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THE GREAT K&A TRAIN ROBBERY.
BY PAUL LEICESTER FORD
THE HONORABLE PETER STIRLING '87
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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 jail. 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 15 minutes before I heard some one steal up and softly unlock the door. I confess the evident endeavor 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 gettin' the boys together and sayin' 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

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RAILROAD TIME TABLES.
ILLINOIS CENTRAL.
Corrected to April 18, 1926.

South Bound	121	101
Lv. Cincinnati	6:00pm	8:15am
Lv. Louisville	7:50am	9:45am
Lv. Owensboro	8:35am	10:01pm
Lv. H. Branch	10:55am	8:25pm
Lv. Central City	12:01am	1:05am
Lv. Nortonville	12:40pm	1:44am
Lv. Evansville	8:30am	4:00pm
Lv. Hopkinsville	11:30am	8:35pm
Lv. Princeton	1:55pm	2:55am
Lv. Paducah	8:35pm	3:00pm
Lv. Paducah	8:40pm	3:05pm
At. Fulton	6:30pm	4:45am
At. Paducah Jct.	8:15am	8:15am
At. Cairo	9:25pm	12:15pm
At. River	5:35am	5:35am
At. Jackson	6:45am	6:45am
At. Memphis	8:30am	10:40pm
At. N. Orleans	7:00pm	9:35am

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They had a talk with the sheriff, and then Fred, Lord Ralles and I were marched off by the official, his lordship demanding sight of a warrant and protesting against the illegality of his arrest, varied at moments by threats to appeal to the British consul, minister plenipotentiary, her majesty's foreign office, etc., all of which had about as much influence on the sheriff and his cowboy assistants as a Moqui Indian snake dance would have in stopping a runaway engine. I confess to feeling a certain grim satisfaction in the fact that if I was to be shut off from seeing Madge the Britisher was in the same box with me.

"That doesn't tell us what Cullen gives you to take the risk."
"Mr. Cullen hasn't given or even hinted that he'll give anything."
"And Mr. Gordon hasn't asked, and, if I know him, wouldn't take a cent for what he has done," said Fred, rising from the floor.
"You mean to say you are doing it for nothing?" exclaimed Camp, incredulously.
"That's about the truth of it," I said, though I thought of Madge as I said it and felt guilty in suggesting that she was nothing.
"Then what is your motive?" cried Baldwin.

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 party has the stock majority in their favor 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 suavely, "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 any one 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'll find we are not built that way," 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 \$100,000 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."

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Ash Forks, though only 6 years old, had advanced far enough toward civilization to have a small jail, and into that we were shoved. Night was come by the time we were lodged there, and, being in pretty good appetite, I struck the sheriff for some grub.
"I'll get you something," he said good naturedly, "but next time you shove people, Mr. Gordon, just quit shovin' your friends. My shoulder feels like"—
Perhaps it's just as well not to say what his shoulder felt like. The western vocabulary is expressive, but at times not quite fit for publication.
The moment the sheriff was gone Fred wanted the mystery of the letters explained, and I told him all there was to tell, including as good a description of the pony as I could give him. We tried to hit on some plan to get word to those outside, but it wasn't to be done. At least it was a point gained that some one of our party besides myself knew where the letters were.
The sheriff returned presently with a loaf of canned bread and a tin of beans. If I had been alone, I should have kicked at the food and got permission for my boys to send me up something from 97, but I thought I'd see how Lord Ralles would like genuine western fare, so I said nothing. That, I have to state, is more—or rather less—than the Britisher did after he had sampled the stuff, and really I don't blame him, much as I enjoyed his rage and disgust.

It didn't take long to finish our supper, and then Fred, who hadn't slept much the night before, stretched out on the floor and went to sleep. Lord Ralles and I sat on boxes—the only furniture the room contained—about as far apart as we could get, he in the sulks and I whistling cheerfully. I should have liked to be with Madge, but he wasn't, so there was some compensation, and I knew that time was playing the cards in our favor. So long as they hadn't found the letters we had only to sit still to win.
About an hour after supper the sheriff came back and told me Camp and Baldwin wanted to see me. I saw no reason to object, so in they came, accompanied by the judge. Baldwin opened the ball by saying:
"Well, Mr. Gordon, you've played a pretty cute gamble."
win wanted to see me. I saw no reason to object, so in they came, accompanied by the judge. Baldwin opened the ball by saying:
"Well, Mr. Gordon, you've played a pretty cute gamble, and I suppose you think you stand to win the pot."
"I'm not complaining," I said.
"Still," said Camp angrily, as if my contented manner fretted him, "our time will come presently, and we can make it pretty uncomfortable for you. Illegal proceedings put a man in jail in the long run."
"I hope you take your lesson to heart," I remarked cheerfully, which made Camp scowl worse than ever.
"Now," said Baldwin, who kept cool, "we know you are not risking loss of position and the state's prison for nothing, and we want to know what there is in it for you."
"I wouldn't bet my chance of state's prison against yours, gentlemen. And while I may lose my position I'll be a lousy way from starvation."

CHAPTER XIII
A LESSON IN POLITENESS.
Within five minutes we had a big surprise, for the sheriff and Mr. Baldwin came back, and the former announced that Fred and Lord Ralles were free, having been released on bail. When we found that Camp had gone on the bond, I knew that there was a scheme of some sort in the move, and, taking Fred aside, I warned him against trying to recover the proxies.
"They probably think that one or the other of you knows where the letters are hidden," I whispered, "and they'll keep a watch on you, so go slow."
He nodded and followed the sheriff and Lord Ralles out.
The moment they were gone Mr. Baldwin said, "I came back to give you a last chance."
"That's very good of you," I said.
"I warn you," he said threateningly, "we are not men to be beaten. There are 50 cowboys of mine in this town who think you were concerned in the holding up. By merely tipping them the wink they'll have you out of this, and after they've got you outside I wouldn't give the toss of a nickel for your life. Now, then, will you hand over those letters or will you go to inside of ten minutes?"
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



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I dropped down on my hands and knees, ed 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 jail.
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 sneaking round it would be sure to attract attention. "The moment you have the letters put them in the station safe," I ended, "and then get word to me."
[TO BE CONTINUED.]



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At. Cairo	9:25pm	12:15pm
At. River	5:35am	5:35am
At. Jackson	6:45am	6:45am
At. Memphis	8:30am	10:40pm
At. N. Orleans	7:00pm	9:35am

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South Bound	285	278
Lv. St. Louis	7:30am	10:15pm
Lv. St. Louis	7:40am	10:25pm
Chicago	11:30am	8:10pm
Carbondale	11:15am	2:00pm
Parker	12:35pm	4:15pm
Paducah	3:00pm	7:45pm
North Bound	386	374
Lv. Paducah	12:15pm	6:15pm
At. Parkers	2:35pm	9:20pm
At. Carbondale	4:55am	8:10pm
At. Chicago	7:00am	10:30am
At. E. St. Louis	7:00pm	6:31am
At. St. Louis	7:24pm	6:58am

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