

WHEN EUREKA WAS CAPTURED

By Agnes Morley Cleaveland

"I'm sure that I hear a calf bawling somewhere," insisted the Young Person who was new to the cow-country, and whose natural instincts were not calloused to animal distress. So when she heard a plaintive little bleat she would not rest until she knew the cause.

"Most likely you do," returned "Uncle Pat," who knows all about the open-range cattle business and is the court of last resort for the household in all that pertains to the proper administration of ranch affairs. "There are several thousand calves outside, and it is likely that one of them is bawling."

"This one bawls as if it was unhappy," persisted the Young Person. "I think it must be lost." She was standing in the door of the ranch-house looking down the cañon, the floor of which was thickly covered with chamiso, a species of shrub that grows dense and rank in that section of the Southwest.

"Its mother is probably around somewhere," "Uncle Pat" said soothingly.

"You will be kept busy if you try to follow up every bawl you hear."

But the Young Person was not satisfied, and without more discussion set off toward the sound as nearly as she could locate it. And down in the cañon bottom she came upon a tiny, red-and-white morsel of calf, so young that its spindle legs bent and twisted alarmingly as it walked.

With a glad little noise that sounded to the Young Person for all the world like the gurgle of a hungry baby when it sees its bottle, the calf came toward her. She stood still so as not to frighten it. When it came close enough she meant to grab it; but it gave one sniff and its nose told it what its eyes did not. That one sniff meant "stranger," and with a bound the little wild thing was gone, lost in the forest of chamiso.

The Young Person was veiled to the verge of tears, for the conviction was strong upon her that the calf was lost from its mother, and what its fate would be she did not care to think.

But what could she do? The foolish little thing couldn't know that she was a friend instead of the enemy that instinct assured it she was, and it ran from her with that wonderful speed with which a calf is born. But presently the Young Person heard a little bleat away over on the ridge to the left of her, and the sound seemed to draw her toward it whether she wished to or not. But the moment the calf spied her it was gone, lost again in the high chamiso.

This time the Young Person did stamp her foot in vexation, and half-turned toward the house, but again that baby call for its mother rang in her ears, and she again set out toward the sound. And again the little nose scented danger, and the shaky little legs did their utmost to betake their owner away from it.

By this time the Young Person was exasperated and more determined than ever. Persistently, from ridge to ridge, from bush to bush, she followed her quarry, always catching only a glimpse of it as it scudded away. At length the calf left the cañon bottom and sped up one of the hillsides skirting the valley. The Young Person followed at a walk. Under a piñon-tree the calf stopped for breath, and looked curiously back at this strange, awesome creature that haunted its steps, but it had no intention of permitting it to come too close, and away it fled to the shade of another tree a hundred yards away. It was beginning to grow tired and to need frequent rests. The strange thing came on slowly, but ever on, on! Wherever the calf ran, there walked the strange thing.

Nothing happened except that the pursuer was always coming steadily forward, and the pursued finally became interested. It waited until the Young Person was close before it ran at all. Once she reached out a hand to seize it, but after this the calf ran faster and farther than ever. The determined Young Person walked after it.

And after countless repetitions of just this performance the calf suddenly gave up. It stopped stock-still, and the Young Person grabbed it by both ears. Without a struggle the captured animal let itself be taken up in two stout young arms, and the long walk home was begun.

"Eureka!" called the Young Person as she appeared in the house door, her prize in her arms, its ears pointing interestedly forward, its legs dangling as if content to be off duty.

"How'd you catch it?" asked "Uncle Pat," eying the flushed face and disheveled hair of the captor.

"Walked it down."

"What? You caught it afoot?"

"Uncle Pat" never did anything afoot if he could help it. It was a novel idea to him, notwithstanding his forty years on a cattle-ranch, that anyone should essay doing anything with a cow-brute unless mounted on a well-trained cowpony.

"Do you mean to tell me that you've been on the trail of that calf for the last two hours?"

"I walked until it decided that I was inevitable. Then it let me catch it. Now let's get some milk, and I'll prove to you whether it is hungry or not."

Three years later there chanced to be a baby in the ranch household, and there came a day when the baby was in sore straits. The only milk-cow that was being kept up for winter use died and baby's rations were suddenly cut off. It was no simple task to get another cow, in spite of the fact

that thousands of range-cattle were running at large. In the first place the breed is one developed for beef and not milk, and in the second place the "breaking of a bronco cow" is an operation attended by much lassoing and tying and hallooing and scrambling on to fences, and all for meager results.

Then came the Young Person's hour of triumph.

"Eureka has a calf, and she's gentle. She will give milk enough for our baby and her baby too. Now, aren't you all ready to acknowledge that I did a good thing when I walked after her?"

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