

The Great K. & A. Train Robbery

BY PAUL LEICESTER FORD
AUTHOR OF.....

"The Hon. Peter Stirling," &c.

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(Continued.)

I lost my temper in turn. "I'd much prefer going to some place where I was less sure of meeting you," I retorted, "and, as for the cowboys, you'll have to be as tricky with them as you want to be with me before you'll get them to back you up in your dirty work."

At this point the sheriff called back to ask Baldwin if he was coming.

"All right," cried Baldwin, and went to the door. "This is the last call," he said, pausing for a moment on the threshold.

"I hope so," said I, more calmly in manner than in feeling. I have to acknowledge, for I didn't like the look of things. That they were in earnest, I felt pretty certain, for I understood now why they had let my companions out of gaol. They didn't care to risk hanging more than was necessary.

A long time seemed to pass after they were gone, but in reality it wasn't more than fifteen minutes before I heard someone steal up and softly unlock the door. I confess the evident endeavour to do it quietly gave me a scare, for it seemed to me it couldn't be an above-board movement. Thinking this, I picked up the box on which I had been sitting, and prepared to make the best fight I could. It was a good deal of relief, therefore, when the door opened just wide enough for a man to put in his head, and I heard the sheriff's voice say, softly:

"Hi, Gordon!"

I was at the door in an instant, and asked:

"What's up?"

"They're getting the boys together, and savin' that you shot a woman in the hold-up."

"It's an infernal lie," I said.

"Sounds that way to me," said the sheriff, "but two-thirds of the boys are drunk, and it's a long time since they've had any fun."

"Well," I said, as calmly as I could, "are you going to stand by me?"

"I would, Mr. Gordon," he replied.

"If there was any good, but there ain't time to get a posse, and what's one Winchester against a mob of cowboys like them?"

"If you'll lend me your gun," I said, "I'll show just what it is worth without troubling you."

"I'll do better than that," said the sheriff, "and that's what I'm here for. Just sneak while there's time."

"You mean—" I exclaimed.

"That's it. I'm goin' away, and I'll leave the door unlocked. If you get clear, let me know your address, and later, if I want you, I'll send you word." He took a grip on my fingers that numbed them as if they had been caught in an airbrake and disappeared.

I slipped out after the sheriff without loss of time. That there wasn't much to spare was shown by a crowd with some torches down the street, collected in front of a saloon. They

were making a good deal of noise, even for the West. Evidently the flame was being fanned. Not wasting time, I struck for the railroad, because I knew the geography of that best, but still more because I wanted to get to the station. It was a big risk to go there,

but it was one I was willing to take for the object I had in view, and, since I had to take it, it was safest to get through with the job before the discovery was made that I was no longer in gaol.

It didn't take me three minutes to reach the station. The whole place was black as a coal dumper, except for the slices of light which shone through the cracks of the curtained windows in the specials, the dim light of the lamp in the station, and the glow of the row of saloons 200 feet away.

I was afraid, however, that there might be a spy lurking somewhere, for it was likely that Camp would hope to get some clew of the letters by keeping a watch on the station and the cars. Thinking boldness the safest course, I walked on to the platform without hesitation, and went into the station. The "night man" was sitting in his chair, nodding, but he waked up the moment I spoke.

"Don't speak my name," I said, warningly, as he struggled to his feet, and then in the fewest possible words I told him what I wanted of him—to find if the pony I had ridden (Camp's or Baldwin's) was in town, and, if so, to learn where it was, and to get the letters on the quiet from under the saddle-flap. I chose this man, first, because I could trust him, and next, because I had only one of the Cullens as an alternative, and if any of them went snoring round it would be sure to attract attention. "The moment

was I saw the letters out them in the

station safe," I ended, "and then get word to me."

"And where'll you be, Mr. Gordon?" asked the man.

"Is there any place about here that's a safe hiding-spot for a few hours?" I asked. "I want to stay till I'm sure those letters are safe, and after that I'll steal on board the first train that comes along."

"Then you'll want to be near here," said the man. "I'll tell you—I've got just the place for you. The platform's boarded in all round, but I noticed one plank that's loose at one end, right in that high corner, and if you just pry it open enough to get in and then pull the board in place they'll never find you."

"That will do," I said, "and when the letters are safe come out on the platform, walk up and down once, bang the door twice, and then say, 'That local freight is late.' And if you get a chance tell one of the Cullens where I'm hidden."

I crossed the platform, boldly, jumped down and walked away. But after going fifty feet, I dropped down on my hands and knees and crawled back. Inside of two minutes I was safely stowed away under the platform in about as neat a hiding-place as a man could ask. In fact, if I had only had my wits enough about me to borrow a revolver of the man, I could have made a pretty good defence, even if discovered.

Underneath the platform was loose gravel, and as additional precaution I popped out, close to the side boarding, through long enough for me to shove the sand over my legs and piled the rest up in a heap close to me, so that by a few sweeps of my arm I could cover my whole body, leaving only my mouth and nose exposed, and those below the level. It made me feel pretty safe, for, even if the cowboys found the loose plank and crawled in, it would take uncommon good eyesight in the darkness to find me. I had hollowed out my living grave to fit, and if I could have smoked I should have been decidedly comfortable. Sleep I dared not indulge in, and the sequel showed that I was right in not allowing myself that luxury.

I hadn't much more than comfortably settled myself and let thoughts of a cigar and a nap flit through my mind, when a row up the street showed that the gaol-breaking had been discovered. Then followed shouts and confusion for a few moments, while a search was being organized. I heard some horsemen ride over the tracks, and also down the street, followed by the hurried footsteps of half a dozen men. Some banged at the doors of the specials, while others knocked at the station door.

One of the Cullens' servants opened the door of 218, and I heard the sheriff's voice telling him he'd got to search the car. The darky protested, saying that the "gentman was all away and only de miss inside." The row brought Miss Cullen to the door, and I heard her ask what was the matter.

"Sorry to trouble you, miss," said the sheriff, "but a prisoner has broken gaol, and we've got to look for him."

"Escaped!" cried Madge, joyfully. "How?"

"That's just what gits away with me," said the sheriff. "My idee is"—

"Don't waste time on theories," said Camp's voice, angrily. "Search the car."

"Sorry to discommode a lady," said the sheriff, gallantly, "but if we may just look around a little?"

"My father and brothers went out a few minutes ago," said Madge, nestlingly, "and I don't know if they would be willing."

"Camp laughed, angrily, and said, 'Stand aside there.'"

"Don't you worry," said the sheriff. "If he's on the car, he can't git away. We'll send a feller up for Mr. Cullen, while we search Mr. Gordon's car and the station."

They set about it at once and used up ten minutes in the task. Then I heard Camp say:

"Come, we can't wait all night for permission to search this car. Go ahead."

"I hope you'll wait till my father comes," said Madge.

"Now, go slow, Mr. Camp," said the sheriff. "We mustn't discommode the lady if we can avoid it."

"Bright-faced, happy, rollicking, playful babies, thousands of them all over the broad land, have in their bodies the seeds of serious diseases, and while they laugh and play are facing death. The mother, in the majority of cases, is unconsciously responsible for this sad state of affairs. Where the mother, during the anxious period, suffers from weakness and disease of the distinctly feminine organism, it is useless to expect a sound and healthy baby. Every woman may be strong in a womanly way, and have robust, happy children.

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"I suffered for years from displacement, debilitating drains, inflammation and weak back," writes Mrs. Bessie McPherson, of 38 So. Main St., Providence, R. I. "I traveled with my husband, and first noticed my weaknesses coming on when the jolt of the cars became unbearable. I stopped traveling but the trouble steadily grew worse. I suffered so that I became despondent and wished for death. I took only a few bottles of Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription and was permanently cured."

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"I believe you're wasting time in order to help him escape," sputtered Camp, so angry as hardly to be able to articulate. "If you won't do your duty, I'll take the law into my own hands and order the car searched."

"Nothin' of the kind," said the sheriff. "But when a female is in question a gentleman, Mr. Camp—yes, sir, a gentleman—is in duty bound to be polite."

"Politeness be — — —!" cried Camp.

"Git angry as you like," said the sheriff, wrathfully, "but — — — me if any — — — cuss has a right to use such — — — talk in the presence of a lady!"

(To be Continued.)

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I dropped down on my hands and knees.



Bright-faced, happy, rollicking, playful babies, thousands of them all over the broad land, have in their bodies the seeds of serious diseases, and while they laugh and play are facing death. The mother, in the majority of cases, is unconsciously responsible for this sad state of affairs. Where the mother, during the anxious period, suffers from weakness and disease of the distinctly feminine organism, it is useless to expect a sound and healthy baby. Every woman may be strong in a womanly way, and have robust, happy children.

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