

Crooked Trails and Straight

By William MacLeod Raine

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Adventure and reckless, rather than criminal, and excited by liquor, Curly Flandrau and his chum, Mac, both practically more boys become involved in a horse-stealing adventure.

CHAPTER II.—Cullison's friends, all cattlemen, determine to lynch Curly as an example to cattle thieves.

CHAPTER III.—His wound dressed, and further violence not apprehended, Curly is aided by Cullison. He questions the boy concerning a notorious outlaw, Soapy Stone, real leader of the rustlers who had been Curly's undoing.

CHAPTER IV.—Curly recovers Soapy Stone from a bear trap into which he has stumbled, and discovers that the outlaw is young Sam's father, the band of Latta in London.

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 stick by him.

CHAPTER VI.—Eavesdropping at a meeting place, Curly hears Stone and his lieutenant, Lute Blackwell, arrange to hold up the train on a crossing known as Tin Cup.

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

CHAPTER II.—Saguache is electrified by the news of the holdup of express messengers, the bandits securing \$20,000.

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debts by heart, but he jotted them down on the back of an envelope and added them again.

Table with 2 columns: Item, Amount. Includes Mortgage on ranch, Note to First National, Note to Reynolds, etc.

Total \$30.50

Twenty thousand was the sum he needed, and mighty badly, too. Absent-mindedly he turned the envelope over and jotted down one or two other things.

CHAPTER II. An Initialed Hat. Mackenzie was reading the Sentinel while he ate a late breakfast.

Trying to do two things at once has its disadvantages. A startling headline caught his eyes just as the egg was at his lips.

While the citizens of Saguache were peacefully sleeping last night, a one-handed held up the messengers of the Western & Southern Express company.

Perry Hawley, the local manager of the company, together with Len Rogers, the armed guard, had just returned from the depot.

Luck had liquidated his poker debt since breakfast. Moreover, he had talked so casually that his visitor had no suspicion of what he was driving at.

Mackenzie attempted a little stenting of his own. "This holdup fellow kind of slipped one over on you last night, Bolt."

Red-headed Bob Cullison finished making the diamond hitch and proudly called his cousin Kate to inspect the packhorse.

"You never saw the hitch thrown better, sis," he bragged, boylike.

"It's fine, Bob," his cousin agreed, with the proper enthusiasm in her dark eyes.

She was in a khaki riding skirt, and she pulled herself to the saddle of her own horse.

It had been on Wednesday morning that Luck Cullison disappeared from the face of the earth.

Now it was Friday morning and Kate was beginning to wonder why her father did not call her up.

She did not like to leave the ranch just now, even for a few hours, but other business called her away.

She rode from sunlight into shadow and from shadow to sunlight again, winding along the hill trail that took her toward the Del Oro.

After hours of travel she came to the saddle from which one looked down to the gap in the canon walls.

The piteous bleating of a lamb floated to her, Kate dismounted and made her way toward the sound.

Kate pulled the boulder away, and released the prisoner. She took the soft, woolly creature in her arms.

Many people of Springfield and vicinity do all their banking business in Eugene when right in their home town they have a national, state, county, and city depository.

you didn't do it. I know you too well. But the trouble was Mackenzie did not know him well enough.

Mackenzie drifted to the courthouse. He found Sheriff Bolt in his office. The Scotsman wanted to discuss the robbery, but was shy about attacking the subject.

Inside of a quarter of an hour the sheriff had found out all he wanted to know about the poker game.

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his pocket the roll Cullison had given him two hours before.

"Get these from Luck?" he asked carelessly.

The cattleman stared at him, and the suspicion grew on him that he had been trapped again.

"Why do you ask?" "Because it happens the bills stolen from the W. & S. were all twenties."

From the office of the sheriff, Mackenzie wandered to the club in search of Luck.

Together they went in search of Luck. But though they looked for him all day, he was not to be found.

The last that had been seen of him Luck was walking along the plaza toward the hotel.

Before daylight the word was whispered all over Saguache that Luck Cullison, pioneer cattleman and former sheriff, was suspected of the W. & S. express robbery.

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continued on the trail that led down to the river.

Sweeney came out from the cabin and hailed her. He was a squat, weather-beaten man, who had ridden for her father ever since she could remember.

"What in Mexico you got there?" he asked in surprise.

She explained the circumstances under which she had found the lamb.

"I'm going to tie up its leg, and take it across the river. Some of the C. F. herders are sure to find it before night."

"Sho! What are you fooling with Cass Fendrick's sheep for?" he grumbled.

"It isn't a sheep, but a lamb. And I'm not going to see it suffer, no matter who owns it. I'll just ride across and leave it outside the fence," she said.

"Lemme go. I know the river better."

Sweeney did not wait for her assent, but swung to the saddle. She handed him the lamb, and he forded the stream.

Sweeney saw some one disappear into a wash as he reached the fence. The rider held up the lamb, jabbered a sentence of broncho Spanish at the spot where the man had been.

An hour later, Kate, on the return trip, topped the rise where she had found the lamb.

She turned at sound of the suave, amused drawl, and looked upon a dark, slim young man of picturesque appearance.

Her instinct told the girl who he was. She did not need to ask herself any longer what Cass Fendrick looked like.

He was holding out to her the blood-stained kerchief that had been tied to the lamb's leg.

"I didn't care to have it returned," she told him with cold civility.

"Now, if you'd only left a note to say so, it would have saved me quite a considerable climb," he suggested.

In spite of herself a flicker of amusement lit her eyes. She had a sense of humor.

She held out her hand for the kerchief, but he did not move.

"I don't know but what I'll keep it, after all, for a souvenir."

She ignored his sardonic mockery. "I don't let live creatures suffer when I can help it. Are you going to give me my handkerchief?"

"Haven't made up my mind yet. Perhaps I'll have it washed and bring it home to you."

She decided he was trying to flirt with her, and turned the head of her horse to start.

"Now your father has pulled his freight, I expect it will be safe to call," he added.

The bridle rein tightened. "What nonsense are you saying about my father?"

"No news, Miss Cullison; just what everybody is saying, that he has gone to cover on account of the holdup."

A chill fear drenched her heart. "Do you mean the holdup of the Limited at Tin Cup?"

"No I don't." He looked at her sharply. "Mean to say you haven't heard of the holdup of the W. & S. Express company at Saguache?"

"No. When was it?" "Tuesday night. The man got away with twenty thousand dollars."