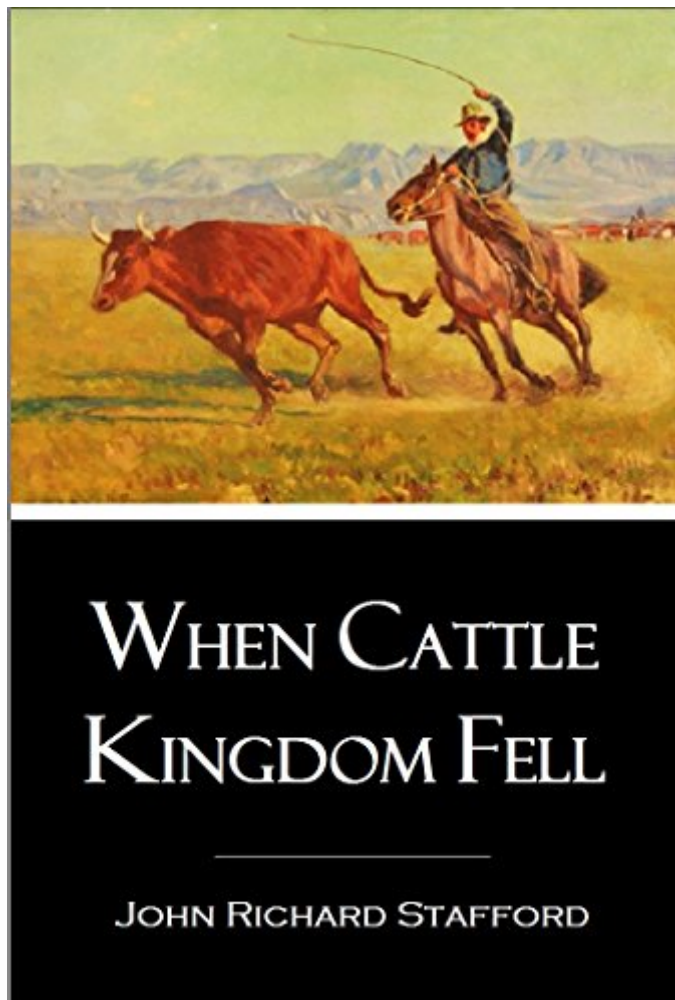


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When Cattle Kingdom Fell (1910)



Synopsis

John Richard Stafford (1874-1966) was a famous Western pulp writer who engaged in cattle ranching with father in Gray and Donley counties, Texas from 1896-98 and was employed as a newspaper writer from 1898-1900. His literary talent was passed on to his Pulitzer Prize winning daughter Jean Stafford. "When Cattle Kingdom Fell," is a very original story of wild cattle days in the vast plains of Texas. It is a thrilling tale of Western life and intrigue in the days when the freebooters of the plains fought to maintain their grip on the great ranges against the incoming settler with his barbed wire. This is the story of contest between the cattle men and the settlers in Texas— the cattle men trying to preserve large tracts of the pasturage of immense herds of cattle, and the settlers fencing up the land into farms. The adventures of John Burns the manager of Double K ranch, who was in favor of giving to settlers their legal rights, of Nell March, daughter of the owner of the ranch, of Warwick the leader of the cattle, interests, are given in an interesting manner, ending in the success of the settlers and the breaking up of the cattle ranges, and incidentally the happy termination of the love affairs of Burns and of Miss Nell. It is an early 20th Century Western story, written with all the emotional intensity and delicate feeling which this dramatic land of the West holds for the novel reader of today. The story overflows with love, hate, Jealousy, revenge and breathes the atmosphere where its people are fearless, reckless and unconventional. Originally published in 1910; may contain an occasional imperfection

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In the history of Western fiction, this remarkable book seems to have fallen through the cracks. Published in 1910, it is as important in its way as Owen Wister's THE VIRGINIAN (1902). It is also very clear that CATTLE KINGDOM had a very strong influence on Frederick ("Max Brand") Faust. Like almost all of Brand's later novels, CATTLE KINGDOM has a villain of Shakespearian complexity and energy... and even a Shakespearian name, Warwick. Warwick's right-hand man Chaves is a tortured and deeply conflicted figure, who completely switches sides early on in the novel. As in Brand's novels, the hero, John Burns, is relatively colorless and is kept off stage for most of the middle of the novel. The basic plot, big rancher versus "nesters," was used over and over in later Westerns, but here it is almost incidental to the incredible variety of incident; there's a big surprise for characters and readers every few pages. In modern filmscripts and novels by authors whose abilities are questionable, there's often a criminal mastermind who appears to have read the novel already; he conveniently knows what everyone is going to do, and everything that's going to happen, and so always keeps several jumps ahead of our heroes. Nothing could be more unlike what happens in CATTLE KINGDOM. Every few pages comes a dramatic plot twist which leaves the villain just as unprepared as the other characters, but the villain is a genius at changing his plans, or concocting new ones... he deals with the situation at hand, and bends it to his purposes in a highly efficient and realistic way. Typical of the author's surprises is a trial scene about a third of the way on in the novel, which completely unexpectedly turns into a gunslinging match in which a number of important characters shockingly perish! There is the usual completely mindless heroine, Nell, but her father and a number of other important characters are depicted as equally mindless, and perpetually baffled by what's happening all around them. Both hero and villain tug on our sympathies by undergoing incredible feats of physical endurance and stamina. And the villain thinks much faster than almost all the other characters, which one has to admire: typically, during the hero's epic journey from prison to home ranch, on foot and with no supplies, the villain changes his plans for destroying the hero (during the trip or upon arrival) at least twice, and possibly three times. Highly recommended in the unlikely event that you ever see a copy. Published by the very obscure B. W. Dodge, and as far as I know never reprinted, it is a rare avis indeed!

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