

WILL IT BE THE AEROPLANE PIRATES NEXT?

How an Unparalleled Chain of Murders and Robberies by Three Automobile Pirates in Paris Has Led the Great German Scientist, Max Nordau, to Predict a Visitation of Captain Kidds of the Air

THE amazing series of robberies and murders by automobile bandits in France has brought to the alarming possibilities of employing modern scientific devices in criminal uses.

It was the perfect understanding of automobile mechanism possessed by these bandits, their ability to repair the machines and run them at the highest speed, their knowledge of where to steal new high-powered machines, and their recklessness and imaginative daring that enabled them to carry on their crimes successfully for three years,

pen to one of the skyscrapers of New York. Suppose, for instance, that the aeroplane bandits descended upon the roof of some Wall street skyscraper, which contains countless millions in cash, notes, gold, securities and other forms of wealth. According to Dr. Nordau the bandits could select the most portable part of this plunder, load it on their machine, and fly away to some secret hiding place—say in the Catskill Mountains.

It is true that at present an aeroplane would have difficulty in landing on the top of most New York

"I anticipate that we shall soon hear that the aeroplane has been adopted by some Captain Kidd of the air. With it may be utilized any one of many new scientific inventions. With two or three aeroplanes a band of criminals could swoop down upon some treasure-filled building, hold the doorways against all assistance, load the treasure on their aeroplanes, fly away, perhaps in the darkness of the night, and speed to some unknown hiding place."—Dr. Max Nordau.



At 8 o'clock in the morning of March 26 the bandits steal an automobile in the Forest of Senart.

over twenty persons and to carry away \$200,000 in money before the hand was arrested.

skyscrapers, but scientific ingenuity will, it is expected, soon make a great improvement in this direction.

Then, according to Dr. Max Nordau, the police will be forced to cope with the pirates of the air by becoming aeroplanists of superior daring themselves.

To return to the actual exploits of the French automobile bandits: The last great coup of these criminals was the looting of the branch bank at Chantilly, near Paris, of the Societe Generale, a very great French banking institution.

At 8 o'clock in the morning six men, armed with rifles and pistols, held up an automobile at Montgeron, held the chauffeur named Mathille, and the chauffeur named Mathille, and seized the machine. They were seen to return at top speed to Paris.

After this outrage, the last of many, the French Ministry of the Interior created a special force of auto policemen furnished with fast machines. Before this, the French police had actually attempted to pursue the auto bandits on horseback.

The police are trying to make out that a burly ruffian, Carouy, was among those arrested, but it is much to be doubted that he had the brains to plan these daring crimes.

The present series of outrages began on December 10 of last year. On that day a swift automobile stopped at 2 o'clock in the afternoon in the Rue Ordener, one of the most central thoroughfares of Paris. The men in it shot down a bank messenger

who was walking along the street, took 100,000 francs in cash from him and poured a volley of bullets into the crowd which gathered about, killing one man and wounding several others. Then they jumped into their machine and disappeared at a speed of nearly fifty miles an hour.

The case was submitted to M. Alphonse Bertillon, the scientific director of the detective department of Paris, who completely reconstructed the doings of the bandits from the traces they had left.

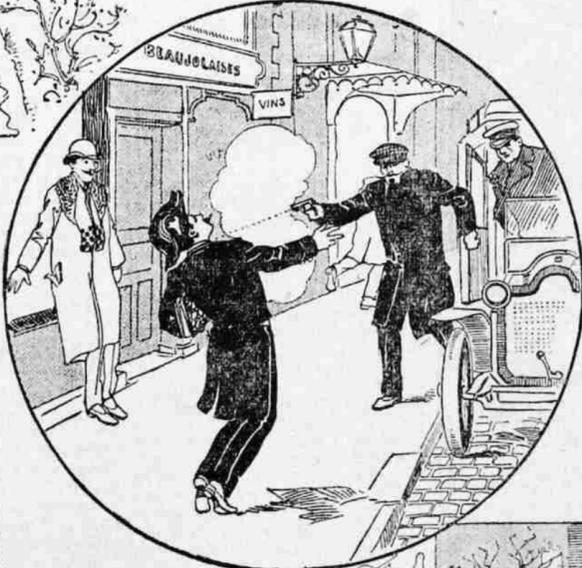
"By measuring the slight impression made by the two auto wheels in the street," he said, "I find that the wheels were exactly four feet six inches apart, and the impression made by the car when it was stopped showed that it was ten feet long. These details would correspond exactly to the measurements of a Panhard ninety horse power machine of 1910."

On the day following the affair in the Rue Ordener M. Norman's auto was found abandoned in a lonely street at Dieppe, one hundred and fifty miles from Paris.

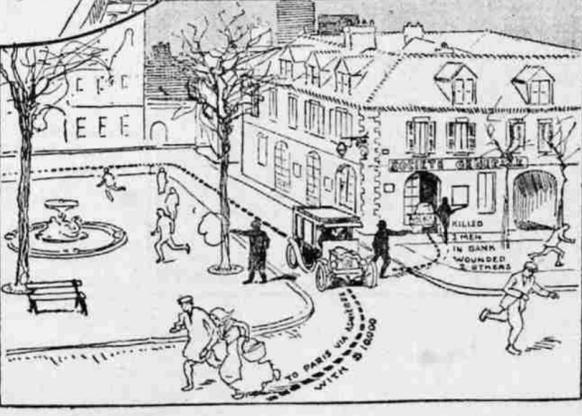
The startling discovery was then made that the leader of the auto bandits was the same person as the head of the gang who plundered the Orient Express in September of last year. This fast train was stopped in the heart of France at night and robbed of thousands of dollars in bags of gold that were being carried to India.

The identity of this bandit was proved by the finger prints he had left while remembering the stolen auto and others he had made at the time of robbing the express.

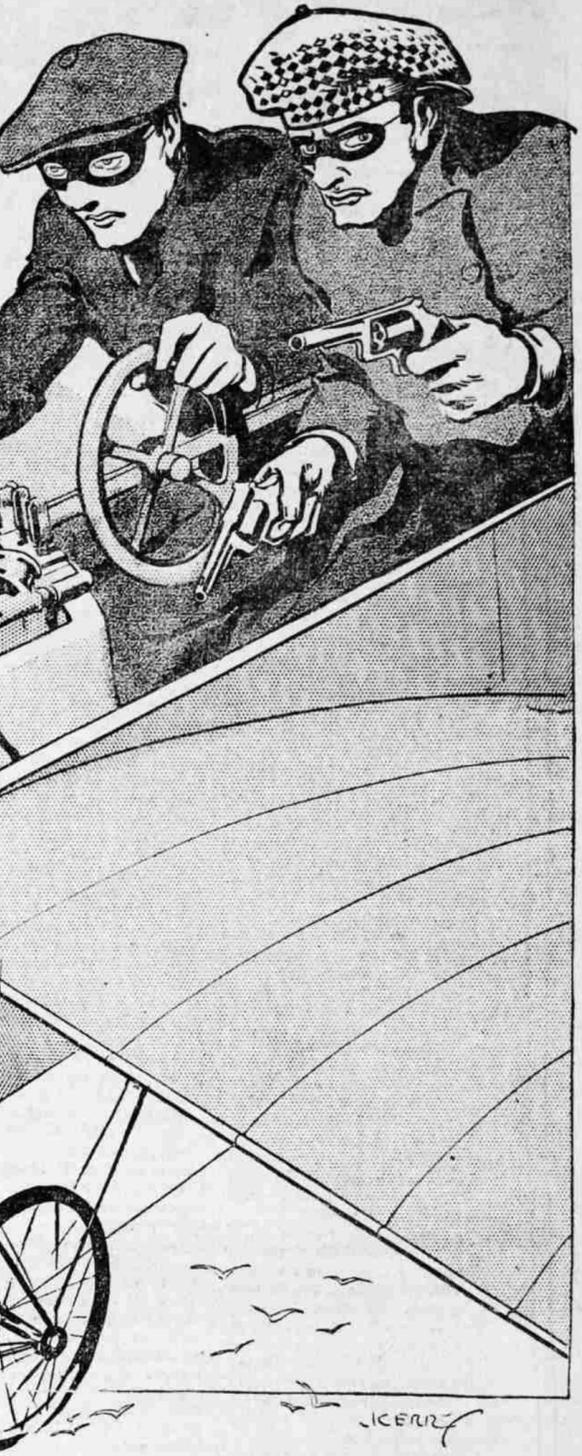
After carrying off their plunder from the train this band stopped at Chatelet-en-Brie, and executed one of their number, an Italian named Platano, a traitor to their plans, by cutting his throat. The man who performed this execution wiped his hands of blood on the dead man's shirt. The executioner and the leader of the auto bandits in the Rue Ordener were one and the same person. After the execution they stopped an auto and murdered the chauffeur at Chatelet-en-Brie.



Murder of Bank Messenger Caby in the Rue Ordener, the First Crime in the Latest Series of Automobile Outrages. All These Were Committed by the Same Man.



At 10:30 the bandits who stole the auto in the forest kill the cashier, assistant cashier and porter of the bank at Chantilly, seize the cash, fusillade the would-be rescuers and vanish.



The interesting fact was also observed by the police that the auto bandits were teetotalers. Probably that was why they were so proficient in their work. Common criminals have always been drinkers of alcohol.

Alcoholic drinkers are forced to stop frequently to take more drink, alcoholic if they can find it, but drink of some sort. They have to stop frequently to attend to their physical needs, and are incapable of continuous, unswerving exertion.

Now, in all the searches the police made they found no traces of men with a fresh supply of money in the common drinking resorts of criminals, no breaking open of saloons such as always follows a successful coup by common burglars, no abandoned bottles along the road. These men were teetotalers and able to refresh themselves by frequent stops at roadside fountains and horse troughs.

The bandits had a habit of constantly stealing fresh automobiles and abandoning the old ones. They had a profound knowledge of all kinds of machines.

The machine abandoned near Dieppe showed by its speedometer that it had been running for the trip at the rate of 40 1/2 miles per hour, the third speed of this machine.

Now, this rate of speed proved that the car had left Paris just three hours and three-quarters before it was abandoned. This was exactly half an hour after the robbery, just time to get out of Paris.

The police here did a clever piece of detective work. They estimated that the criminals had stolen a fresh machine about half an hour after the robbery and sent, perhaps, one accomplice to Dieppe to get rid of the old machine.

But the bandits were too clever, guessed the police plans, turned around, came back by a different road and passed the control gate of Paris at 6 o'clock, always going full speed. At 6:05 they overturned a vegetable dealer's cart in the Rue de Rivoli and their machine was injured, a fact shown by a streak of gasoline along the road.

At 6:30 they stopped in the Place du Havre to mend a leak in the gas-

oline tank. A policeman named Garnier, not suspecting they were the great bandits, put his foot on the step to warn them against breaking the speed law. They left him dead with three bullets in him.

As they flew away, many terrified pedestrians were able to distinguish three men in the car, with a tremendously thickset giant at the wheel, his face concealed by automobile goggles.

Did justice hold the bandits at last? Not yet.

Once more they vanished in a cloud of dust, and orders were wired to the police and gendarmerie (the national military police force) in every direction to watch for a fleeing or an abandoned auto.

Soon a report came of an auto abandoned in a back street of St. Ouen, a suburb of Paris.

It was the auto of M. Buisson, 1 St. Mandé. It had been set on fire and all its combustible parts destroyed, but this time the speedometer showed a distance of 215 miles covered in one trip. On the back of the carriage were the marks of two revolver bullets.

This showed that the bandits had travelled far out of Paris, had been concerned in another crime (for no bullets had struck the machine before), and had been compelled to return to Paris for some reason.

At this point word came from Fontaine, another suburb, five miles from St. Ouen, that at 5 o'clock that morning, before daybreak, some men had been surprised in the office of M. Tintant, a leading lawyer of the town, engaged in breaking open his safe. M. Tintant had discovered them and fired at them from his window as they were getting into an auto. A journeyman baker named Cornet, who was up at that early hour on account of his trade, attempted to hold them and was shot dead.

At this point the bandits disappeared completely. It was not until after they attacked and bombarded the Societe Generale at Chantilly, an episode described earlier in this article, that any of them were arrested.

Among the other crimes attributed to them besides those already mentioned are: Bank messenger named Gouy Paillet robbed of \$30,000 in Paris January 31, 1912. Freight station robbed, two men murdered, at Les Aubrais, near Orleans, January 31. Battle with burglars, in which one policeman was killed and one burglar committed suicide, Angerville, January 31.