Crooked Trails and Straight

By

William MacLeod Raine

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Adventurous and reckless, rather than criminal, and excited by liquor, Curly Flandrau and his chum, Mac, both practically mere boys, become involved in a horse-stealing adventure. Disposing of the stolen stock in the town of Saguache, Ariz., the band separates. Curly and his partner staying in town. They are awakened and told a posse is in town in pursuit of them. They elude their pursuers. Overtaken next day, Mac is killed by the posse and Curly made captive, after he has shot one and himself been wounded. The man shot is Luck Cullison.

CHAPTER II.—Cullison's friends, all cattlemen, determine to lynch Curly as an example to cattle thieves. With the rope around his neck he is saved by the intervention of Kate Cullison, Luck's daughter.

CHAPTER III.—His wound dressed, and further violence not apprehended, Curly is sent for by Cullison. He questions the boy concerning a notorious outlaw, Soapy Stone, real leader of the rustlers who had been Curly's undoing. Flandrau learns that Soapy Stone is Cullison's bitter enemy and exercises a baleful influence over the ex-sheriff's son, Sam, who has quarreled with his father. Cullison goes bail for Curly.

CHAPTER IV.—Curly rescues Soapy Stone from a bear trap into which he has stumbled, and discovers that the outlaw is young Sam's rival for the hand of Laura London. He gives Curly a note to deliver to Sam, and Flandrau and Stone set out for the latter's ranch.

CHAPTER V.—There Curly meets his companions of the rustling expedition and delivers Laura's note to Sam. Young Cullison believes Stone is his friend and says he will ride by him. Flandrau sees some move is being planned and becomes convinced it is again robbery. Sam leaves the ranch to go to Saguache. Curly accompanies him.

CHAPTER VI.—Eavesdropping at a meeting place, Curly hears Stone and his lieutenant, Lute Blackwell, arrange to hold up the train at a crossing known as Tin Cup, and after the robbery shoot young Cullison and leave his body on the scene, thus getting his revenge on the ex-sheriff through his son's death and disgrace. Curly is accused by Stone of being a spy of Luck Cullison's. They are separated, but part with the understanding that their next meeting will mean a fight to the death. Curly makes a confidant of Dick Maloney, cattleman, and they inform Luck Cullison of Stone's plot against his son.

PART TWO

CHAPTER I.—After an all-night session at the Roundup club, in which Cullison has lost heavily, there is an exchange of sharp words between Luck and a sheepman, Cass Fendrick, with whom Cullison has a feud.

CHAPTER II.—Saguache is electrified by the news of the holdup of express messengers, the bandits securing $20,000. Cullison pays his poker debts, and shortly afterward Mackenzie and Alex Flandrau, his closest friends, learn he is suspected of the express robbery, his hat having been found on the scene and he being missing.

CHAPTER III.—Kate goes to Saguache for a consultation with Mackenzie, Alex Flandrau and Curly. All are convinced of Luck's innocence. The sheriff reveals that besides the finding of Cullilson's hat, and his payment of his debts, Cass Fendrick had seen the robber and is almost certain it was Luck. Cullison is about to enter a homestead claim which will practically put Fendrick out of business.

CHAPTER IV.—Kate's shrewdness reveals how Cullilson had taken Fendrick's hat when he left the Roundup club, and suspicion points strongly to a frameup on Fendrick's part and to his being responsible for Luck's disappearance. The sheriff receives a series of notes turning on the "Jack of Hearts." Curly finds a cigar store by that name and secures evidence that the proprietress, Mrs. Wylie, knows what happened to Luck.

CHAPTER V.

A Message in Cipher.

While Kate listened to what Curly had to tell her the dark eyes of the girl were fastened upon the trembling little woman standing near the door.

"Do you mean that she is going to let my father be killed rather than tell what she knows?" Her voice was sharply incredulous, touched with a terror scarcely realized.

"I—I don't know anything about it," the harassed woman iterated.

"What's the use of saying that when we know you do? And you'll not get out of it by sobbing. You've got to talk. You've got to tell—you've just got to," Kate insisted.

The little woman shrank before the energy of a passion so vital. No strength was in her to fight. But she could and did offer the passive resistance of obstinate silence.

Curly had drawn from his pocket the newspaper found in the cellar. His eyes had searched for the date line to use as cumulative evidence, but they had remained fastened to one story. Now he spoke imperatively.

"Come here, Miss Kate. I believe this is a message to us."

"A message?"

"From your father, perhaps."

"How could it be?"

"I found the paper in the cellar where he was. See how some of these words are scored. Done with a finger nail, looks like."

This was the paragraph upon which his gaze had fastened, and the words and letters were scored sharply as shown below, though in the case of single letters the mark ran through them instead of underneath, evidently that no mistake might be made as to which was meant:

J. P. Kelly of the ranger force reports over the telephone that by unexpected good luck he has succeeded in taking prisoner the notorious Jack Foster of Hermosilla and the Rincons notoriety and it now bringing him to Saguache where he will be locked up pending a disposition of his case. Kelly succeeded in surprising him while he was eating dinner at a Mexican road-house just this side of the border.

"Do you make it out?" Maloney asked, looking over their shoulders.

Curly took a pencil and an envelope from his pocket. On the latter he jotted down some words and handed the paper to his friend. This was what Maloney read:

" ..... luck ..... prisoner ....Jack....of He....a ....R.....t.....s now ..... Saguache ..... locked up pending a disposition of his case. ....succeeded in surprising him ...."

"Read that right ahead."

Dick did not quite get the idea, but Kate, tense with excitement, took the envelope and read aloud:

"Luck——prisoner—Jack of Hearts——now Saguache—locked up pending a disposition of his case——succeeded in surprising him." She looked up with shining eyes. "He's alive somewhere. We'll save him now."

Curly spoke to her in a low voice. "You have a talk with Mrs. Wylie alone. We'll pull our freights. She'll tell you what she knows." He smiled in his gentle, winning way. "She's sure had a tough time of it if ever a woman had. I reckon a little kindness is what she needs. Let her see we're her friends and will stand by her, that we won't let her come to harm because she talks."

It was an hour before Kate joined them, and her eyes, though they were very bright, told tales of tears that had been shed.

"That poor woman! She has told me everything. Father has been down in that cellar for days under a guard. They took him away tonight. She doesn't know where. It was she sent the warnings to Sheriff Bolt. She wanted him to raid the place, but she dared not go to him."

"Because of Blackwell?"

"Yes. He came straight to her as soon as he was freed from the penitentiary. He had her completely terrorized. She gave him money, and he came for more—and more."

Curly nodded. He said nothing, but his strong jaws clamped.

"He was there that day," the girl continued. "She plucked up courage to refuse him what little she had left because she needed it for the rent. He got hold of her arm and twisted it. Father heard her cry and came in. Blackwell was behind the door as it opened. He struck with a loaded cane and father fell unconscious. He raised it to strike again, but she clung to his arm and called for help. Before he could shake her off another man came in. He wrenched the club away."

"Fendrick?" breathed Curly.

"She doesn't know. But the first thing he did was to lock the outer door and take the key. They carried father down into the cellar. Before he came to himself his hands were tied behind his back."

"And then?"

"They watched him day and night. Fendrick himself did not go near the place—if it was Fendrick. Blackwell swore to kill Mrs. Wylie if she told. They held him there till tonight. She thinks they were trying to get father to sign some paper."

"The relinquishment, of course. That means the other man was Fendrick."

Kate nodded. "Yes."

Curly rose. The muscles stood out in his jaw hard as steel ropes.

"We'll rake the Rincons with a fine tooth comb. Don't you worry. I've already wired for Bucky O'Connor to come and help. We'll get your father out of the hands of those hell hounds. Won't we, Dick?"

The girl's eyes admired him, a lean, hard-bitten Westerner, with eyes as unblinking as an Arizona sun and with muscles like wire springs. His face still held its boyishness, but it had lost forever the irresponsibility of a few months before. She saw in him an iron will, shrewdness, courage and resource. Out of ten thousand men there were none whose voice drummed on her heartstrings as did that of this youth.

* * * * * * *

Two men sat in a log cabin on opposite sides of a cheap table. One of them was immersed in a newspaper. His body was relaxed, his mind apparently at ease. The other watched him malevolently. His fingers caressed the handle of a revolver that protruded from the holster at his side. He would have liked nothing better than to have drawn it and sent a bullet crashing into the unperturbed brain of his prisoner.

There were reasons of policy why it were better to curb this fascinating desire, but sometimes the impulse to kill surged up almost uncontrollably. On these occasions Luck Cullison was usually "deviling" him, the only diversion that had been open to the ranchman for some days past.

From time to time as Luck read he commented genially on the news.

Blackwell merely scowled. Given his way, Cullison would not be here to read the Sentinel. But the brains of the conspiracy had ruled otherwise and insisted, too, upon decent treatment. With one ankle securely tied to a leg of the table there was no danger in freeing the hands of the cattleman, but his hosts saw that never for an instant were hands and feet at liberty together. For this man was not the one with whom to take chances.

Cullison read on:

"'Lieutenant O'Connor of the Arizona rangers left town today for a short trip into the hills, where he expects to spend a few days hunting.' Hunting what, do you reckon? Or hunting who, I should say. Ever meet Bucky O'Connor, Blackwell? No, I reckon not. He's since your time. A crackerjack, too! Wonder if Bucky ain't after some friends of mine?"

"Shut up," growled the other.

"Sure you'll shut up—when Bucky lands on you," retorted Luck cheerfully. Then, with a sudden whoop: "Hello, here's a personal to your address. Listen. 'The friends of L. C. serve notice that what occurred at the Jack of Hearts is known. Any violence hereafter done to him will be paid for to the limit. No guilty man will escape.' So the boys are getting busy. I figured they would be."

The former convict leaned forward angrily. "Lemme see that paper."

His guest handed it over, an index finger pointing out the item. "Large as life, Blackwell. No, sir. You certainly didn't ride herd proper on that opportunity."

"Don't be too sure it's gone, Mr. Sheriff."

"They've got you dead to rights. Read that personal again. Learn it by heart. 'The friends of L. C. give warning.' You better believe they're rounding up your outfit. They know I'm alive. They know all about the Jack of Hearts. Pretty soon they'll know where you've got me hidden."

"You'd better pray they won't. For if they find the nest it will be empty. Look out of that window behind you."

Luck turned. The cabin was built on a ledge far up on the mountainside. From the back wall sloped for a hundred feet an almost perpendicular slide of rock.

"There's a prospect hole down there," Blackwell explained savagely. "You'd go down the Devil's Slide—what's left of you, I mean—deep into that prospect hole. The timberings are rotted and the whole top of the working ready to cave in. When your body hits it there will be an avalanche—with Mr. Former-Sheriff Cullison at the bottom of it. You'll be buried without any funeral expenses, and I reckon your friends will never know where to put the headstone."

The thing was devilishly simple and feasible. Luck, still looking out of the window, felt the blood run cold down his spine, for he knew this fellow would never stick at murder if he felt it would be safe.

"So you see I'm right; you'd better pray your friends won't find you. They can't reach here without being heard. If they get to hunting these hills you sure want to hope they'll stay cold, for just as soon as they get warm it will be the signal for you to shoot the chutes."

Luck met his triumphant savagery with an impassive face. "Interesting if true. And where will you be when my friends arrive? I reckon it won't be a pleasant meeting for Mr. Blackwell."

"I'll be headed for Mexico. I tell you because you ain't liable to go around spreading the news. There's a horse saddled in the dip back of the hill crest. Get it?"

From far below there came through the open window the faint click of a horse's hoofs ringing against the stones in the dry bed of a river wash. Swiftly Blackwell moved to the door, taking down a rifle from its rack as he did so. Cullison rose noiselessly in his chair. If it came to the worst he meant to shout aloud his presence and close with this fellow. Hampered as he was by the table, the man would get him without question. But if he could only sink his fingers into that hairy throat while there was still life in him he could promise that the Mexican trip would never take place.

Blackwell, from his place by the door, could keep an eye both on his prisoner and on a point of the trail far below where horsemen must pass to reach the cabin.

A rider came into sight and entered the mouth of the canyon. He was waving a white handkerchief. The man in the doorway answered the signal.

"Not your friends this time, Mr. Sheriff," Blackwell jeered.

"I get a stay of execution, do I?" The cool drawling voice of the cattleman showed nothing of the tense feeling within.

He resumed his seat and the reading of the newspaper. Presently, to the man that came over the threshold he spoke with a casual nod.

"Morning, Cass."

Fendrick mumbled a surly answer. The manner of ironical comradeship his captive chose to employ was more than an annoyance. To serve his ends it was necessary to put the fear of death into this man's heart, which was a thing he had found impossible to do. The logic of circumstances was driving the sheepman into a corner. He had on impulse made the owner of the

"Not Your Friends This Time, Mr. Sheriff."

Circle C his prisoner. Seeing him lie there unconscious on the floor of the Jack of Hearts, it had come to him in a flash that he might hold him and force a relinquishment of the Del Oro claim. His disappearance would explain itself if the rumor spread that he was the W. & S. express robber. Cass had done it to save himself from the ruin of his business, but already he had regretted it fifty times. Threats could not move Luck in the least. He was as hard as iron.

So the sheepman found himself between the upper and the nether millstones. He could not drive his prisoner to terms and he dared not release him. For if Cullison went away unpledged he would surely send him to the penitentiary. Nor could he hold him a prisoner indefinitely. He had seen the "personal" warning in both the morning and the afternoon papers. He guessed that the presence of the ranger, Bucky O'Connor, in Saguache was not a chance. The law was closing in on him. Somehow Cullison must be made to come through with a relinquishment and a pledge not to prosecute. The only other way out would be to let Blackwell wreak his hate on the former sheriff. From this he shrank with every instinct. Fendrick was a hard man. He would have fought it out to a finish if necessary. But murder was a thing he could not do.

"Price of sheep good this week?" Cullison asked amiably.

"I didn't come here to discuss the price of sheep with you." Fendrick spoke harshly. "Are you going to sign this relinquishment?"

Luck's face showed a placid surprise. "Why no, Cass. Thought I mentioned that before."

"You'd better." The sheepman's harassed face looked ugly enough for anything.

"Can't figure it out that way."

"You've got to sign it. By G——, you've no option."

"No?" Still with pleasant incredulity.

"Think I'm going to let you get away from here now? You'll sign and you'll promise to tell nothing you know against us."

Luck's answer came easily and lightly. "My friend, we've already discussed that point."

"You won't change your mind?"

"Your arguments don't justify it, Cass."

The sheepman looked at him with a sinister significance. "Good enough. I'll bring you one that will justify it muy pronto."

[*Continued in next week's Banner.*]

The Good Is There.

The most miserable man in the world is the one who believes that nobody is to be trusted, that selfishness is the predominant trait in every life, that goodness is merely a matter of convenience. There is much, it is true, to discourage us as we observe the ways of the world and see how little of the spirit of Christ is in many of the things that happen. But that is only a superficial view; we cannot see deep into the hearts of men and read the motives that lie back of what they do. Yet it is motive that gives moral value to actions. We need to realize that there is more good in the world and in the hearts of men than appears on the surface. Such realization will save us many an hour of discouragement and many a pang of disappointment. We should never condone sin—nor should we ever overlook goodness. Even the worst of men sometimes have noble impulses.—*New Orleans Christian Advocate.*

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Timely Advice For the Home Pork Producer

The other day as we sat reading over what seemed a pretty good government article telling about the curing of meats in came Mr. E. D. Foster, of Antrim, so we asked him how many good ways there were to save pork products. His answer was that there were many ways. Then along came Mr. Arthur McDade, from Curtis, and we asked him the same question. He said about every man had his own method. As there seem so many ways to cure meats, and as we had this information from both North and South Bossier, we came to the conclusion that there must be at least one other good way—perhaps told in the article just read. Anyway, it's readable and sounds like it might turn out some pretty tempting hams, shoulders and sides, so we decided well to reproduce it in the Banner.

The reader will note that the article says: "A very satisfactory smokehouse can be constructed as shown in the accompanying sketch." The illustration referred to shows a barrel with perforated top and an enclosed fire-pit constructed of rock, cement, etc., the two being connected by an underground smoke-pipe six feet in length. The site chosen for this improvised smokehouse is on an incline, the barrel, of course, being of considerable more elevation that the fire-pit. We incline to believe such a "smokehouse" will never be generally used throughout the South.

The article as appearing in the *Weekly News Letter*, published by the Federal Department of Agriculture, here follows:

What is more inviting to a farmer than to come in from the barn on a cold, blustery winter morning to find on his breakfast table a dish well laden with home-cured ham, juicy, tender, and smoking hot? Why do not more farmers convert their crop of summer pigs into meat for their own use instead of selling it on the market and buying cured meats and high-priced products? There is profit in the transaction for the dealer and the packer, but none for the farmer, who besides sacrificing profit has also given away one of his most valuable privileges—that of growing and preparing his own food products.

TURN WASTES INTO PROFITS.

Any farm will support a few pigs. The waste of the farm may be profitably converted into a valuable food product through the agency of a few young porkers. If more pigs are raised and more pork cured than can be consumed at home there is always opportunity for its sale among the neighbors.

A great many farmers who raise pigs feel that the expense of curing hams and preparing pork products is too great, but some of the best results are secured through the use of inexpensive supplies and equipment. The tools and equipment necessary for killing and cutting up a pig are: A straight 8-inch sticking knife, a cutting knife, a bell-shaped scraper, a meat saw, a hog hook and gambrel, and an old barrel for scalding.

Many farms have an outbuilding while others have regular brick smokehouses in which the hams, shoulders and bacons may be hung and smoked. A very satisfactory smokehouse can be constructed as shown in the accompanying sketch. For a few pigs such small equipment is ample, but where many are to be killed and cured the equipment will need to be enlarged so that all the meat of a single killing can be cuerd at once.

GIVES DELICATE FLAVOR.

The smoking process not only helps to preserve the meat but also imparts a very delicate and desirable flavor, which cannot be obtained in any other way.

The meat for smoking, if brine-cured, should be taken from the brine, soaked in water for half an hour, washed, and hung in the smokehouse to drain. It should dry for twenty-four hours before the fire is started. Hang the meat at a distance from the fire so it will warm up gradually and not become too hot. Take care that the pieces do not touch one another.

For fuel, use green hickory, maple or any hard wood. Never use resinous wood. The time required to smoke a lot of meat is from thirty-six to forty-eight hours, but a slower and longer smoking is desirable if the meat is to be kept for a long time.

When the smoking process is complete the meat should be allowed to cool and then be wrapped and stored. It should first be wrapped in heavy paper and then put into muslin sacks. In tying the top of the sack the old string by which the meat was hung should be removed and the top of the bag given a tight fold or double wrap to keep out insects. The bag is then brushed with a coating of yellow wash and the meat hung up until needed.

Yellow wash sufficient for 100 pounds of smoked meat may be prepared from the following recipe:

3 pounds of barium sulphate.
.06 of a pound of glue.
.08 of a pound of chrome yellow.
.40 of a pound of flour.

THE SMITHFIELD PROCESS.

The celebrated Smithfield ham is like wine, the older the better, and it requires a different curing process. Smithfield hams are cured as follows:

The hams are placed in a large tray of Liverpool fine salt, then the flesh surface is sprinkled with finely ground crude saltpeter until the hams are as white as though covered by a moderate frost—or, say, use 4 to 6 ounces of the powdered saltpeter to each 100 pounds of green hams.

After applying the saltpeter, salt immediately with the Liverpool fine salt, covering the entire surface well. Then pack the hams in bulk, but not in piles more than 3 feet high. In ordinary weather the hams should remain in salt in bulk one day for each pound each ham weighs—that is, a 10-pound ham should remain ten days, and in like proportion of time for larger and smaller sizes. Next, wash with tepid water until the hams are thoroughly cleaned, and, after partially drying, rub the entire surface with finely ground black pepper, after which they should be hung in the smokehouse and the important operation of smoking begun. The smoking should be done very gradually and slowly, lasting thirty or forty days.

After the hams are cured and smoked they should be repeppered, to guard against vermin, and then bagged. These hams improve with age and are especially fine when one year old.

Tired

"I was weak and run-down," relates Mrs. Eula Burnett, of Dalton, Ga. "I was thin and just felt tired, all the time. I didn't rest well. I wasn't ever hungry. I knew, by this, I needed a tonic, and as there is none better than—

CARDUI

The Woman's Tonic

. . . I began using Cardui," continues Mrs. Burnett. "After my first bottle, I slept better and ate better. I took four bottles. Now I'm well, feel just fine, eat and sleep, my skin is clear and I have gained and sure feel that Cardui is the best tonic ever made."

Thousands of other women have found Cardui just as Mrs. Burnett did. It should help you.

At all druggists.

E. 87

A Dry World.

New Orleans *Christian Advocate.*]

Great reforms sometimes move very slowly at first, but the momentum of success carries them faster and faster toward their ultimate goals. The experiment of national prohibition has already proved such a success in the United States that the prediction is being freely made that England will be dry within ten years. Dr. C. W. Seleeby, noted British scientist, leading eugenist, and Chairman of the Birthrate Commission of England, who recently addressed the International Congress Against Alcohilism, made the following statement: "The day is coming when, as predicted by Sir Henry Crookes, America will cease to export food to England. Great Britain imports five-sixths of her wheat supply. On the day that America ceases to export food, England will go dry. On that day the destruction of grain and sugar for liquor will stop. You are making a collosal experiment in this country. Englishmen visiting here carry back stories of the workings of prohibition that will have their effect on the people. Lord Leverhulme, shrewd business man, came here a 'wet' and returned 'dry.' He said we could pay our debt in five years if we shut off our "drink bill." Moral sentiment may not be sufficient to bring about world-wide prohibition in a short time, but the economic factor will have tremendous weight with those who care little for moral effect.

The Innocent Suffer.

One of the greatest tragedies growing out of the late war is the fact that three and one-half million children in Cenral Europe are facing starvation, thousands of others already having died for the lack of even the bare necessaries of existence. It will probably always be so—that the innocent will suffer as the result of wrongdoings for which they are not responsible—but the Christian world is at fault if it allows that suffering to reach larger proportions that is absolutely necessary. It is estimated that $20 will save the life of a child until the next harvest is available. Of this amount, the countries where these children are can furnish two-thirds, leaving the other third, or $10, to be supplied from other sources. Many of our own people have passes through difficult times within the past four years—but starvation has not stalked among us. Fully to be commended are those agencies which are endeavoring to raise funds in this country for the relief of suffering little ones in devastated lands. The Christmas spirit now so evident will save the life of many a child that otherwise would starve to death.—*New Orleans Christian Advocate.*

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