



The COW PUNCHER

By Robert J.C. Stead

Author of 'Kitchener, and other poems'

Illustrations by Irwin Myers

Later he waded up the canyon. He must have walked swiftly, for the sun was not yet at the meridian when he found himself at the little nook in the rock where he and Irene had sat that afternoon when they had first laid their hearts open to each other.

Some whim led him through the grove of spruce trees on his way back to the ranch. Here, in an open space, he looked about, kicking in the dry grass. At length his toe disturbed a few bleached bones, and he stood and looked with unseeing eyes far across the shimmering valley.

"Brownie," he said at length. "Brownie!" The whole scene came back upon him—the moonlight, and Irene's distress, and the little bleeding body. And he had said he didn't know anything about the justice of God; all he knew was the critic that couldn't run was the one that got caught.

And then they had stood among the trees and beneath the white moon and pledged their faith. Again his head went up and the old light flashed in his eyes.

Darkness had again fallen before Dave found his car threatening the streets of the city, still feverish with its newborn excitement of war. He returned his car to the garage; an attendant looked up curiously—it was evident from his glance that Dave had already been missed—but no words were exchanged.

He was amazed to find that, even in his bitterness, the city reached a thousand hands to him—hands of habit and association and customs of mind—all urging him back into the old groove; all saying: "The routine is the thing. Be a spoke in the wheel; go round with the rest of us."

"No," he reminded himself. "No, I can't do that. I have business on hand. First—to kill the wolf." He remembered that he had given his revolver to Irene. And suddenly she sat with him again at the tea table.

In the hallway of the block in which he had his bachelor apartments Dave almost collided with a woman. He drew back, and the light fell on his face, but he was in the shadow.

"Oh, Dave, I'm so glad—Why, what has happened?" The last words ran into a little tremble of pain as she noted his haggard face.

"You—Edith?" he managed to say. "Whatever—" She came toward him and placed her hands on his. "I've been here a hundred times—ever since morning—ever since Bert Morrison called up to say you had disappeared—that there was some mystery. There isn't, is there, Dave? You're all right, Dave, aren't you, Dave?"

"I guess I'm all right," he managed to answer, "but I got a job on—an important job on. I must get it done. There is not time—"

But her woman's intuition had gone far below his idle words. "There is something wrong, Dave," she said. "You never looked like this before. Tell me what it is. Tell me, Dave. Perhaps I—can help."

Dave was silent for a moment, watching her. Suddenly it occurred to him that Edith Duncan was beautiful.

If she had not quite the fine features of Irene she had a certain softness of expression, a certain mellowness, even tenderness, of lip and eye; a certain womanly delicacy.

"Edith," he said, "you're white. Why is it that the woman a man loves will fall him, and the woman he only likes—stays true?"

"Oh!" she cried, and he could not guess the depths from which her cry was wrung. "I should not have asked you, Dave," she said. "I'm sorry."

They stood a moment, neither wishing to move away. "You said you had something that must be done at once," she reminded him at length.

"Yes," he answered. "I have to kill a man. Then I'm going to join up with the army."

Her hands were again upon him. "But you mustn't, Dave," she pleaded. "You can't fight for your country then. You can't only increase its troubles in these troubled times. Don't think I'm pleading for him, Dave, but for you, for the sake of us—for the sake of those—who care."

He took her hands in his and raised them to his eyes and drew his

face close to his. Then, speaking very slowly, and with each word by itself, "Do you really care?" he said. "Oh, Dave!" "Then come to my room and talk to me. Talk to me! Talk to me! For



"Yes," He Answered, "I Have to Kill a Man."

God's sake talk to me! I must talk to someone."

She followed him. Inside the room he had himself under control again. He told her the story, all he knew.

When he had finished she arose and walked to one of the windows and stood looking with unseeing eyes upon the street. For the second time in his life Dave Elden had laid his heart bare to her, and again after all these years he still talked as friend to friend. That was it. She was under no delusion. Dave's eyes were as blind to her love as they had been that night when he had first told her of Irene Hardy. And she could not tell him now. Most of all she could not tell him now. . . . She had waited all these years, and still she must wait.

Dave's eyes were upon her form, silhouetted against the window. It occurred to him that in form Edith was very much like Irene. He recalled that in those dead past days when they used to ride together Edith had reminded him of Irene.

When she stood silent so long he spoke again. "I'm afraid I haven't played a very heroic part," he said, somewhat shamefacedly. "I should have buried my secret in my heart; buried it ever from you; perhaps most of all from you. But—you can advise me, Edith. I will value whatever you say."

She trembled until she thought he must see her, and she feared to trust her voice, but she could delay a reply no longer.

"Dave," she said at length, "why should you take Conward's word in such a matter as this?" "I didn't take Conward's word. That's why I didn't kill him at once. It wasn't his word. It was the insult that cut. But she tried to save him. She threw herself upon me. She would have taken the bullet herself rather than let it find him. That was what—that was what—"

"I know, Dave." She had to hold herself in check lest the tenderness that welled within her, and would shape words of endearing sympathy in her mind, should find utterance in speech. "I know, Dave," she said. "The next thing, then, is to make sure in your own mind whether you ever really loved Irene Hardy. Because if you loved Irene a week ago you love her tonight."

"Edith," he said, "there is no way of explaining this. You can't understand. I know you have given yourself up to a life of service, and I honor you very much, and all that, but there are some things you won't be able to understand. You can't understand just how much I loved Irene. Have you never known of love being turned to hate?"

"No. Other impulses may be, but not love. Love can no more turn to hate than sunlight can turn to darkness. Believe me, Dave, if you hate Irene now you never loved her. Listen: Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things!"

"Not all things, Edith; not all things."

"It says all things."

Dave was silent for some time. When he spoke again she caught a different sound in his voice—a tone as though his soul in those few moments had gone through a lifetime of experience.

"Edith," he said, "when you repeated those words I knew you had something that I have not. I knew it, not by words but by the way you said them. You made me know that in your own life, if you loved, you would be ready to endure all things. Tell me, Edith, how may this thing be done?"

She trembled with delight at the new tone in his voice, for she knew that for him life would never again be the empty, flippant, selfish, irresponsible thing which in the past he had called life.

"In your case," she said, "the course is simple. It is just a case of forgiveness."

He gazed for a time into the street, while thoughts of bitterness and revenge fought for domination of his mind. "Edith," he said, at length, "must I—forgive?"

"I do not say you must," she answered. "I merely say if you are wise you will. Nothing, it seems to me, is so much misunderstood as forgiveness. The one who is forgiven may merely escape punishment, but the one who forgives experiences a positive spiritual expansion."

"Is that Christianity?" he ventured. "It is one side of Christianity. The other side is service. If you are willing to forgive and ready to serve I don't think you need worry much over the details of your creed. Creeds, after all, are not expressed in words but in lives. When you know how a man lives you know what he believes—always."

"Suppose I forgive—what then?" "Service. You are needed right now, Dave—forgive my frankness—your country needs you right now. You must dismiss this grievance from your mind, at least dismiss your resentment over it, and then place yourself at the disposal of your country."

"That is what I had been thinking of," he said. "At least that part about serving my country, although I don't think my motives were as high as you would make them. But the war can't last. It is unbelievable."

"I'm not so sure," she answered gravely. "Of course I know nothing about Germany. But I do know something about our own people. I know how selfish and individualistic and sordid and money-grabbing we have been; how selfish and incompetent and self-satisfied we have been; and I fear it will take a long war and sacrifices and tragedies altogether beyond our present imagination to make us unselfish and public-spirited and clean and generous. I am not worrying about the defeat of Germany. If our civilization is better than that of Germany we shall win, ultimately, and if our civilization is worse than that of Germany we shall be defeated ultimately—and we shall deserve to be defeated."

"But I rather think that neither of the alternatives will be the result. I rather think that the test of war will show that there are elements in German civilization which are better than ours, and elements in our civilization which are better than theirs, and that the good elements will survive and form the basis of a new civilization better than either."

"If that is so," Dave replied, "if this war is but the working of immutable law which proposes to put all the elements of civilization to the supreme test and retain only those which are justifiable by that test, why should I—or anyone else—fight? And," he added, as an afterthought, "what about that principle of forgiveness?"

"We must fight," she answered, "because it is the law that we must fight; because it is only by fighting that we can justify the principles for which we fight. If we hold our principles as being not worth fighting for the new civilization will throw those principles in the discard. And that, too, covers the question of forgiveness. Forgiveness, in fact, does not enter into the consideration at all."

"We must fight, not because we hate Germany but because we love certain principles which Germany is endeavoring to overthrow. The impulse must be love, not hate."

She had turned and faced him while she spoke, and he felt himself strangely carried away by the earnestness of her argument. What a wonderful woman she was! And as he looked at her he again thought of Irene, and suddenly he felt himself engulfed in a great tenderness, and he knew that even yet—

"What am I to do?" he said. "What am I to do?" "In the darkness of her own shadow she set her teeth for that answer. It was to be the crowning act of self-renunciation and it strained every fiber of her resolution.

"You had better go overseas and enlist in England," she told him calmly, although her nails were biting her palms. "You will get quicker action that way. And when you come back you must see Irene, and you must learn from your own heart whether you really loved her or not. And if you find you did not, then—then you will be free to—to think of some other woman."

"I am afraid I shall never care to think of any other woman," he answered, "except you. But some way you're different. I don't think of you as a woman, you know; not really, in a way. I can't explain it, Edith, but you're something more—something better than all that."

He had sprung to his feet. "Edith. I can never thank you enough for what you have said to me tonight. You have put some spirit back into my body. I am going to follow your advice. There's a train east in two hours and I'm going on it. Fortunately my property, or most of it, has dissolved the way it came."

She moved toward him with extended hand. "Goodbye, Dave," she said.

He held her hand fast in his. "Goodbye, Edith. I can never forget—I can never repay—all you have been. It may sound foolish to you after all I have said, but I sometimes wonder if—if I had not met Irene—if— He paused and went hot with embarrassment. What would she think of him? An hour ago he had been ready to kill or be killed in grief over his frustrated love, and already he was practically making love to her. Had he brought her to his room for this? What a hypocrite he was!

"Forgive me, Edith," he said, as he released her. "I am not quite my-

self. . . I held you in very high respect as one of God's good women. Goodbye!"

CHAPTER XIV. When Irene Hardy pursued Dave from the house the roar of his motorcar was already drowned in the hum of the city streets. Hatless, she ran the length of a full block; then, realizing the futility of such a chase, returned with almost equal haste to her home.

"What is the meaning of this?" she demanded of Conward. "Why did he threaten to shoot and why did he leave as he did? You know. Tell me."

"I am sure I wish I could tell you," said Conward with all his accustomed suavity. In truth Conward, having somewhat recovered from his fright, was in rather good spirits. Things had gone better than he had dared to hope. Elden was eliminated, for the present, at any rate, and now was the time to win Irene.

She stood before him, flushed and vibrating and with flashing eyes. "You're lying, Conward," she said deliberately. "First you lied to him, and now you lie to me. There can be no other explanation. Where is that gun? He said I would know what to do with it."

"I have it," said Conward, partly carried off his feet by her violence. "I will keep it until you are a little more reasonable, and perhaps a little more respectful."

"Irene," said Mrs. Hardy, "what way is that to speak to Mr. Conward? You are out of your head, child! Such a scene, Mr. Conward! That cow puncher! I always knew it would come out some time. Oh, if the papers should learn of this!"

"That's all you think of," Irene retorted. "A scene, and the papers. You don't trouble to even wonder what was the occasion of the scene, you're afraid of the papers, I'm not. I'll give the whole story to them tomorrow. I'll tell that you insulted him, Conward, and how you stood there, a grinning, gaping coward under the muzzle of his gun. How I wish I had a photograph of it!" she exclaimed, with a little hysterical laugh. "It would look fine on the front page." She broke into peals of laughter and rushed up the stairs.

In the morning she was very sober and pale, and marks of distress and sleeplessness were furrowed in her face. She greeted her mother with cold civility and left her breakfast untouched. She gave part of her breakfast to Charlie; it was a saving indulgence to her to have someone upon whom she could pour affection. Then she went to the telephone. She called Dave's office. Nothing was known of Mr. Elden; he had been working there last night; he was not down yet. She called his apartments. There was no answer. Then she tried a new number.

"Hello, is that the office of the Call? Will you let me speak to—" Her mother interrupted almost frantically: "Irene, you are not going to tell the papers? You mustn't do that. Think of what it means—the disgrace—a shooting affair, almost, in our home. Think of me, your mother—"

"I'll think of you on one condition—don't that you explain what happened last night and tell me where Dave Elden is."

"I can't explain. I don't know. And I don't know—"

"And you don't want to know. And you don't care, so long as you can keep it out of the papers. I do. I'm going to find out the facts about this, if every paper in the country should print them. Hello! Yes, I want to speak to Miss Morrison."

In a few words she explained Dave's sudden disappearance, stripping the incident of all but vital facts. Bert Morrison was all sympathy. "It's a big story, you know," she said, "but we won't think of it that way. Not a line, so far as I am concerned. Edith Duncan is the girl we need. A sort of adopted sister to Dave. She may know more than any of us."

But Edith knew absolutely nothing; nothing except that her own heart was thrown into a turmoil of emotions. She spent the day and the evening downtown, rotating about the points where Dave might likely be found. And the next morning she called on Irene Hardy.

In spite of all efforts at self-control she trembled as she pressed the bell. She had never met Irene Hardy; it was going to be a strange experience. Introducing herself to the woman who had been preferred over her and who had apparently proved so unworthy of that preference.

She had difficult things to say, and even while she said them she must fight a battle to the death with the

jealousy of her natural womanhood. And she must be very, very careful that in saying things which were hard to say she did not say hard things. And, most difficult of all, she must try to pave the way to a reconciliation between Dave and the woman who stood between her and happiness.

Irene attended the door, as was her custom. Her eyes took in Edith's face and figure with mild surprise. Edith was conscious of the process of a quick intellect endeavoring to classify her—sollicitor, music teacher, business girl? And in that moment of pause she saw Irene's eyes and a strange commotion of feeling surged through her. So this was the woman Dave had chosen to love!

No; one does not choose whom one will love; one loves without choosing. Edith was conscious of that; she knew that in her own life, and even as she looked this first time upon Irene she became aware of a subtle attraction gathering about her; she felt something of that power which had held Dave to a single course through all these years. And suddenly a great new truth was born in Edith Duncan. Suddenly she realized that if the steel, at any time prove unfaithful to the magnet the fault lies not in the steel but in the magnet. What a change of view, what a reversal of all accepted things came with the realization of that truth which roots down into the bedrock of all nature! . . .

"Won't you come in?" Irene was saying. Her voice was sweet and musical, but there was a note of sadness in it which set responsive chords a-tremble all through Edith's heart. "I am Edith Duncan," she managed to say. "I—I think I have something to say that may interest you."

There was a quick leap in Irene's eyes; the leap of that intuitive feminine sense of danger which so seldom errs in dealing with its own sex, and is yet so unreliable a defense from the dangers of the other. Mrs. Hardy was in the living room.

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First Gasoline Launch Appears on the Lake at the Country Club

Members of the County club and others got their first real insight this week into the sort of a playground that the club will develop into. The golfbugs have been so busy telling lies about their low scores that they haven't paid any great attention to the other features, but the motor launch which appeared the first of the week has caught every other attraction into the shade.

The tennis enthusiasts are getting interested, too, and if the weather keeps on running true to form, there'll be a crowd of bathers there some day. Work on the construction of the club house has already begun. (Continued in next issue.)

Get your supply of sassafras bark at Thiele's. 42

CHANGES IN OWNERSHIP OF TWO MEAT MARKETS

This week C. E. Simpson purchased a half-interest in the Sanitary meat market, Frank Melvin retiring. He has not yet decided what he will do in the future. Mr. Simpson has been conducting a meat market at the Stalos grocery, and will hereafter be found at the West Third street location.

L. E. Bliss has disposed of his interests in the Model market to his partner, E. K. Jones.

The senate finance committee added \$1,360,000 to the appropriation bill. This raises the total of the bill to \$22,860,000. Of the added amount \$746,000 is for the university. Of the sum added for the university \$350,000 is for a new gymnasium on condition that an equal sum be raised by subscription. The remaining \$396,000 for the university is for general expense and improvements. The other items added to the bill are for various state departments and for some special purposes.

Miss Beatrice Liedloff who has been in a critical condition for the past few days, is reported improving this morning.

When your watch is out of order bring it to Thiele's. 42

Dr. C. E. Kircher, field representative of Hastings college, is in Alliance attending the synodical convention at the Presbyterian church.

Lee Moore went to Hemingford Thursday on business.

Mrs. W. A. Zook of Crawford, who has been in the hospital returned home Sunday. She has made a good recovery from a very serious operation.

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London youth, having won a college degree, has been refused it because he lacked a birth certificate. He must prove he is alive!

Nations throughout the world seem more ready to throw down their arms than their arms.

As a professional definition, has "psycho-motor excitation" the punch of "brainstorm?"

If Kaiser Bill cuts his clothes to fit the world's opinion of him, he's not using up much cloth.

France, having no money, strenuously favors an allied loan of \$250,000,000 to save Austria.

Yaqui Indians are on the war path, but that will be taken care of. It is an automobile highway now.

Waterloo House Dresses \$2.50 to \$6.00. Highland-Holloway Co. 42

Herald Want Ads 1¢ a word.

SPECIALS FOR THE WEEK AT THE MODEL MARKET
Sugar Cured Bacon, per lb, 25 28 33 38 45c
LARD, Home Rendered, per lb. 16c
COMPOUND, per lb. 12 1/2c
SWIFT'S Premium Ham, MORRIS' Supreme, ARMOUR Star 35c
MORRIS' Matchless, per lb. 33c
POT ROASTS, per lb. 15c
HOME MADE SAUSAGE, per lb. 20c
ALL STEAKS, lb. 28c
PORK STEAK, lb. 25c
HAMBURGER, lb. 15c
All Kinds of Lunch Meats, Weinies, Bologna, Minced Ham, 22 1/2c