



The COW PUNCHER

By Robert J.C. Stead
Author of
"Kitchener, and other poems"

Illustrations by Irvin Myers

Elden held the bill in his fingers gingerly, as though it might carry infection, as in very truth it did. He realized that he stood at a turning-point—that everything the future held for him might rest on his present decision. There remained in him not a little of the fine, stern honor of the ranchman of the open range; an honor, sometimes terrible, in its interpretation of right and wrong, but a fine, stern honor nevertheless. And he instinctively felt that to accept this money would compromise him for evermore. As he turned the bill in his fingers he noticed that it was for one hundred dollars. He thought it was ten.

"I can't take that much," he exclaimed. "It isn't fair."

"Fair enough," said Conward, well pleased that Dave should be impressed



"I Can't Take That Much," He Exclaimed. "It Isn't Fair."

by his generosity. "Fair enough," he repeated. "It's just ten per cent of my profit."

"You mean you made a thousand dollars on that deal?"

"Exactly that. And that will look like a peanut to what we are going to make later on."

"We?"

"Yes. You and me. We're going into partnership."

"But I've nothing to invest. I've only a very little saved up."

"Invest that hundred."

Dave looked at Conward sharply. Was he trifling? No, his eyes were frank and serious.

"You mean it?"

"Of course. Now, I'll put you onto something, and it's the biggest thing that has been pulled off yet. There's a section of land lying right against the city limits that is owned by a fellow over in England; remittance man who fell heir to an estate and had to go home to spend it. I am arranging through a London office to offer him ten dollars an acre, and I'll bet he jumps at it. I've arranged for the necessary credits, but there will be some expenses for cables, etc., and you can put your hundred into that. If we pull it off—and we will pull it off—we start

up in business as Conward & Elden, or Elden & Conward, whichever sounds better. Boy, there's a fortune in it."

"What do you figure it's worth?" said Dave, trying to speak easily. "Twenty-five dollars an acre?"

"Twenty-five dollars an acre!" Conward shouted. "Dave, newspaper routine has killed your imagination. Twenty-five dollars an acre! Listen!

"The city boundaries are to be extended—probably will be by the time this deal goes through. Then it is city property. A street-railway system is to be built, and we'll see that it runs through our land. We may have to 'grease' somebody, but it's a poor engineer that saves on grease. Then we'll survey that section into twenty-five-foot lots—and we'll sell them at two hundred dollars each for those nearest the city down to one hundred for those farthest out—average one hundred and fifty—total nine hundred and sixty thousand dollars. Allow, say, sixty thousand for grease and there is still nine hundred thousand, and that doesn't count resale commissions. Dave, it's good for a cool million."

Dave was doing rapid thinking. Suddenly he faced Conward and their eyes met. "Conward," he said, "you don't need my little hundred to put this over. Why do you let me in on it?"

Conward smiled and breathed easily. There had been a moment of tension. "Oh, that's simple," he answered. "I figure we'll travel well in double harness. I'm a good mixer—I know people—and I've got ideas. And you're sound and honorable and people trust you."

"Thanks," said Dave, dryly.

"That's right," Conward continued. "We'll be a combination hard to beat."

Dave had never felt sure of Conward, and now he felt less sure than ever. But the lust of easy money was beginning to stir within him. The bill in his hands represented more than three weeks' wages. Conward was making money—making money fast, and surely here was an opportunity such as comes once in a lifetime.

"I'll go you," he said to Conward, at last. "I'll risk this hundred, and a little more, if necessary."

"Good," said Conward, springing to his feet and taking Dave's hand in a warm grasp. "Now we're away. But you better play safe. Stick to your paycheck here until we pull the deal through. There won't be much to do until then, anyway, and you can help more by guiding the paper along right lines."

"It sounds like a fairy tale," Dave demurred, as though unwilling to credit the possibilities Conward had outlined. "You're sure it can be done?"

"Done? Why, son, it has been done in all the big centers in the States, and at many a place that'll never be a center at all. And it will be done here, Dave, bigger things than you dare dream of are looming up right ahead."

CHAPTER VII.

David Elden smoked his afternoon cigar in his bachelor quarters. The years had been good to the firm of Conward & Elden; good far beyond the wildest of their first dreams. The transaction of the section bought from the English absentee had been but the beginning of bigger and more daring adventures. Conward, in that first wild prophecy of his, had spoken of a city of a quarter of a million people; already more lots had been sold than could be occupied by four times that population.

Dave had often asked himself where it all would end.

The firm of Conward & Elden had profited not the least in the wild years of gain-getting. Their mahogany-finished first-floor quarters were the last word in office luxuriance. Conward's private room might with credit have housed a premier or a president. Its purpose was to be impressive rather than to give any other service, as Conward spent little of his time there. On Dave fell the responsibility of office management, and his room was fitted for efficiency rather than luxury. It commanded a view of the long general office where a battery of stenographers and clerks took care of the details of the business of Conward & Elden. And Dave had established his ability as an office manager. His fairness, his fearlessness, his impartiality, his courtesy, his even temper—save on rare and excusable occasions—had won from the staff a loyalty which Conward, with all his abilities as a good mixer, could never have commanded.

He had prospered, of course. His statement to his banker ran into seven figures. Dave was still a young man, not yet in his thirties; he was rated a millionaire; he had health, comeliness, and personality; he commanded the respect of a wide circle of business men, and was regarded as one of the matrimonial prizes of the city; his name had been discussed for public office; he was a success.

And yet this night, as he sat in his comfortable rooms and watched the street lights come fluttering on as twilight silhouetted the great hills to the west, he was not so sure of his success. He was called a success, yet in the honesty of his own soul he feared the coin did not ring true. He felt that the crude but honest conception of the square deal which was the one valuable heritage of his childhood was slipping away from him. He had little in common with Conward outside of their business relationship. He suspected the man vaguely, but had never found tangible ground for his suspicion.

He was turning the matter over in his mind and wondering what the end would be, when a knock came at the door.

"Come," he said, switching on the light. . . . "Oh, it's you, Bert! I'm honored. Sit down."

Roberta Morrison threw her coat over a chair and sank into another. Without speaking, she extended her shapely feet to the fire, but when its soothing warmth had comforted her limbs she looked up and said:

"Adam sure put it over on us, didn't he?"

"Still nursing that grievance over your sex?" laughed Dave. "I thought you would outgrow it."

"I don't blame him," continued the girl, ignoring his interruption. "I am just getting back from forty-seven tens. Gabble, gabble, gabble. I don't blame him. We deserve it."

"Then you have had nothing to eat?"

"Almost. Only insignificant indigestibles."

Dave pressed a button, and a Chinese boy (all male Chinese are boys) entered.

"Bring something to eat. Go out for it, and be quick. For two."

"You've had your dinner, surely?" asked Bert.

"Such a dinner as a man eats alone," he answered. "Now for something real. You stick to the paper like the ink, don't you, Bert?"

"Can't leave it. I hate it—and I love it. It's my poison and my medicine. Most of all I hate the society twaddle. And, of course, that's what I have to do."

"Bert," Dave said, suddenly, "why don't you get married?"

"Who, me?" Then she laughed. "It would be mean to put over anything

like that on a man, and a girl wouldn't have me."

"Well, then, why don't you buy some real estate?" he continued, jocularly. "Every man should have some dissipation—something to make him forget his other troubles."

"A little late in the meal for that word, isn't it? But the fact is, I have invested."

"A look came into his face which she



"It Would Be Mean to Put Over Anything Like That on a Man, and a Girl Wouldn't Have Me."

like that on a man, and a girl wouldn't have me."

"Well, then, why don't you buy some real estate?" he continued, jocularly. "Every man should have some dissipation—something to make him forget his other troubles."

"A little late in the meal for that word, isn't it? But the fact is, I have invested."

"A look came into his face which she

did not understand. "With whom?" he demanded, almost peremptorily.

"With Conward & Elden," she answered, and the roguishness of her voice suggested that her despised femininity lay not far from the surface. "Were you about to be jealous?"

"Why didn't you come to me?" She realized that he was in deep earnest. "I did," she answered candidly. "At least, I asked for you, but you were out of town, so Conward took me in hand and I followed his advice."

"Do you trust Conward?" he demanded, almost fiercely.

"Well, he's good enough to be your partner, isn't he?"

The thrust hurt more than she knew. He had his poise again.

"Real estate is the only subject I would trust him on," she continued. "I must say, Dave, that for a shrewd business man you are awfully dense about Conward."

He remained silent for a few moments. He decided not to follow her lead. He knew that if she had anything explicit to say about Conward she would say it when she felt the time to be opportune, and not until then.

"How much did you invest?"

"Not much. Just what I had."

"You mean all your savings?"

"Why not? It's all right, isn't it?"

He had risen and was standing by the window.

"It's all right, isn't it?" she repeated.

"I'm afraid it isn't!" he said, at length, in a restrained voice. "I'm afraid it isn't."

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"Bert," he continued, "did it ever occur to you that this thing must have an end—that we can't go on forever lifting ourselves by our own bootstraps? We have built a city here, a great and beautiful city, almost as a wizard might build it by magic overnight. There was room for it here; there was occasion; there was justification. But there was neither occasion nor justification for turning miles and miles of prairie land into city lots—lots which in the nature of things cannot possibly, in your time or mine, be required for city purposes. These lots should be producing; wheat, oats, potatoes, cows, butter—that is what we must build our city on. We have been considering the effect rather than the cause. The cause is the country, the neglected country, and until it overtakes the city we must stand still, if we do not go back. Our prosperity has been built on borrowed money, and we have forgotten that borrowed money must some time be repaid."

"You mean that the boom is about to burst?" she said.

"Not exactly burst. It will not be so sudden as that. It will just ooze away like a toy balloon pricked with a pin."

There was silence for some minutes. When she spoke at length it was with a tinge of bitterness. "So you are unloading?"

"The firm is, I beg you, Bert, it" (Continued on Page 7)

Wanted to buy both your fat and stock hogs. O'Bannon and Neuswanger. Phone 71. 18tf

Unemployment is Sending Men From Cities to Farms

Men who left the farm for the city during the period of high wages are returning in great numbers to till the soil, according to the officer in charge of the federal free employment offices in Nebraska. It is also stated that many of them are being hired without pay, being willing to do general farm work for their board and room.

Farmers, throughout Nebraska, reports indicate, are making preparations now to employ help for their spring work. A great many requests for farm help have already been made to the federal employment offices. These requests are coming from all parts of the state.

There is every indication, if present conditions continue, that Nebraska farmers will be able to employ farm help this spring for less than half what they paid last year. A large number of experienced farm hands have been employed during the last few weeks at very low wages, it is claimed, while others are being given a place to work for their board and room until spring work begins.

A great many of the men applying for work on the farms at the present time are ex-service men. On being discharged from the army these men were attracted to the city where high wages were being paid. As soon as industries began to close down and money tighten they were thrown out of employment. As most of them are inexperienced in finding new jobs in a city they found themselves "up against it."

While a great many of the men applying for jobs are given places, the supply of farm help at the present time far exceeds the demand, and it will probably be some little time before all are able to find employment.

TEACHERS' EXAMINATION

Regular teachers examinations will be held at the court house March 26. OPAL RUSSELL, County Superintendent.

30-33

GRANDMA FOR A BLUE SUNDAY

"Helen, I really cannot permit you to read novels on the Sabbath."

"But, grandma, this one is all right; it tells about a girl who was engaged to three Episcopal clergymen all at once."—Boston Transcript.

Very naturally most of the teeth inserted in preventive laws turn out to be false.

IMPERIAL

TONIGHT — TONIGHT
A Film Dramatization of Ethel M. Dell's Great Novel
"Bars of Iron"
COMEDY The Dog Doctor
LAUGHS

WEDNESDAY

Will Rogers
— IN —
"Guile of Women"
— COMEDY —

WILL ROGERS in 'The Guile of Women'

"MOVIE MAD"

THURSDAY and FRIDAY
MARCH 24 and 25

Charles Chaplin

Latest 6 REELS of JOY
"THE KID"

THINK OF THIS! Six Big Reels of the Biggest Comedy The Screen Has Ever Known.

TOOK A YEAR TO MAKE IT

STARTING FRIDAY AND RUNNING
FRIDAY MATINEE, FRIDAY NIGHT
AND SATURDAY MATINEE—
The Worlds Wonder Jungle Serial

The Son of Tarzan

15—WEEKS—15
of
ROMANCE, THRILLS,
ANIMALS, JUNGLES,
SENSATIONS FROM THE
HEART OF
DARKEST AFRICA

15—BIG WEEKS—15
FRIDAY AFTERNOON
AND NIGHT and
SATURDAY MATINEE

A World Necessity

WHAT makes possible the running of farms and businesses; the erecting of schools and churches and homes; the building of roads; the payment of wages; in short, the carrying on of human activities and life itself? It is saving, your saving, our saving, the saving of those who lived before us, that makes these things possible.

You couldn't borrow if someone hadn't saved and when you haven't saved enough for your own use you must pay others for the use of what they have saved. It's fair, isn't it?

But why not save for yourself, receive five per cent interest on your savings and accumulate enough to buy things you will want with your own money?

Opening a savings account with us will help you to do these things.

Come in today.

The First National Bank