A PRODIGY IN CRIME.

The Boy Who Wrecked the Central Train at Rome.

INSPIRED BY JESSE JAMES.

His Confession to His Sweetheart After the Attempted Robbery.

Extraordinary Features of the Crime by Which Two Men Lost Their Lives—Young Hildreth, Who Planned It, the Son of a New York Lawyer—His Longing for Adventure and His Wayward Life at Rome—An Instance of the Daring of His Character—His Three Accomplices and Their Pastimes—A Life of Jesse James That Inspired the Crime—The First Attempt to Wreck a Train Was a Failure. But the Second Succeeded.

ROME, N. Y., Nov. 23.—All things considered, one of the most remarkable crimes in the records of the State was committed when the fast mail on the New York Central Railroad was thrown into the ditch by a gang of robbers secreted in the swampy woods besides the track three miles west of this place last Tuesday morning. For it was not alone that so frightful a disaster as the hurling of a passenger train from the rails was accomplished; there are also peculiarities about the perpetrators of the crime and their conduct in connection with it that should receive the most careful attention of all who are in any way interested in the doings of criminals, and there were incidents in the plunge of the train down the embankment that are simply astounding.

Two years ago last summer John Watson Hildreth, son of J. Horner Hildreth, a lawyer, whose office is in the Stewart building in New York, arrived here in Rome. He said he had come to pass his summer vacation. Just why Rome was selected the young man will not now tell, further than to say, "I had friends here—not relatives—and I thought it a good place to come to;" but it is believed that he got acquainted with the place during some excursion, made tramp fashion, when he had run away from home before that time.

He was then but a little over fifteen—a lad in knickerbockers. He is described by those who remember him as rather small of his age when compared with boys of the region. He had hair that was unmistakably red and somewhat curly, and a pleasant, smiling face, and clothes of excellent material and stylish make, while his constant companion was a huge St. Bernard dog, "bigger than he was, and almost as tall when on all fours," that he led about by a big chain attached to "a wide collar with spikes on it an inch long." Rome has perhaps 16,000 inhabitants—it is a charming little place when viewed away from the railroad tracks—but it has some prejudices peculiar to the country. The stylishly dressed youngster who "towed a St. Bernard every place he went," and worse yet, "carried a big cane," was looked upon as a dude by about all the other youths of the town, and was in consequence avoided by them.

But young Hildreth was not the kind of boy to live without associates. He was of a cheerful disposition, usually kindly and considerate in his bearing, and withal a lad who was fond of athletic sports, and particularly of hunting and boxing. Moreover he had, for a boy, a liberal allowance of money.

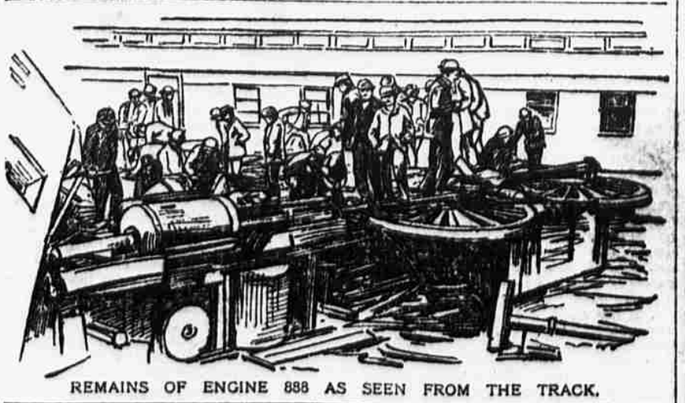
"I have made many friends since I came here," he said to THE SUN reporter. "They are the dearest I have anywhere."

And that was a right sorry fact for three boys in Rome and for a good many other people, too.

After this first visit young Hildreth came and went at intervals. No one—not even Hildreth himself—seems to know how many times he has come here or how long he has remained during any of his visits except the last. When questioned he said yesterday that he first came here four or five years ago, and added, "I do not know how long I have been here. It was just off and on."

He has attended, he says, the Wesleyan Academy at Wilbraham, Mass., for two scholastic years, one of which was since that first visit to Rome, but he is particularly hazy when he talkes about dates, and very little if any dependence is to be placed on what he says about his doings. Whatever the fact in this matter may be, he returned here early last spring and remained until about the 1st of October, when he went to New York. He was gone until Nov. 2, and then he again came back, and has since that time been about town constantly.

LOOKING TOWARD THE REAR FROM THE PASTURE.



REMAINS OF ENGINE 888 AS SEEN FROM THE TRACK.

YOUNG HILDRETH'S DARING.

During all his life here he has had no employment whatever, except for a brief time last summer when he worked in a canning factory near the canal. One of his fellow workmen, when asked what kind of a boy he was at the factory, replied:

"He was just like this. One day, when we were coming away from work all together, one of the boys said to him:

"'There you are, Jack, you're always telling what you ain't afraid to do. Now, jump into the canal and show us if you ain't afraid to do it.'

"'Huh!' he said, 'that's nothing,' and in he went, over his head, clothes and all, though he couldn't swim a stroke. He was close to shore, though, and got out easy enough. He always wanted to make everybody believe he could do anything.

"I tell you what kind of a boy he was," said another who knew his career in Rome very well. "He had money to pay for riding on the cars whenever he wanted to go any place—Utica or west—but he wouldn't ride like respectable folks. He'd just climb on a freight and hang on to the bumpers of a brake beam like a tramp just to show off what he could do, and because he didn't want to be like anybody else."

When asked why he remained here all this time, he replied that it was because he liked the place.

"But why did you not stay at home part of the time?" was asked.

"Because I had a stepmother. I could not get on with her, and father gave me enough money to live on away from home."

This is true after a fashion. His father's home is in East 138th street, New York, where he has a neat house and yard, and the boy has a stepmother who does not get on well with him. The father, too, did send him money to live on in Rome, but it was because he supposed the boy was attending an agricultural school here. This last fact is well worth noting, because it shows the ingenuity of the boy. Wishing to return to live here, he first professed a desire to go to California and buy a fruit farm. His father fell in with the idea, and when this much had been accomplished the boy said there was a fine agricultural college here at Rome, and asked permission to attend it in order to fit himself for the fruit-farm business. The father was glad to have him attend college, and then the boy gave his father an estimate in figures of the cost of the schooling—tuition, books, board, &c., all of which seemed perfectly fair to the father, and money was provided liberally. It was with this money that young Hildreth came to Rome early last spring, and it was on his regular allowance for school expenses that he has since lived. As a matter of fact, there is no agricultural school here, and, as said, he lived, most of the time, an idle life.

It is tolerably clear, however, that the boy has had during most of his career in Rome nothing worse about him than an insatiable longing for wild adventure, a longing which neither riding on the brake beams of a freight train nor hunting for rabbits, squirrels, or birds in the wood lots of the Mohawk Valley could satisfy. Chief of Police Hagerty says that he did not know the boy even by sight until last Tuesday, and that the only connection any policeman in town ever had officially with him was to send him to his hotel one morning at about 2 o'clock when he was found wandering about the street alone. The policeman thought "his actions looked suspicious," as if "he might be going to break in somewhere." Save for violations of the game law, something not considered a very serious offence up this way, he was never guilty of any crime so far as any one knows here.

THE FOUR BOY CONSPIRATORS.

A good deal of space has been so far devoted to this young man, but this is necessary, because it was his brain that did most of the planning of the frightful crime of last Tuesday morning. Just when the crime was first conceived has not yet been related, but where the idea came from is very well known, although Hildreth and all his associates strenuously deny the fact. The idea was conceived while trying to kill time that sometimes hung heavy.

As it now appears, Hildreth has had, during more than three years past, three young men of this town for his most intimate friends. They were Frederick Bristol, who says he was 18 years old on Sept. 16, but is said to be really a year older; Herbert Marshall Plato, who will be 18 years old on Jan. 4, and Theodore Melvin Hibbard, who says he was 19 years old on Oct. 2. These three, with Hildreth, have been together day and night for months past. They really formed a gang, but not a gang like those of New York. They did not drink, nor fight, nor destroy property. They were commonly found loafing about the railroad or canal, or in young Hildreth's room. Since Nov. 2 Hildreth has had room 63 at the Temperance Hotel. Both the proprietor and the clerk said yesterday that the four boys passed most of their time when there in playing cards and boxing, and that these amusements kept them up very frequently as late as 2 o'clock in the morning. There were two other associates of Hildreth's, but, fortunately for them, they were less intimate. One of these was Joseph Wilkes, a telegraph operator, and the other Edward Palmer, a harness maker. They occasionally took a hand in the card games and put on the boxing gloves.

All of this was innocent enough, but along with the card games and the boxing came one other pastime. The boys were all given to the habit of reading flash stories, and their favorite book was the life of Jesse James as issued in pamphlet form by a Chicago house. As has been said, the young men all indignantly deny this, but they deny too much. Hildreth said, when asked if he had ever read any such books, that he had never even seen any except in book stalls, but the detectives found two blood-and-thunder stories in his room that had been well thumbed. Bristol was the most indignant of all when asked if he had read such stuff, but the life of Jesse James mentioned was found in his room. That he and Hildreth were both entirely familiar with it was shown by their answers when questioned about it. Moreover, a boy who was a neighbor told the reporter about a conversation with Bristol about the robbery on the Kansas Pacific at Muncie, six miles from Kansas City, when the James gang got $30,000 worth of gold dust and $25,000 in silver, which had been shipped over the road.

"Yah! wasn't that slick?" said Bristol after going over the story to his neighbor.

In the book found in Bristol's room the part referring to this crime (chapter xxii.) was well worn. Two paragraphs that appear on page 129 are worth quoting:

After the car had been thoroughly ransacked, a shrill whistle again gave the command, and the robbers disappeared in the darkness.

"Fifty-five thousand dollars! A clean, quick job. It was to express the sentiments of a disgusted railroad official, a beautiful bit of work, but d——d expensive.

Another part of the book that seems to have attracted not a little attention was the end of the second chapter, and the reason for this will appear from another quotation:

He had again and again begged permission to enter the band, but was considered too young. He was barely sixteen years of age, with the smooth face of a girl, but the muscles of an athlete.

Determined to fight, * * * smarting under the insults he had borne, and burning for vengeance, he mounted his horse and sped for the guerrilla encampment. He was this time received with open arms and from that time on was the loudest, most daring, wildest member of the c[illegible] party.

Jesse James had begun a notorious criminal career at the age of sixteen. Hildreth had already wasted two years of his life! He was nearly eighteen and had never even killed one man. And then there was the tremendous fortune of $55,000 in gold dust and silver. "Yah! wasn't that slick?"

J. WATSON HILDRETH.

THEODORE HIBBARD.

HERBERT PLATO.

FRED BRISTOL.

PLANNING THE CRIME.

To the reader unacquainted with the habits and thought of boys who are late in disposition but easily stirred by tales of wild life, it may seem incredible that boys of 18 or more should be influenced to a criminal act by any such stories as these, but in this case the connection between the story and the crime seems beyond dispute. From reading about these crimes the four fast friends passed naturally to discussing them, and from that to planning one of the same kind was another step easily taken. That crimes of the sort were discussed, and that projects to wreck a train on the Central were made long before the final plan was carried out, is established by the testimony of both Joseph Wilkes and Edward Palmer, who were invited to join the gang and share the plunder, but refused to do so.

The skill with which the plans were laid and carried out shows plainly that these young men knew very well what they were about, and that their offence is not to be condoned on the plea that they were too young to be responsible. Having determined to wreck a train for the plunder, they set about selecting a place where the crime could be done with the least danger of detection. In this matter Hildreth undoubtedly took the lead, for they promptly decided on a place with which he had become entirely familiar in his shooting trips about the region. Moreover, one of his associates—Hibbard—says he was the leader.

SCENE OF THE ROBBERY.

Beginning about four miles west of the Rome passenger station the tracks of the railroad pitch down toward Rome for about a mile in what is known as the Wheeler grade. It is a pretty steep grade for the Central—quite steep enough to slow up by a half the long freight trains bound west, while the east-bound trains, whether freight or passenger, come down there a-sailing invariably. It is a pitch from a ridge down into a swamp. J. E. MacHarg, one of the old residents, told the reporter that when the road was first graded the builders had to erect a trestle across the whole swamp, using piles from 30 to 40 feet long, the ground was so soft. Eventually the road was graded up, of course, with gravel ballast, but so much had to be dumped into the swamp that the gravel is now between 30 and 40 feet deep beyond the foot of the grade. Naturally, as the work progressed, the roadbed was raised, and it now stands at least 15 feet above the level of the wet land outside the company's right of way, while the spaces between the roadbed and the fence that bounds the right of way has been scooped out to form a wide ditch, not a little suggestive of the irrigating canals of the desert regions.

Because the land along the road here was swampy it has never been cultivated. On the north side stands a forest that for nearly half a mile comes right up to the Central's fence. It looks like a second growth, but as a matter of fact it has never been cleared. The large trees have been cut out, leaving only a thick copse, composed chiefly of elm, with some birch and an occasional hemlock and cedar on the little knolls. Dim trails run through it in various directions, showing probably the favorite routes of gunners like young Hildreth, and of cattle that are turned in there in summer. On the south side of the track lies a regular woods pasture. The trees have been cut away for some rods south from the tracks within a few years, but the stumps are standing, and beyond them is a thick patch of woods, perhaps twenty acres in extent. The nearest house is one standing at the west, about half a mile away.

Here, then, was a lonesome stretch of road with a down grade, a steep bank over which to roll the train, and a handy forest on each side through which the criminals might make their escape, and that was the spot chosen. Although Hildreth has all along denied that he was the Captain of the gang, he has admitted that he was made the guide, because he was so familiar with the woods on both sides that he could lead his companions through the dim trails even at night. It is certain that he had often been through the woods there at night for various purposes, and it is likely that he and his gang went over the ground at night several times while preparing for the final task.

THE FIRST ATTEMPT A FAILURE.

Eventually they got ready for action, and on Sunday night, Nov. 10, began to carry out their plans, but only to make a failure through lack of knowledge about the tools used by trackmen. They went to the toolhouse of the Rome, Watertown and Ogdensburg road, and breaking it open stole a spike claw and two of the wrenches used in working the nuts that hold the fishplates to the joints of the rails. Carrying these through the outskirts of the town they reached the Central tracks and walked out to the eastern edge of the woods and there began work on the fishplates uniting two rails on the south side of the south track, that being the line of the east-bound passenger trains. But when they would have removed the fishplate they found that wrenches from the Watertown road would not fit the nuts on the Central's tracks, and although they succeeded in loosening one set of plates they failed to get them off, and had to give it up.

The track walker, on his way back to Rome shortly before daylight on Monday, saw the loosened fishplates, and, hastening to town, gave the alarm. The track men turned out and the joint was tightened up. The company's detective at Utica was brought over, and he nosed about for a day or so. He learned that some men had been discharged from the trackmen's gang, and he concluded that they might have taken the Watertown road's tools to loosen the Central's rail a bit just to create a scare, and all this for revenge, or tramps might have done it through inherent devilishness. That little episode made the real criminals chuckle with glee, and meantime they learned a lesson in mechanics by which they profited.

For several nights the track walkers and other railroad men are said to have devoted extra time to vigilance along the road, but when a week had passed in peace they eased back into their old habits. Hildreth and two of his friends who were constantly loafing about the road, quickly observed this and immediately prepared for action. It was on Monday night, Nov. 18, that they saw the old routine of track walking resumed. Hildreth, Bristol, and Plato were together at about 9 o'clock when it was determined to make another attack on the road, but Hibbard was supposed to be at his home out in the edge of town. In their haste to get to work, Hildreth and Plato hired a cab at the Arlington stables and drove out to Hibbard's house, only to learn that he had gone down town. Then they drove back again, shortly before 10 o'clock, and found him. Then all four went to Hildreth's room and remained there for a time—just how long nobody seems to know. Eventually they left the hotel, and, going by a roundabout route, reached the tool house of the Central's trackmen just west of the town.

THE SECOND ATTEMPT.

Young Plato carried a remarkable hammer. It had a double-ended, hand-made head, say 4½ inches long by an inch square in the centre. It had had a handle perhaps a foot long, but to make it handier to conceal Plato had sawed off the handle to a length of nine inches. Then he had taken a flexible strand of steel wire and secured it to the end of the handle to form a loop such as policemen have on their clubs. This hammer was used to break the lock of the tool house. There are dents on the doors, it is said, that the hammer fits. It is a little remarkable that the pounding did not attract attention, but luck favored them. Once in the tool house they took what is called a claw bar, used for drawing spikes from the ties, and three wrenches used for taking nuts from fishplate bars. Hibbard and Hildreth, one at each end, carried the claw bar, while Hibbard, who is the strongest of the gang, carried a wrench in addition. Plato and Bristol carried each a wrench.

This time they walked beyond the end of the woods for say 200 yards, stopping just above a little jog in the fence where the Central's land widens out a rod on the north side of the road. They had walked up the south track on which east-bound passenger trains run. They stopped where two rails were joined on the south side, overlooking the embankment that rose steep but firm from the ditch 16 feet below. There was no moon shining on the morning of Nov. 10, and the joint in the rail was located by feeling for the fishplate with their feet. Then Bristol scratched a match and examined the nuts that held the plates. The sight of the tiny flame made young Plato shiver. He felt as if watchmen and the police were coming in on him from every side, and, glancing furtively around, he said:

"I'm going back."

Up to this time Hildreth had been the leader because of his superior education and knowledge of the world, but the time had arrived when brute force was needed instead of intelligence, and Bristol was the man for the hour. Straightening up from his position over the rail joint, he said:

"I mean that goes back. I'll shoot him."

Plato was overawed, but Bristol with ready wit at once made a concession to his frightened companion and told him to walk down the track a couple of hundred steps and keep watch for the police and track walker.

This done, Bristol took up the long claw and tried to adjust it to one of the spikes that held a rail in place, but his strength was unequal to the work, for he is suffering from a chronic complaint that weakens and will eventually kill him. So he gave the claw to Hibbard, who was the brawniest of the lot, and once more returned to the task of loosening the bolts of the fishplates at the end of the rail, and in this he was assisted by Hildreth. Just at what hour they began work, and how long it took them, they do not know, but they think they were at it for two or three hours—perhaps longer, tugging at the nuts and bolts and pulling the spikes. Some of the bolts fitted so snugly in place that it was only by hard pounding with the hammer which Plato had brought and with the wrenches that they could drive them out. When they were pounding some sort of light was needed, for the blows struck in the dark proved ineffectual, so when the nut was off a bolt one boy struck matches and held the flame so that the other could knock out the bolt. The noise of the pounding made them shiver somewhat with apprehension, but they worked away, with only occasional rests, when they listened for sounds of an approaching track walker. Having cleared most of the spikes from the southern or outer rail, they tried the end of the rail about six inches over toward the ditch. They had already done enough to insure the destruction of the train, but they resolutely went to work on the other rail, and, loosening it, they pointed it like the first.

WAITING FOR THE TRAIN.

Then, throwing down their tools, they called Plato from his post as guard, and all went over to the north side of the track and gathered in a group in the corner of a jog in the brush where the Central's right of way broadens out. They were completely hidden there from the view of any one coming down the track and were right at hand ready to climb over the wreck in search of plunder. Each one had brought a revolver. These were now drawn and cocked, and that done nothing remained but to await the approach of the train.

"Then we were on pins and needles," says Hibbard, but of all that they said while they stood there, only one sentence has been related. Plato was the one to speak.

"It is past the middle of the month and we've got to kill some one before the end of November," he said.

At that time the fast mail from the West, a train that consisted of four long white mail cars with three heavy sleepers behind them, was flying along, drawn by engine 888, one of the huge locomotives that at the head of the Empire State Express have set the pace for speed to all the world. Nathan M. Hagar, who for forty-two years had served the road faithfully, stood at the throttle, while C. Wagner, the stocky fireman, bent to the task of spraying the coal over the white-hot firebox. Through Oneida, Verona, and Green's Corners they drove exactly on time, and three minutes later the long train passed the crest and went roaring down the long grade.

The glare of the headlight turned the rails into two white lines of steel, on which the eyes of the old engineer rested steadily and composedly until more than half way to the bottom, and then the break was seen. With a warning cry he shoved in the throttle, hauled over the reversing lever, and once more grasped the throttle. The fireman straightened up, glanced ahead through the window, saw the break in the rails, and sprang through the door of the cab. There he turned to glance back at his chief, saw him standing erect at his post, and then jumped for his life.

THE WRECK.

An instant later the huge locomotive, tender and all, pitched end over end down the bank, and lifting a long mail car from the track, hurled it through the air, to land it at last 300 feet beyond the spot where it left the rails. The tender, breaking the links that held it to the engine and car, fell forty feet short of the first car, while the two cars that followed piled themselves in a V about the engine, and the rest were strung out along the embankment, half turned on their sides, save the last sleeper, which did not leave the rails.

From their place over in the jog in the brush the four wreckers gazed in awe as the cars rose in the air and piled up, a smoking mass, and then, while yet the roar and crash were ringing in their ears, they turned toward the brush and fled away in terror.

The moment the cars ceased their motions the cries of wounded and the shouts of those imprisoned in the wreck arose. The brakemen and such employees of the mail cars as were uninjured quickly got clear of the wreck and ran to the aid of those less fortunate and tried to put out the fires that here and there imperiled the helpless victims. Then a brakeman ran back to the head of the grade to stop the next train, while another ran down to Rome to summon help. Physicians were routed from their beds, carriages were called out, wrecking trains were summoned, and in audaciously short time—certainly within an hour—hundreds of people had gathered about the ruins, and everything that could mitigate the sufferings of the injured was being done. It is worth noting here that some women who had been tossed from their berths by the wreck had instantly recovered their self-possession and were among the first to go to the assistance of those who had been wounded.

Fireman Wagner was one of the first of the wounded reached by the rescuers. He had landed between the tracks, and although badly cut about the head, his first thought was for Engineer Hagar, and some of the men were sent to look for him, but their search was at that time vain. While they searched about the cab of the locomotive where he was supposed to be, they found near the end of the second mail car the mangled body of a tramp who had been riding there, and near at hand was another tramp with one foot cut off.

Daylight came while the work of bandaging the wounded and sending them away in carriages was going on, and then a man who was walking back along the wreck, on turning aside to avoid the trucks of one of the mail cars which had been thrown fifty feet from the track, almost stepped on a body that had been partly buried in the soft earth by the truck falling on it. He called for help, and a trainman who came instantly recognized the veteran engineer, Nathan M. Hagar. The story of his death was easily told then. As the engine pitched end over end down the bank, Hagar was thrown from his post out into the field, and the truck that came flying through the air after him landed on his breast and instantly crushed out his life.

How the passengers were cared for and sent on their journey again, and how the wreckers came to mend the track and clear away the débris need not be detailed here, for there was nothing novel in that part of the story. But with the first wrecking train came the detectives, and the story of the identification and arrest of the wreckers is well worth telling.

VIEW OF THE WRECK FROM THE PASTURE.

A BROKEN MAIL CAR.

ARREST OF HILDRETH.

It was plain from the first that the wreck was the work of criminals and not an accident. The fish plates, with the bolts and nuts intact, were lying near by, where they had been dropped by the wreckers, and so were the tools, while the rails were intact, though bent, and the spikes that had been drawn from the ties were scattered about. John Latham is the chief of the New York Central's detectives in that region. On his arrival at Rome he first summoned to his aid Chief of Police Hagerty and as many of the other policemen as could be put on the work. Reaching the place of the disaster Latham found an amateur detective, Henry C. Arnott, already looking for traces of the wreckers. Arnott was in the woods on the north side of the tracks, and while walking along saw a soft black felt hat with a white lining lying on the ground under a bushy sapling. He picked it up and handed it to Latham, who was then looking the ground over inside of the fence. Latham instantly looked inside of the hat, and there he saw rudely but distinctly written with a lead pencil in Roman capitals the name "Hildreth."

With this excellent clue in hand, Latham hurried back to the city, where a railroad employee recognized the name as that of the young man who had been loafing about the station so much since last spring. Then Patrolman Keating's attention was called to the hat, and he at once said he knew the young man very well. It was then about 8 o'clock. The policeman and the detective went at once to the hotel where Hildreth lived, and learned that, after breakfast, he had gone up to the wreck. So they started up the track, and when rather more than half way there met and arrested him.

He protested his innocence, and continued to do so until they had taken him to Police Headquarters. Here it was observed that he had a scratch on his nose and a bruise on his forehead. Chief Hagerty concluded that these wounds were made by the brush when the hat was lost, and when Hildreth was questioned on this theory he concluded that his best plan was to own up.

"You got that scratch in the brush; I can see that," said the Chief. "Now tell me who were in this job with you."

With no further hesitation Hildreth named Bristol, Plato, and Hibbard, and thereafter went into most of the details which have been so far related.

It was during the talk with the officers following the confession that a bit of youthful romance and the one bright spot in Hildreth's character were brought out. He was telling of his movements after fleeing from the frightful scene he had witnessed. He, with Plato and Hibbard, had left Bristol behind because the latter was not strong enough to run swiftly, and on reaching the town these three had separated and sneaked to their homes. But Hildreth was unable to remain in his room, and so out he got and went up to the home of Miss Celia Perryn, his sweetheart. As he told of going to her his eyes filled with tears and his voice became so broken that he could not go on for a minute.

HIS CONFESSION TO HIS SWEETHEART.

Miss Celia Perryn is a sweet-faced, slender little lady, with a disposition and a habit of thought as gentle and as innocent as any young woman in Rome. It is the testimony of every one who knows her that she is as nearly ignorant of the wickedness of the world as any girl of 20 could be in a town like this. That Hildreth should have been attracted as he was by a girl of this character is one of the curious features of his strange career.

In his troubled state of mind he had gone to the home of this girl, and there made a confession as explicit as that made to the police. The girl saw that he was pale and agitated, that his trousers and shoes were muddy, although he was usually extremely neat, and that he wore a hat which she recognized as the property of Hibbard.

"Jack," she said, "you act strangely; what has happened?"

"Oh, nothing at all," he replied, with an effort to appear cheerful; but the girl's eyes saw then that his face was scratched, and calling his attention to his condition she asked him what had happened.

"Celia," he replied, "it is terrible, I can't tell you;" but after a little he continued: "An awful thing has happened. The fast mail has been wrecked and I am implicated. I led the boys."

"Who was with you?" asked the girl.

"That I cannot tell you," he replied.

"I think I can guess one," said the girl, "Theodore Hibbard."

"Yes," said he, "you recognize his hat, which I am wearing."

Then he told how the rails were turned, denied that he had done the turning, said he had acted as guide merely, and added that it had been done that the gang might rob the dead. The girl did not comprehend what he was saying, but asked if much damage had been done and if the train had gone on yet.

"Gone on?" said he. "Celia, if you could see that mass of wreckage that lies in the ditch." A little later he added that he had lost his hat in the brush, that his name was in it, and that he was sure to be arrested, and he ended by asking her to telegraph to his father as soon as she heard that he was in custody. This the girl did.

When the reporter called on the girl he found her at work in MacHarg's fish-reel factory. She was greatly agitated when spoken to about Hildreth, but told in a low voice what has been related here, and then added:

"I can never believe in any one again. He was always so gentle and kind hearted and considerate. I thought he was incapable of any cruelty or wickedness whatever."

HIS COMPANIONS ALSO ARRESTED.

The arrest of the others was also interesting. While looking about the wreck Detective Latham discovered Plato's hammer, and he brought it to town. It was identified by Hildreth, and Chief Hagerty drove off to get Plato. He found the young man sitting by the front window of his home in Henry street partly dressed. A pair of shoes stood near by. They had recently been cleaned carefully. A pair of trousers had also been cleaned and pressed. When told that he was wanted Plato put on the trousers and shoes and went along. He at first denied any connection with the crime, but at the station confessed, as Hildreth had done.

Hibbard and Bristol were yet to be captured. Haggerty went to Hibbard's home in North Jay street, but Hibbard had gone away. Mrs. Hibbard, the young man's mother, pointed out the room he occupied, and Haggerty found both trousers and shoes wet and muddy. Hibbard had gone away picking up bones for sale to a fertilizer factory, and was so employed when arrested. He at once confessed and told the story as the other two had done, denying, like each of them, any active participation in the crime. Each of the three said he had been on guard while the others worked, but Hibbard admitted that he had scratched matches to furnish light to Bristol in his work.

Bristol was found in his room at home, but unlike the rest he stoutly denied having been out of the house during the night, and from this denial he has never wavered. He had had the benefit of the advice of an elder brother. Policeman Keating went after Bristol, and, when he had told his errand, the brother said:

"You've been out all night. Now, if you've got into trouble keep your mouth shut and I'll go down and see Joe Sayles." Sayles is a lawyer.

When all had been arrested and the three had told their stories all four were put in the general corridor of the county jail. On Wednesday morning Hildreth and Plato were taken up to the scene of the wreck to point out the place where they had thrown their revolvers when they fled through the woods, as they said they had done. A long search was made, but the weapons were not found. It is supposed that some of the people who were rambling through the woods on Tuesday found the weapons and carried them off. Hildreth had had a new revolver of 38-calibre, which he brought from New York when he last returned from the metropolis, and all of the other revolvers are said to have been large and valuable weapons. But Plato, when unable to remember where he dropped the pistol, took a detective to a place where the tools stolen from the Watertown Railroad tool house had been buried and they were recovered.

The boys, having been turned loose together in the jail, fell to playing cards and singing in the most cheerful fashion. They were eventually visited by Lawyer Sayles, and thereafter they were not only cheerful but defiant as well. They denied that they had been in at the wreck, and declared that the confessions had been wrung from them by force. Hildreth told the reporter that the hat found at the wreck had been stolen from the hotel on the preceding Sunday night, and when told of what he had confessed to his sweetheart, said she was mistaken. When asked how he had been terrorized, he said that Detective Latham had said:

"If I'd caught you at the wreck I'd shot you, and I've a notion to shoot you now."

"How were you frightened?" was asked of Plato.

"Why, the Chief took that hammer you saw written with a lead pencil in Roman capitals the name 'Hildreth,'" said he.

LOOKING TOWARD REAR OF THE WRECK FROM THE BANK.

PREVIOUS HISTORY OF BRISTOL, HIBBARD, AND PLATO.

Some interesting facts in connection with the previous history of Bristol, Hibbard, and Plato remain to be told. Both Bristol and Hibbard are the sons of liquor sellers, and Plato has been a bartender. Plato comes of bad stock. His father, George Daniel Plato, was well known in the town of Western as Panther Plato. It is said that he used to terrorize the weaker-minded farmers by yelling like a panther at night in the woods and then carrying off young and small stock. He was eventually convicted of stealing and butchering a steer, and was sent to State prison for a year in consequence. Plato's mother died eight years ago, and he has since lived with his grandmother. He was for over two years employed at Stanwix Hall Hotel here, at first as bell boy and then as barkeeper. At the hotel the clerk said the young man was discharged for getting drunk twice.

Hibbard's father was for many years a hotel keeper at Westmoreland, and, although the people refused continually to elect excisemen who would give him a license, he sold, according to District Attorney Kloch, who knows the family well, liquors all the time he was in the business. The boy, Theodore, was, so to speak, reared behind an unlicensed bar.

Bristol's father keeps a saloon in Rome. It is not the resort of the best people in town, but his mother is described as a very good woman. His brother is one of the husbands of Lizzie Norton, a notorious woman, under indictment for bigamy. Another husband of the woman is Dacy, the pugilist.

As most of the readers of THE SUN know, the crime with which these young men are charged is that of causing the death of two men while they were committing a felony—that is to say, with murder in the first degree. District Attorney Kloch is fully impressed with the enormity of the crime that has been committed, and with the necessity of punishing the criminals to the full extent of the law in order that such a crime may not be repeated in this region again, but if one may judge of the temper of the jury that will try the prisoners by what is said on the streets of Rome, the severest verdict that is to be expected is that of murder in the second degree. Although all the young men are of an age when legally and actually responsible for all they may do, it is believed that the sympathies of the jury will be excited enough to save them from the electric chair.

O'SULLIVAN'S ELECTION CASE.

He Contests the Return of Charles R. Page, Who Claims a Majority of 21.

Argument was heard by Justice Ingraham of the Supreme Court yesterday on the application of Senator Thomas C. O'Sullivan of the Seventeenth district to compel the Board of County Canvassers to count a number of ballots marked for identification for him. Charles R. Page contends that he was elected by a majority of 21. O'Sullivan says that if certain ballots which are thrown out are counted for him he will be the winner. The stay accompanying the order to show cause has prevented the Board of County Canvassers from proceeding with their work. Asa Bird Gardiner appeared for O'Sullivan, and Page was represented by Abe Gruber.

Lawyer Gruber objected technically to the proceeding because the order had been directed against the Board of County Canvassers, and Page, who was most interested in the decision of the Judge, had not been made a party. He said that Page had not even seen the papers served in the case. He made the further point that the court had not the power to decide on what were and what were not defective ballots, and said that Justice Cullen had so decided. The remedy of O'Sullivan, he said, would be to bring quo warranto proceedings to test the right of Page to the office. As it was required that the Board should certify the result of their inquiry to the Secretary of State on Monday, he said it was necessary that they should not be delayed, and that O'Sullivan could obtain all the rights he had without such a summary proceeding.

Justice Ingraham admitted that he had not digested the new ballot law, but he said he understood that it authorized the present proceeding. He suggested that the hearing be adjourned until Monday, so he could go over the law.

"You will want several days to read it over and understand it?" interposed Mr. Gardiner.

"It is quite probable that I never will be able to understand it," said the Judge.

Mr. Gardiner said that there were forty-seven alleged defective ballots which had been thrown out, yet should have been counted for O'Sullivan.

"I will not interfere at all," said Justice Ingraham, "unless power is given to me by the ballot law. You had better have all the defective ballots here on Monday so that I can see them."

Mr. Gardiner contended that under the ballot law a vote was either void or must be counted. There should be no defective ballots. He said that the law gave power to the Board which was very dangerous, and he hoped the law would be changed at the next session. They did not intend, he said, to take away any of Page's votes, but he thought that votes which were obviously for O'Sullivan should go to him.

Justice Ingraham said that Justice Cullen was a very careful man, for whose rulings he himself had great respect. He said he would go over the decision of Justice Cullen before Monday.

Mr. Gruber said that he would apply on Monday for a similar order so that he could look after the O'Sullivan count, and Justice Ingraham said he would grant him such an order.

Before the argument in court the Board of County Canvassers met to permit Col. Gardiner to serve on them the order to show cause why the ballots returned by inspectors of election in the Seventeenth Senate district as defective should not be counted for Mr. O'Sullivan.

Col. Gardiner had notified Abraham Gruber, Mr. Page's counsel, and that gentleman was present at the meeting of the Board. Mr. Gruber tried to make an address to the Board protesting against the relinquishment by them of the marked ballots, but he was cut off by the adjournment of the Board until Monday noon on motion of Alderman Noonan.

KENTUCKY'S LEGISLATURE.

Contests that Will Be Made in Various Districts—Blackburn's Hopes.

LEXINGTON, Ky., Nov. 23.—The narrow margin between the Democratic and Republican parties in the new Legislature is likely to lead to several contests. George Howard, the Democrat who was defeated in the Thirty-third Legislative district by a Republican, says he will contest the seat on the ground that the Republican was holding the office of Commissioner of Harlan county when elected.

In the Legislative district of Lexington every effort is being made to prevent Wood Denton, Republican, from taking his seat. Senator Blackburn, who was here last night, expressed himself as being certain of election if there should be a Democratic majority, no matter how slight.

JACOB NEU A HUSTLER.

Re-elected a Civil Justice in Brooklyn in Face of Great Opposition.

Civil Justice Jacob Neu has come out of the recent political fray in Brooklyn apparently the most popular Democrat in that city. In his race for reelection in the First district against Moore (Rep.) and a Shepardite candidate he polled 76,599 votes, a plurality of 722 over his Republican competitor.

Van Wart and Schnitzpan, the Republican candidates for Civil Justices in the Second and Third districts, had a plurality of 2,144 and 2,010 respectively.

Hugo Hirsh Will Appeal.

Hugo Hirsh, the defeated Republican candidate for the Supreme Court in the Second Judiciary district, will appeal from the decision of Justice Gaynor, upholding the battle-axe ballots in Long Island City. With these votes counted, Martin J. Keogh, the Democratic candidate, has a safe plurality over Hirsh.

Gen. Harrison in Saratoga.

SARATOGA, Nov. 23.—Ex-President Harrison arrived here at 2¼ o'clock this afternoon from New York, via Albany. He was met at the depot by Mrs. John R. McKee, and went direct to the McKee residence on Circular street.

A Receiver Called to Account.

SEATTLE, Nov. 23.—United States Circuit Court Judge Hanford has ordered Edwin O'Neill, receiver of the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company, to appear on Nov. 26 and show cause why he should be receiver of the Washington and Idaho Railroad and the Oregon Railway Extension companies, the charge being made that these receiverships were brought about through conspiracy. It is requested that a new receiver be appointed for each company and that O'Neill be compelled to pay interest on bonds of those companies out of money in his possession. "Whatever default has been occasioned," says the petitioner, "is due to an unlawful conspiracy and a confederation of the Farmers' Loan and Trust Company, in the interest of its bondholders, and the American Loan and Trust Company as trustee of the collateral trust mortgage of the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company."

Seattle, Lake Shore and Eastern.

SEATTLE, Wash., Nov. 23.—United States District Judge Hanford has signed a decree of foreclosure against the Seattle, Lake Shore and Eastern Railroad in proceedings instituted at the instance of the Union Trust Company of New York. The claim against the property is $6,500,000.

A Mortgage for $1,000,000.

OLEAN, N. Y., Nov. 23.—A mortgage for $1,000,000 has been filed in the Cattaraugus County Clerk's office by the reorganized Erie Railroad Company, to secure [illegible] the purchase of the Buffalo and Southwestern Railroad.

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