

The Great K. & A. Train Robbery

BY PAUL LEICESTER FORD

AUTHOR OF.....

"The Hon. Peter Stirling," &c.

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(Continued.)

"If there had been any use, I should have replied, 'The right.' But I knew that they would only think I was posing if I said it. Instead, I replied 'Mr. Cullen's favour has the stock majority in their favour, and would have won a fair fight if you had played fair, since you didn't, I'm doing my best to put things to rights.'"

"Camp cried, 'All the more fool!'—but Baldwin interrupted him by saying: 'That only shows what a mean cuss Cullen is. He ought to give you \$10,000 if he gives you a cent.'"

"Yes," cried Camp, "those letters are worth money, whether he's offered it or not."

"Mr. Cullen never so much as hinted paying me," said I.

"Well, Mr. Gordon," said Baldwin, "we'll show you that we can be liberal. Though the letters rightfully belong to Mr. Camp, if you'll deliver them to us we'll see that you don't lose your place, and we'll give you \$5,000."

I glanced at Fred, whom I found looking at me anxiously, and asked him: "Can't you do better than that?"

"We could with anyone but you," said Fred.

I should have liked to shake hands over this compliment, but I only nodded, and turning to Mr. Camp, said: "You see how mean they are."

"You see how mean they are," said Baldwin. "Five thousand isn't a bad day's work, eh?"

"No," I said, laughing, "but you just told me I ought to get \$10,000 if I got a cent."

"It's worth \$10,000 to Mr. Cullen, but—"

I interrupted by saying, "If it's worth \$10,000 to him, it's worth \$1000,000 to me."

That was too much for Camp. First he said something best omitted, and then went on, "I told you it was waste time trying to win him over."

The three stood apart for a moment whispering, and then Judge Wilson called the sheriff over and they all went out together. The moment we were alone Frederic held out his hand and said:

"Gordon, it's no use saying anything, but if we can ever do—"

I merely shook hands, but I wanted the worst way to say:

"Tell Madge."

Ash Forks, like all western railroad towns is one long line of buildings running parallel with the railway tracks. Two hundred feet, therefore, brought me to the edge of the town, and I wheeled my pony and rode down behind the rear of the buildings. In turning I looked back and saw half a dozen mounted men already in pursuit, but I lost sight of them the next moment. As soon as I reached a street leading back to the railroad I turned again and rode toward it, my one thought being to get back, if possible, to the station and put the letters into the railroad agent's safe.

When I reached the main street, I saw that my hope was futile, for another batch of cowboys were coming in full gallop toward me, very thoroughly heading me off in that direction. To escape them I headed up the street away from the station, with the pack in close pursuit. They yelled at me to hold up, and I expected every moment to hear the crack of revolvers, for the poorest shot among them would have found no difficulty in dropping my horse at that distance if they had wanted to stop me. It isn't a very nice sensation to keep your ears pricked up in the expectation of hearing the shooting begin and to know that any moment may be your last. I don't suppose I was on the ragged edge more than thirty seconds, but they were enough to prove to me that to keep one's back turned to an enemy as one runs away takes a deal more pluck than to stand up and face his gun. Fortunately for me, my pursuers felt so sure of my capture that not one of them drew a bead on me.

The moment I saw that there was no escape I put my hand in my breast pocket and took out the letters, intending to tear them into one hundred pieces. But as I did so I realized that to destroy United States mail not merely entailed criminal liability, but was



I turned across the railroad track.

off colour morally. I faltered, balancing the outfitting of Camp against State prison, the doing my best for

of Baldwin and the judge, and Camp held the torn pieces up to them, saying:—

"They've torn the proxies in two." "Don't let that trouble you," said the judge. "Make an affidavit before me, reciting the manner in which they were destroyed, and I'll grant you a mandamus compelling the directors to accept them as bona fide proxies. Let me see how much injured they are."

Camp unfolded the papers, and I chuckled to myself at the look of surprise that overspread his face as he took in the fact that they were nothing but section reports. And, though I don't like cuss words, I have to acknowledge that I enjoyed the two or three that he promptly ejaculated.

(To be Continued.)

CHAPTER XII. AN EVENING IN GAOL.

Before my ideas had had time to straighten themselves out I was lifted to my feet and half pushed, half lifted, to the station platform. Camp was already there, and as I took this fact in I saw Frederic and his lordship pulled through the doorway of my car by the cowboys, and dragged out on the platform beside me. The reports were now in Lord Ralles' hands.

"That's what we want, boys," cried Camp, "those letters."

"Take your hands off me," said Lord Ralles, coolly, "and I'll give them to you."

The men who had hold of his arm let go of him, and quick as a flash Ralles tore the papers in two. He tried to tear them once more, but before he could so so half a dozen men were holding him, and the papers were forced out of his hands. Albert Cullen—for all of them were on the platform of 218 by this time—shouted, "Well done, Ralles!" quite forgetting in the excitement of the moment his English accent and drawl. Apparently Camp didn't agree with him, for he ripped out a string of oaths, which he impartially divided among Ralles, the cowboys, and myself. I was decidedly sorry that I hadn't given the real letters, for his lordship apparently had no scruple about destroying them, and I knew few men whom I would have seen behind prison bars with as little personal regret. However, no one had apparently paid the slightest attention to the pony, and the probabilities were that he was already headed for Baldwin's ranch, with no likelihood of his stopping till he reached home. At least that was what I hoped, but there were a lot of ponies standing about, and, not knowing the markings of the one I had ridden, I wasn't able to tell whether he might not be among them.

Just as the fragments of the papers were passed over to Mr. Camp he was

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