

# GET THE MAN!

Craft and Courage of Old-Time and Modern Express Robbers Matched by Organized Secret Service and the Mandate That Makes Capture Alone the End of an Unflinching Man Hunt



William A. Pinkerton.

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WHILE the golden age of the train wrecker and robber has waned, and the picturesque holdup man has ceased from troubling to some extent, express companies in the United States still lose thousands of dollars annually in money, jewels and valuables, and each of them maintains a standing army for defense against bandit and defaulter.

The annals of crime directed against the express companies are filled with thrilling incidents. The daring of outlaws, the bravery of messengers, the skill and persistence of agents of justice go to make a story more stirring than that of any other phase of the war waged by the desperado upon property. Although armored cars, burglar proof safes and powerful private detective forces have set some bar to activities of robbers of the James type, such men have by no means disappeared. The chances against them are greater, but they have still to be reckoned with. And the situation has been complicated further by the clever inside manipulator, the package snatcher, the thief who relies upon cunning and wit rather than upon mask and revolver.

In the management of an involved transportation enterprise each separate joint in the machinery offers some weakness, however slight. The companies have learned costly lessons in the guarding of their elaborate systems, but never have they reached the point where they can say that every mile and every danger has been foreseen and warded off.

Express companies do not advertise their losses, and more frequently than not nowadays the thefts are unaccompanied by ostentation. When a bundle of bills is quickly flicked from sight they do not rush to the police with their complaint. They have a more effective method than that. In their employ are the best criminal trackers they can find or train, constituting a secret service as formidable and expert as that of a sovereign government. Frequently they are aided by the detective forces of railroads, such as that of the Southern Pacific. Except in rare cases they expect little of the regular police, and the first part played by the authorities in their affairs is to take charge of the captured fugitive.

When seen recently William A. Pinkerton said that the situation as to express companies is made satisfactory only at the expense of constant vigilance. The result is obtained by tireless persistence and watching.

## Mr. Pinkerton's View of It

"The greatest help we have at present lies in the reputation we have built up and are maintaining among the criminal class," he said. "The Adams express company has always taken the position that the criminal and not the money is the thing to land. Consequently we have never had to compromise. When we are after a thief he knows that we want him and he can not dicker for immunity. We get what he has stolen, of course, if we can. But it is much better to make an example of him than to recover every cent he has taken."

In this Mr. Pinkerton struck the keynote of the attitude of the companies toward the class that preys upon them. They have been forced into unrelenting tactics as the price of reasonable safety, and when a robber makes one of them his victim he can count upon having on his trail a pursuer that will never rest until he has paid the penalty.

"For the last quarter of a century," said Mr. Pinkerton, "the 'yeggs' and holdup men have been chiefly a western product from the cattle country. Cowboys with criminal instincts passed naturally through the development of camp thieves, horse rustlers, stage and, finally, train robbers. Their followers and disciples were drawn from among mechanics who came out during the great railroad development and who were familiar with the use of dynamite and nitroglycerine. The original train robbing band was usually from five to eight strong. It dwindled to from three to five, and of late years a number of robberies have been handled by but one man."

"Recently we have had to contend also with the dishonest employe, who maps out a smooth plan for inside theft and covers his tracks skillfully. This is a different game and calls for another kind of detective ability."

A typical instance of the real train holdup conducted in traditional melodramatic style took place in Montana recently. A Northern Pacific passenger train was stopped near Bear Mouth by two masked men. They entered the tender at a water tank and crawled forward over the coal to the cab. Revolvers at the nape of his neck induced the engine driver to set his brakes, and the bandits turned their attention to the express car. The messenger locked his doors, suspecting the cause of the sudden halt, and the robbers forced the engine driver to light the fuse to a stick of dynamite that made an entrance for them.

Having bound and gagged the messenger they tried to open the safe, and after setting off five charges of dynamite without result they placed an enormous charge that blew the side out of the car and hurled the safe 40 feet. They obtained about \$65,000 and made off. One of those to head a posse in pursuit was "Kid" Curry, himself a notorious train robber. It was believed that the two men were members of his former band.

A little more than a year ago the Oriental limited, of the Great Northern, was held up by four robbers near Rondo, Mont. Their tactics were similar to those adopted on the former occasion, boarding the tender and beginning operations with the engine driver. Rewards of \$13,000 were offered for their capture, but they escaped.

The most desperate and dangerous of the express car bandits have been those whose method has been to wreck trains in conducting robberies. Dynamite or obstructions on the track have been their tools, and loss of life frequently has resulted from their crimes, which have been the object of severe legislation. In contrast with such reckless men as these is the bandit of the type of "Old Bill" Miner, said to be the most remarkable single handed express robber who ever lived. Miner always worked alone,



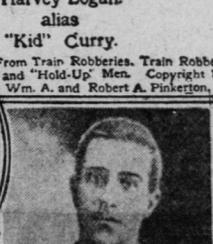
Their employers do not ask of them that they give their lives, but it is expected that they will contest the attempt to the last inch, and they do it.



Fred Whitrock, alias Jim Cummings, Lone Train Robber. From Train Robberies, Train Robbers and "Hold-Up" Men. Copyright by Wm. A. and Robert A. Pinkerton.



Harry Schwartz. From Train Robberies, Train Robbers and "Hold-Up" Men. Copyright by Wm. A. and Robert A. Pinkerton.



Harvey Logan, alias "Kid" Curry. From Train Robberies, Train Robbers and "Hold-Up" Men. Copyright by Wm. A. and Robert A. Pinkerton.

never took a life and never posed as a "bad man." He made a startling record in the west.

## A \$200,000 Job

One of the largest hauls in an express car holdup was that of a Lake Shore train near Kessler, Ind. The halt was obtained by swinging a red light upon the tracks. When the engine driver slowed down he was shot through the shoulder by one of the 12 robbers who were grouped on either side. The passengers and train crew were held at bay by masked men with rifles while the express car was blown open and the messenger disarmed. It was estimated that \$200,000 was taken from the safe. Before entrance was gained, however, the messenger succeeded in hiding two strong boxes containing \$100,000 in gold coin under a coffin and these were overlooked. The robbers lacked the professional touch and the affair was laid to Hoosier youths who had been reading penny dreadfuls.

A similar saving for an express company was made about the same time on the Hannibal and St. Joseph railroad, in Missouri. While the bandits were forcing an entrance the messenger kicked a package containing \$10,000 under the stove and it was overlooked. The robbers took \$47,800 from the safe and were satisfied.

Many are the unlauded heroes who have stood bravely to their duty in the defense of property in express cars. Express messengers have repeatedly taken the utmost risks in resisting holdups and many of them have paid for their courage with their lives. The man who undertakes to garrison a car in which hundreds of thousands of dollars may be stowed through vast stretches of country where train robbers have been operating displays no mean bravery. It is a fearsome thing to hear the pounding of revolver butts upon the doors and a command to open from reckless men who are ready to kill and armed with dynamite. Yet, single handed, messengers have stood off the fiercest attacks. Their employers do not ask of them that they give their lives, but it is expected that they will contest the attempt to the last inch, and they do it.

Mystery still surrounds the killing of an American express company messenger in Dallas, Texas, a few years ago. The train was moving through the yards and the messenger, Concannon, was seen standing at the open door of his car as it passed a point six hundred yards from the platform. There was a brief delay at a switch and the train drew into the station. Agents ran a truck to the side of the car, but Concannon did not appear. They climbed inside to find the messenger stretched upon the floor fatally injured. There were evidences of a struggle. His skull had been crushed with an iron bar. The safe was not locked and \$10,000 was missing from it. The whole affair, murder and robbery, had been accomplished within five minutes and no trace of the criminal or the way he had entered and departed was ever discovered.

"Joe" Shannon, one of the best known express messengers of the country, was in the employ of the Adams express company for 25 years. He prevented robberies a score of times, was the means of sending 22 bandits to the penitentiary and killed two. He was overpowered in one attack and was tied to a tree in the woods near Montgomery, Ala. Five days passed before he was discovered. When he was released his first remark was of satisfaction at having shot one of his assailants.

At Corinth, Miss., a messenger for the Southern express company was fatally shot through the open door of his car, but continued to fire his revolver while he lay dying. The robber took a large sum of money from the safe.

## On the New York Central

Near Little Falls, on the New York Central, a masked robber boarded the front platform of the express car and sawed out a panel of the door. He entered while the messenger's back was turned, and picking up a revolver from the top of the safe, fired

it close to the man's ear. After an introduction of this kind he was able to persuade the messenger to open the strong box.

Even the detectives whose lives have been spent in running down express robbers yield a grudging admiration to the man who, without confederate or assistant, holds up a train, overawes messenger and crew and makes his haul successfully. There is a forceful quality in a bandit capable of such an act and he is no mean antagonist.

Crimes frequently have been committed against express companies with the connivance or active participation of dishonest messengers. While the average of the men employed in this capacity is high, the opportunities offered by the position have proved too much for some men with straight records, while criminals have lived honestly for years in order to obtain such a post.

"The first thing to question in express robberies is whether or not the messenger has been absolutely square with the company," says Mr. Pinkerton, on this phase of the subject. "He is subjected to strong temptation, and by working in with the bandits can give them a free hand while keeping an appearance of innocence."

This point arose in connection with one of the most famous express robberies of the many in which William A. Pinkerton and his brother Robert were concerned. Just before a train on the St. Louis and San Francisco railroad left St. Louis a stranger approached the express messenger, Fotheringham, and handed him a letter apparently written by the route agent. It directed Fotheringham to allow the stranger to ride with him in order to become familiar with the duties of the position. At Pacific Junction, just outside the city, the stranger drew a revolver and planted the muzzle at the messenger's head. Fotheringham submitted and was bound and gagged. The man escaped with \$65,000 from the safe.

Interest was added to the chase by a series of letters written to a St. Louis newspaper by the fugitive and signed "Jim Cummings." In these he protested against the arrest of Fotheringham, explaining that the letter he had presented had been forged and that the messenger had been completely deceived.

## Fotheringham Vindicated

Patient tracking brought about the arrest of the criminal, Fred Whitrock, and those who had shared in the proceeds of the robbery. Almost the entire sum was recovered and the men were sent to prison for long terms. Fotheringham was finally vindicated.

Of more serious character was the robbery of an express car on the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific railroad between Joliet and Morris and the murder of the messenger, Kellogg Nicholls. When William A. Pinkerton received word of the affair he telegraphed to have the express car kept locked until his arrival.

"The first thing I noticed when I climbed inside," said Mr. Pinkerton, "was that the stove poker, covered with blood and hair, was hanging on its usual nail. Nicholls had been beaten about the head with the poker and his throat had been cut. The thought struck me immediately that no outsider would take the trouble to return the poker to its place. That could only be the unthinking act of a man accustomed to keep a car neat and orderly. I said nothing about the circumstance, however, and questioned the train crew."

"The story told by the two witnesses, Harry Schwartz, a brakeman, and Newton Watt, the baggageman, was that robbers had held them up through the transom of the baggage car and forced them to give up a key to the express car, after which Nicholls was killed. I sat down with Watt and chatted confidentially. I observed that he wore a pair of gloves. After I had made him comfortable with a cigar I suggested that it was rather warm for gloves. He agreed and peeled them off. On the back of his left hand I saw a deep imprint of four finger nails. Later, on examining the body of Nicholls, I found scratches



William Miner, an Old Time Pacific Coast Train Robber. From Train Robberies, Train Robbers and "Hold-Up" Men. Copyright by Wm. A. and Robert A. Pinkerton.

"Captain Bob" Bunch was one of the most active of express car robbers in the south, which at one time was terrorized by criminals of his following and kind. He was finally run down and killed by detectives in the employ of the Southern express company.

A tangled case of the "inside" variety was the disappearance of \$40,000 in currency sent by an express company from New York to Susquehanna for the payment of employes in the Erie railroad shops. It was inclosed in a canvas pouch, with tag and seal, delivered by the Marine national bank, transported and locked in the express company's safe at Susquehanna. When the agent opened the bag he found that it contained packages of brown paper neatly clipped and tied to represent bills.

The Pinkertons were called in. They found that the bag, seal and tag were bogus and had been substituted at some point. Acting on a "tip" from a professional thief that an employe of the railroad was concerned, they learned that a foreman in the boiler shop had recently obtained leave of absence. On this slender clue they followed the man, found he had squandered money and arrested him. He confessed that he had taken wax impressions of the keyholes in the safe and the office door and named accomplices in Canada. On his representation that he could lure the others to the United States they let him go, whereupon he escaped to Canada.

The next move of the Pinkertons was an indication of their far reaching influence. They caused a rumor to reach the cars of the foreman and his confederates that they were wanted by the Canadian police for a robbery there. The foreman boarded a train for Portland, N. H., at once. One of the Pinkertons met the train at Island Pond, Vt., after it crossed the border and caught him.

## \$100,000 in a Potato Sack

A singular robbery was that committed by an express messenger on the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific railroad. Two packages of currency, each containing \$50,000, were in his safe. He had brought along seven sacks of potatoes which he intended to leave at Davenport, his home. While the train was drawing into Davenport he had a sudden impulse to take some money, and he stripped a ten dollar bill from one of the packages. Then, as he later explained, he reflected that he might as well take all as part, so he tumbled the whole \$100,000 into a potato sack. With this over his shoulder he left the car at the station and walked to a barn on the outskirts, where he concealed all but \$1,000, after which he started for Chicago.

The theft was discovered when his car arrived in Chicago and he was captured the moment he set foot in that city. He accompanied the detectives back to Davenport and the barn, and the entire treasure, with the exception of \$6, was in the hands of the company's officials exactly 24 hours after it had been removed from the safe. The messenger could never explain what his plan had been or how he expected to evade pursuit.

A poorly dressed young man entered a trunk store in Milwaukee carrying a valise. He selected a trunk and left the valise, asking that it be inclosed in the larger receptacle and sent to an address he gave. While the clerk was following these instructions the valise flew open. It was full of money, more than \$90,000 in all. The police were notified and the young man was arrested when he came to inquire for his trunk. He was a money clerk in an express office at St. Louis and had simply walked out with the money during business hours.

Better planned, if equally futile, was the adventure of an express agent in Golden City, Mo. He found that he had a bundle of bills containing \$8,000 in his office one day, and decided that this was his chance for a European tour. Next day his wife missed her husband and her best mourning costume, which she wore on account of her father's death. Meanwhile a charming widow, quite fashionable in appearance except as to the feet, was on a train bound for St. Louis. The feet attracted considerable attention in the streets and the widow was arrested on suspicion. The express agent went no further with his European trip.

Another kind of theft for which the companies and their secret service forces must be ever on the alert is the stealing packages from express wagons on the city delivery routes. A clever band of thieves, whose method was to steal horse, wagon, packages and all, recently gave much trouble. They usually operated by sending a small parcel by express to an address on the top floor of a building. Waiting near at hand until the driver was upstairs, they fastened the front door from the outside with a chain and padlock, mounted the wagon and drove calmly away.

## Big Haul from a Truck

Two truck robbers of this kind made a rich haul of eight trunks a few years ago. They were identified by a process of elimination, the detectives searching out every thief in the city who had ever carried on this form of depredation. Their rooms were watched and the wife of one of them was arrested first. When she was searched she had bracelets and brooches worth \$2,000 in her clothing and a bag containing more jewelry. Nearly \$20,000 worth of valuables was recovered when the men were arrested.

Drivers on an express wagon in Jersey City stole a small package marked as containing jewelry, and on opening it discovered a diamond necklace of 57 stones, worth \$5,000. They were arrested when they tried to pawn the gems for \$75.

Another case of a similar kind occurred in the same city last year. A collection of jeweled ornaments valued at \$32,000 was sent from New York in care of an express company. A boy, 17 years old, helper on the wagon, having been disappointed in some love affair, betrouth him to win the favor of his lady fair by a gift of gems. When the wagon arrived at the Jersey City office he picked up the parcel and walked off with it.

Complete mystery surrounded the case for nearly a week. The boy had chosen, quite accidentally, the exact moment when the package was not watched and there was no one to observe his movements. The first real clue that the detectives obtained came from the manager of a large business concern. He said that an office boy in his establishment had exhibited a pearl necklace. The boy was arrested and produced the article. It was made of 85 pearls, worth \$3,000, and he had purchased it from the thief for 25 cents. He said that he had also been offered another necklace, subsequently found to have been an emerald and diamond dog collar worth \$13,500, for 75 cents, but would not go so high.

The express helper was traced and all the gems were recovered. Most of them were found in a rag and tucked behind an ice box.

For their own preservation the express companies have been forced to adopt an unvarying system in their treatment of thieves of all kinds that prey upon them. This was illustrated in a striking manner a few months ago, when one of the largest companies in the country pressed the prosecution of a washwoman in their New York office who had stolen half a cake of soap. It was part of the accepted rule and it had to go forward. As one of the most available channels through which great wealth in tangible form passes they have occupied an exposed position from the first, and unremitting care is all that spells life to them.

of skin under the nails on his right hand. After that I found a scrap of bond paper in the caboose where the men slept."

While the public and the authorities accepted the story of the bandits without question Pinkerton worked for a year on the private theory he had formed. He traced Schwartz to Philadelphia, where he visited his wife. This was of the more interest in that Schwartz had recently married a woman in Chicago. On the brakeman's return to that city Pinkerton caused his arrest on a charge of bigamy. A well known Philadelphia attorney was brought on to defend him. Just at the moment when Schwartz was bailed out on the bigamy charge Pinkerton caused him to be spirited into the hands of the Grundy county authorities, who had papers ready for his arrest in the Nicholls case. Schwartz and Watt were sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder.

Pinkerton's effort to recover the \$21,000 loot came to an end in a peculiar way. The Chicago wife of Schwartz said that the money had been rolled into shotgun cartridges and that she had turned it over to the lawyer. The lawyer always denied this vigorously and there the matter rested. Incidentally Mr. Pinkerton took care of the unfortunate woman at his own expense until her death.

The history of express car holdups is not without its touches of humor. John Dalton, a famous bandit, conceived a picturesque holdup on the Northwestern railroad. He had a stuffed buffalo constructed for his purpose with a space inside in which he could conceal himself. Having ensconced himself in his strange hiding place he had the buffalo shipped by express.

The messenger sat admiring the lifelike appearance of the former monarch of the prairies that occupied one corner of his car until the train passed Deadwood, S. D. He was suddenly startled to observe that one of the glass eyes had disappeared. Presently something else that he recognized as a rifle barrel pushed at him through the socket and a voice that came apparently from the spirit of a dead bison ordered him to throw up his hands. Quick as a flash the messenger had seized the situation and with a spring to one side he was out of range.

Then he vaulted to the back of the buffalo, reached forward and gripped the gun barrel in both hands. The stuffed figure sank beneath his weight until it rested on the shoulders of the helpless bandit, and there he remained until the next station brought aid.

## Missouri Their Lair

According to Mr. Pinkerton, Missouri has produced more train robbers of the traditional type than any other section. Of the outlaws from this state the James boys were the most desperate. During the war they were members of Quantrell's guerrillas, and afterward, with Cole, "Jim," John and "Bob" Younger, Charles Pitts, the Miller boys, the Tompkins brothers and others they held high carnival robbing banks, trains, express cars and individuals right and left. Another well known character was Charles Bullard, known as "Piano Charlie," who with "Ike" Marsh robbed an express car on the Hudson River railroad of \$100,000. Bullard afterward opened the notorious American bar in Paris, which became a kind of international rendezvous for thieves of all nations. He died in prison after having been associated with Adam Worth, the man who evaded the Pinkertons for years, stole millions of dollars and the famous Gainsborough portrait, and who came to a miserable end in poverty.