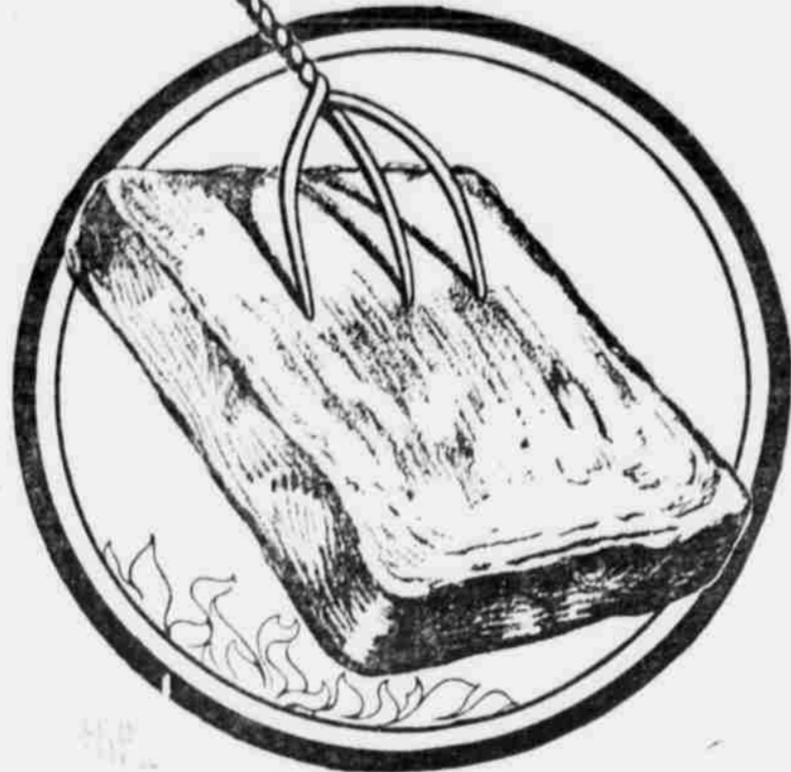


It's toasted

LUCKY STRIKE cigarette

It's toasted to increase the good, wholesome flavor of the Kentucky Burley tobacco. A regular man's smoke and delicious!



Guaranteed by The American Tobacco Co.

Crooked Trails and Straight

By William MacLeod Raine

Copyright by G. W. Ellingwood Company

SYNOPSIS.

Part I.

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.

"What about the boss?" asked Jake presently.

"Tell you more tomorrow morning." "Do you mean that he—that he may not get well?" Curly pumped out, his voice not quite steady.

Doctor Brown looked at him curiously. Somehow this boy did not fit the specifications of the desperado that had been poured into his ears.

"Don't know yet. Won't make any promises." He had been examining the wound in a businesslike way. "Looks like the bullet's still in there. Have to give you an anesthetic while I dig it out."

"Nothin' doing," retorted Flandrau. "You round up the pill in there and I'll stand the grief. When this lead hypodermic jabbed into my arm it sorter gave me one of them under-what-d'ye-call-em—and one's plenty for me."

"I'll hurt," the little man explained. "Expect I'll find that out. Go to it."

Brown had not been for thirty years carrying a medicine case across the dusty deserts of the frontier without learning to know men. He made no further protest but set to work.

Twenty minutes later Curly lay back on the bunk with a sudden faintness. He was very white about the lips, but he had not once flinched from the instruments.

The prisoner glanced toward his guards and his voice fell to a husky whisper. "Say, Doc. Pull Cullison through. Don't let him die."

"Hmp! Do my best, young fellow. Seems to me you're thinking of that



Say, Doc. Pull Cullison Through.

pretty late." Brown took up his medicine case and went back to the house.

CHAPTER II.

At the End of the Road.

Curly's wooden face told nothing of what he was thinking. The first article of the creed of the frontier is to be game. Good or bad, the last test of a man is the way he takes his medicine. So now young Flandrau ate his dinner with a hearty appetite, smoked cigarettes impassively, and occasionally chatted with his guards casually and as a matter of course. Deep within him was a terrible feeling of sickness at the disaster that had overwhelmed him, but he did not intend to play the quitter.

As the day began to wear out two riders from the Bar Double M reached the ranch and were brought in to identify him as the horse thief. The two were Maloney and Kite Bonfils, neither of them friends of the young rustler. The foreman in particular was a wet blanket to his chances.

"You've got the right man all right," he said to Buck without answering Flandrau's cool nod of recognition.

"What sort of a reputation has he got?" Buck asked, lowering his voice a little.

Kite did not take the trouble to lower his. "Bad. Always been a tough character. Friend of Bad Bill Cranston and Soapy Stone."

"I don't know anything against the kid, barring that he's been a little wild," Maloney testified. "And I reckon

we ain't any of us prize Sunday school winners for that matter."

As Buck turned to leave the bunkhouse the boy touched him on the arm. "How about Cullison?" he asked, very low.

But Buck would not have it that way. "What about him?" he demanded out loud, his voice grating like steel when it grinds.

"Is he—how is he doing?" "What's eatin' you? Ain't he dying fast enough to suit you?"

Flandrau shrank from the cruel words, as a schoolboy does from his teacher when he jumps at him with a cane.

It was then that Maloney made a friend of the young man for life. He let a hand drop carelessly on Curly's shoulder and looked at him with a friendly smile in his eyes, just as if he knew that this was no wolf but a poor dog up against it hard.

"Doc thinks he'll make it all right."

But there were times when Curly wondered whether it would make any difference to him whether Cullison got well or not. Something immediate was in the air. Public opinion was sifting down to a decision. Most of these men were up to the average for the milk of human kindness. They were the squarest citizens in Arizona. But Flandrau knew they would snuff out his life just the same if they decided it was best. Afterward they might regret it, but that would not help him.

Darkness came, and the lamps were lit. Again Curly ate and smoked and chatted a little with his captors. But as he sat there hour after hour, feeling death creep closer every minute, cold shivers ran up and down his spine.

They began to question him, at first casually and carelessly, so it seemed to Curly. But presently he discerned a drift in the talk. They were trying to find out who had been his partners in the rustling.

"And I reckon Soapy and Bad Bill left you lads at Saguache to hold the sack," Buck suggested sympathetically.

Curly grew wary. He did not intend to betray his accomplices. "Wrong guess. Soapy and Bad Bill weren't in this deal," he answered easily.

The foreman of the Bar Double M interrupted impatiently, tired of trying to pump out the information by finesse. "You've got to speak, Flandrau. You've got to tell us who was engineering this theft. Understand?"

The young rustler looked at the grim frowning face and his heart sank. "Out with it," ordered Buck.

"Oh, I expect I'll keep that under my hat," Curly told them lightly.

They were crowded about him in a half circle, nearly a score of hard leather-faced plainsmen. Some of them were riders of the Circle C outfit. Others had ridden over from neighboring ranches. All of them

plainly meant business.

"Think again, Curly," advised Sweeney quietly. "The boys ain't trifling about this thing. They mean to find out who was in the rustling of the Bar Double M stock."

"Not through me, they won't." "Through you. And right now."

A dozen times during the evening Curly had crushed down the desire to beg for mercy, to cry out desperately for them to let him off. He had kept telling himself not to show yellow, that it would not last long. Now the fear of breaking down sloughed from his soul. He rose from the bed and looked round at the brown faces circled about him in the shine of the lamps.

"I'll not tell you a thing—not a thing."

He stood there chalk-faced, his lips so dry that he had to keep moistening them with the tip of his tongue.

Dutch had a new rope in his hand with a loop at one end. He tossed it over the boy's head and drew it taut. Two or three of the faces in the circle were almost as bloodless as that of the prisoner, but they were set to see the thing out.

"Will you tell now?" Bonfils asked. Curly met him eye to eye. "No." "Come along, then."

One of the men caught his arm at the place where he had been wounded. The rustler flinched.

"Careful, Buck. Don't you see you're hurting his bad arm?" Sweeney said sharply.

"I don't aim to hurt him," Buck defended himself.

Curly's senses had never been more alert. He noticed that Buck had on a red necktie that had got loose from his shirt and clanked up his neck. It had black polka dots and was badly frayed. Sweeney was chewing tobacco. He would have that chew in his mouth after they had finished what they were going to do.

"Ain't be the gamest ever?" some one whispered.

The rustler heard the words and they braced him as a drink of whisky does a man who has been on a bad spree.

"Better do it at the cottonwoods down by the creek," Buck told Bonfils in a low voice.

The foreman of the Bar Double M moved his head in assent. "All right. Let's get it over quick as we can."

A sound of flying feet came from outside. Some one smothered an oath of surprise. Kate Cullison stood in the doorway, all out of breath and panting.

"What is it?"

They had not a word to say for themselves. In that room were some of the most cautious hearts in the territory. Not one man in a million could have faced them, but this slender girl dumfounded them. Her gaze settled on Buck. His wandered for help to Sweeney, to Jake, to Kite Bonfils. "Now look-a-here, Miss Kate," Sweeney began to explain.

But she swept his remonstrance aside.

"No—No—No!" Her voice gathered strength with each repetition of the



"I Won't Have It."

word. "I won't have it. What are you thinking about?"

"He's a rustler, Miss Kate; belongs to Soapy Stone's outfit," Sweeney answered the girl.

"Can you prove it?"

"We got him double etched."

"Then let the law put him in prison."

"He shot yore paw," Buck reminded her.

"Is that why you're doing it?"

"Yes'm," and "That's why," they nodded.

Like a flash she took advantage of their admission. "Then I've got more against him than you have, and I say turn him over to the law."

Kite pushed forward, rough and overbearing. "Now see here, we know what we're doing and we know why we're doing it. This ain't any business for a girl to mix in. You go back to the house and nurse your father that this man shot."

"So it isn't the kind of business for a girl," she answered scornfully. "It's work for a man, isn't it? No, not for one. For nine—eleven—thirteen—seventeen big brave strong men to hang one poor wounded boy."

(To be continued.)

Watch for the next installment.

Walk a mile each day to keep the doctor away, advises the United States public health service. Try walking to work every morning and see if it doesn't make you younger and healthier.



1919 Model

Cabinet Gas Range

AS nearly perfect as any range can be made. It conserves time, food, fuel --and money. Remarkably easy to keep clean with its white porcelain tray and splasher back. Enables you to do your cooking with a minimum of time and effort, giving you leisure for out-doors. A truly wonderful range for the money and thoroughly guaranteed.

Mountain States Power Co.

PHONE 58

Corner Sixth and Main