it out; try, at least, to close up with a clean sheet. If we must close up. But we can't wind up a business without selling the stock on hand, and to whom are we to sell if not to people who want it? That is what you seem to object to."

"You place me in rather an unfair light," Dave protested. "What I object to is taking the life savings of people—people of moderate circum-



"Are All Cow Punchers So Discourteous?"

stances, mainly—in exchange for property which we know to be worth next to nothing."

"Yet you admit that we must clean up, don't you?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"And there's no other way, Dave," said Conward, rising and placing his arm on his partner's shoulder. "I sympathize with your point of view, but, my boy, it's pure sentiment, and sentiment has no place in business."

Dave dropped the subject. There appeared to be nothing to gain from pursuing it further. They were in the grip of a system—a system which had found them poor, had suddenly made them wealthy, and now, with equal suddenness, threatened to make them poor again. It was like war—kill or be killed.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Cattle Eat "Rubber Cakes."
Experiments at Singapore have shown that a feeding cake for cattle and other stock can be produced from the residue of Para rubber seed after the extraction of an oil comparing favorably with linseed oil.

Clever Management of Braid in Suits



Braid and buttons have been the accustomed decorations for suits for so long a time that we take them as a matter of course and are not surprised to find them among any season's productions. Their popularity ebbs and flows; occasionally there is a season when they almost disappear and then comes a time when there is no getting away from them. They have been at the ebb for the past two seasons—sparingly but most cleverly used in ingenious ways that are surprisingly novel. Like the return of old friends after an absence, braid and bone buttons are welcome, especially when we discover them so smart and original in application.

The suit at the right has a few buttons and a little braid, but these are used with consummate taste. The braid appears in a lattice-work ap-

plique on the front and back of the coat, which is a vague-fitting belted model, conservative and graceful. Buttons are set along the top of the pockets and on the narrow belt at the back. It is a suit for any climate or any season.

The suit at the left differs only by having more buttons set in two long rows at the back, with bands of braid joining them. They form a narrow panel that is turned under, in most unexpected fashion, at the bottom. It is little, unusual touches of this kind that give clothes distinction.

Designers who determined to use braid evidently made up their minds to think up new ways of applying it. These are only two of several braid-trimmed models that have compelled admiration for their originality and ingenuity.

WHITE GOODS SALE



The heads of well regulated households take inventory of the wardrobes of their families in January, with a view to replenishing undermuslins. This is the time also to go over the household linen chest and maintain its standard of sheets, pillow cases, towels, etc.

Early in January the white goods sales are featured in dry goods stores along with showings and sales of undermuslins.

Styles change less in undermuslins than in other apparel, although there are usually new and interesting developments on trial in the January sales. The limit of sheerness has been reached and there is a reaction away from it and away from silks. They have become too popular and too showy to suit the fastidious. A return to fine cottons and handwork is a step in advance, which evidences the cultivation of good taste in people who have money to spend and are learning how to spend it.

Batiste in good qualities is the favored fabric for underthings. Although it is fine and dainty it stands up well under the strain of wear and tubbing. Like other clothes the most economical practice is to have a supply large enough so that the same gar-

Julia Bottomly

"CALIFORNIA FIG SYRUP" IS CHILD'S LAXATIVE

Look at tongue! Remove poisons from stomach, liver and bowels.



Accept "California" Syrup of Figs only—look for the name California on the package, then you are sure your child is having the best and most harmless laxative or physic for the little stomach, liver and bowels. Children love its delicious fruity taste. Full directions for child's dose on each bottle. Give it without fear.

Mother! You must say "California."—Adv.

Chinese Beauties.

An expert has turned his attention to what he calls "the exquisite complexion of the Chinese women." This, he claims, is not due to emulating, as is generally supposed, but to careful manipulation of the face by the most expert masseuses.

They begin by a gentle pinching of the cheeks between the tips of their fingers, an operation that consumes a period of ten minutes. Lotions are applied by means of absorbent cotton, then comes an unguent and there follows a kneading of the cheeks with an extreme delicacy of touch, always proceeding from the nose and commissures of the lips toward the ears.

HURRY! YOUR HAIR NEEDS "DANDERINE"

Get rid of every bit of that ugly dandruff and stop falling hair.



To stop falling hair at once and rid the scalp of every particle of dandruff, get a small bottle of "Danderine" at any drug or toilet counter for a few cents, pour a little in your hand and rub well into the scalp. After several applications all dandruff usually goes and hair stops coming out. Every hair in your head soon shows new life, vigor, brightness, thickness and more color.—Adv.

To Be Sure.

"Sir, I hear you called me a political nonentity."

"I did not. I merely said you couldn't be elected dog catcher."

"Isn't that the same thing?"

"Not at all. A man might be defeated for dog catcher, and still have enough friends to make him a person of some importance in his voting precinct."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

ASPIRIN FOR COLDS

Name "Bayer" is on Genuine Aspirin—say Bayer



Insist on "Bayer Tablets of Aspirin" in a "Bayer package," containing proper directions for Colds, Pain, Headache, Neuralgia, Lumbago, and Rheumatism. Name "Bayer" means genuine Aspirin prescribed by physicians for nineteen years. Handy tin boxes of 12 tablets cost few cents. Aspirin is trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid.—Adv.

What Time Might Do.

Old Goldbags—What's that! You really mean to tell me you love my daughter for herself alone?

Hardup—Yes, sir; but I think I could learn to love you t-too, sir, in t-time, sir.—London Tit-Bits.

"Cold in the Head"

is an acute attack of Nasal Catarrh. Persons who are subject to frequent "colds in the head" will find that the use of HALL'S CATARRH MEDICINE will build up the System, cleanse the Blood and render them less liable to colds. Repeated attacks of Acute Catarrh may lead to Chronic Catarrh. HALL'S CATARRH MEDICINE is taken internally and acts through the Blood on the Mucous Surfaces of the System. All Druggists 5c. Testimonials free. \$10.00 for any case of catarrh that HALL'S CATARRH MEDICINE will not cure. F. J. Cheney & Co., Toledo, Ohio.

A Slight Mistake.

"Is your brother's voice sonorous?" "When he is asleep, it is."—Baltimore American.