

# THOROUGHBRED

Cowboy Bill Knew as Many Tricks About

Love as the Visitors on His Dude Ranch

CAROLE surveyed herself in the full-length mirror and her pretty mouth pursed itself into a gesture of distaste. She was wearing a gray flannel man's shirt, a pair of men's blue jeans held up at the waist by a broad, brass-studded belt and men's high-heeled cowboy riding boots.

She didn't like the reflection the mirror gave back. Behind her she could see into the open door of her closet. Two smart and up-to-the-minute riding habits hung there. There was a full rack of latest-mode gowns and frocks and suits and sport costumes.

She eyed them wistfully, sighed, then resolutely tossed her head.

"It'll be worth it," she thought. "There never was a man like Bill Stevens. There never was anything in this world that I wanted more than his love."

Bill Stevens was foreman of the Silver Moon Dude Ranch, where Carole was sunning with a party of Eastern friends. He was tall and bronzed and handsome. He had a quiet assurance about him. He had a strength of character and an honesty of expression that marked him as different from the men Carole had been used to.

Casually she had asked questions and learned that he had a Harvard degree, but he liked ranching better than city life and possessed a yen for books.

Bill was different and she loved him. She knew it before she had been at the ranch a week.

And then Carole got the shock of her young life. Bill Stevens made it clear that he regarded her exactly as he did all the other duds on the ranch.

That regard was characterized by a certain reserve and seldom-betrayed contempt for Easterners who had too much money to spend and were never quite satisfied with the results they got from spending it.

It made her furious. Bill Stevens was the first thing she had ever wanted that she wasn't able to have. She tried humiliating him by treating him like a common servant. She tried flirting. She tried patronage, adoration, flattery. But all the devices failed.

In desperation Calore resorted to one final attempt—that of making herself over into the type of woman Bill Stevens and all Western men admire. Her first move was to dress the part.

RESISTING nobly an urge to freshen her complexion with cosmetics

By RICHARD HILL  
WILKINSON

Illustrated by

Henrietta McCaig Starrett

him, a sob catching in her throat, glad that he was near, wanting him.

Bill Stevens lifted her to her feet. He held her off, staring at her soberly, a faint derision masking his features.

"Well," he said harshly, "I suppose now you're satisfied. You should be. You succeeded in proving yourself a first-rate idiot by not heeding my warning. You've shown yourself as a silly, empty-headed little flirt, and you darned near cost me my job by foolishly getting lost when I was responsible for your safety."

BACK at the ranch Carole packed her bags. Tomorrow she would ask Jim Yancey to drive her to town in time to catch the first train going East.

It would be easy to forget. She had made a fool of herself, but now that was over. Bill Stevens had proved despicable. Discovery of his plan to frighten her and her friends had sickened her. Memory of his tryst with May Carlton provoked no feelings now but contempt. She hated him.

Hesitating before her mirror, she considered the green, shimmering crepe gown she had bought before coming West. It was smart and startling and had never been worn. Why not appear in it on this last night? she thought. Why not make the act her last gesture of defiance toward Bill Stevens and all that he represented?

Bill Stevens wasn't in the dining room. Carole lingered over her coffee, but he didn't appear. So at last she rose and stepped out on to the terrace. A million stars twinkled overhead. The eastern horizon was flushed with the silvery heralds of a rising moon.

A step sounded behind her. She whirled.

"You look more natural in that dress," Bill Stevens said. "It does something to you. Overalls and flannel shirt don't become your temperament."

"Indeed! Aren't you being a trifle familiar in offering your compliments to a guest, cowboy?"

"Perhaps," said Bill. He came closer.

"It was a dirty trick. I'm sorry. I thought you wanted a thrill, and that was my idea—"

"A very crude idea, Mr. Stevens."

"I made the mistake of thinking you were like that crowd you travel with."

"My crowd? What's the matter with them?"

"Well, they're different. Or you are, perhaps. They're the sort of people that would give a girl like you a bad reputation. You take the lot of them as they are, not a decent man or woman in

