

# A Battle With Bandits

Stories of the Greatest Cases in the Career of Thomas Furlong, the Famous Railroad Detective, Told by Himself

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The American railroad men are one of the finest bodies of public servants. Their sense of responsibility is admittedly very high. So rarely does one betray his trust that the following record is almost unique, and may be read without offense as the exception which proves the rule.

About the twentieth day of November, 1898, I received an urgent summons from Mr. Horace G. Clark, then general superintendent of the Gould system, with headquarters at St. Louis. I had formerly been chief of the secret service for the system and so lost no time in hurrying to the superintendent's office.

"Furlong," began Mr. Clark, "a hold-up has been planned to take place near Sedalia, on the Lexington branch, and I want you to take charge of the matter immediately. The information has been supplied by one of the conspirators, who is really acting in our interests."

"Mr. Clark," I answered, "my experience has convinced me that it is impossible to rely on the statement of a man who is admittedly betraying his companions."

The superintendent demurred to this principle and explained the circumstances. Adams, the informant, had told him that the plot to hold up and rob one of the trains had been formed by six railway men, including himself, James West, an engineer, and Ell Stubblefield, an ex-conductor. The exact date and point had not been definitely fixed, but Adams was to furnish a team and conveyance which would take the would-be bandits to the place where the scheme was to be "pulled off," and after the coup had been accomplished he was to take them back to the city of Sedalia. He further informed Superintendent Clark that when the date and point of attack had been settled he would at once advise him, inasmuch as he had only agreed to furnish the conveyance and assist in the robbery so that each of the robbers might be apprehended and handed over to the law.

Adams had been a faithful employe of the company for a number of years, and was in good standing with it. He had been a locomotive engineer, and his record was excellent. He was regarded in the community in which he lived as a sober, reliable and intelligent man, and a good citizen. While oiling around his engine one day at a station the throttle had begun to leak, thereby admitting steam to the cylinders, which caused the engine to move suddenly while Adams' arm was extended through the spokes of the drivewheels. The sudden movement of the engine had torn the engineer's arm from the shoulder and thus terminated his career. The railroad company had settled with Adams for the loss of his arm without suit, paying him a large sum, with which Adams set up in business in Sedalia as a money-lender. He had, however, as has been said, a good reputation in the community.

Among his clients were West and Stubblefield. The latter was well known as a freight train conductor and was in the service of the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad company, being popularly known as "Katy." West had been an engineer for years, having been in charge of a freight train. Each of these men owed Adams quite a considerable sum of money. It was in the course of a conversation with them about their indebtedness to him that Adams was approached by them upon the subject of robbing the train. "We will have plenty of money to pay you all that we owe you in a few days," said one of them, and then they asked him to join them in pulling off the job, which he agreed to do for the reason stated.

I had known Mr. Clark for a number of years, and, as stated above, had done considerable work for him while chief special agent for the Missouri Pacific road. I had severed my connection with that line at this time and was conducting a secret service company in St. Louis. It was on account of the close friendship between us that Mr. Clark had sent for me, and on this account I was especially anxious to frustrate the robbery.

"Furlong," said the superintendent, "just as soon as the time and place for this hold-up have been fixed I will notify you, and I want you to take measures to prevent that train from being robbed and to catch the guilty parties."

Early on the morning of November 23 I received a message from Mr. Clark, stating that the superintendent had just learned from Adams that the passenger train on the Lexington branch was to be held up and robbed that night at a point nine miles north of Sedalia, and instructing me to take immediate steps to protect the train and prevent the robbery. The superintendent placed W. W. Kay, his special agent, at my disposal, and two more agents, Detective Frank Barnett and another, who joined me at Independence. The fifth member of the party was Joseph S. Manning, one of

my own staff, from the St. Louis office.

On consulting the official time card of the Missouri Pacific road I found that, in order to protect the Lexington branch train against the contemplated robbery, it would be necessary to leave St. Louis that morning, in order to board the endangered train at Independence Junction the same evening, as that train was due to leave Kansas City on its eastward trip before the train from St. Louis arrived there. I also found that if both trains were on time I would have three minutes at Independence to make connections. This was accomplished.

I told the conductor in charge of the Lexington branch train at Independence of the instructions which I had received from Superintendent Clark, and instructed him that, when the train was flagged and stopped, he should pay no attention to the parties who had signaled her, but was to devote his whole time to keeping his passengers quiet in their seats and, in particular, that he should see that none of them raised a window or put his head out. I then went over to the engineer and told him what was liable to happen.

"When we arrive at the curve," I said, "you'll see the signal, which will be a red light shown across the track. You are to stop the train immediately, and under no circumstances are you to run beyond the danger signal."

I further instructed him that, after stopping the train, he and his fireman could squat down on what is known as the hearth of the engine, in front of the boiler, where they would both be entirely safe, and could not be reached by bullets fired from the ground, as the sides of the cab, up as far as the window sills, were steel, and by stooping down below the level of the sills both of them would be perfectly safe from any shots that might be fired. The engineer and fireman both understood these instructions perfectly, but were naturally somewhat perturbed at the unexpected prospect in store for them.

When the train reached the first station north of the curve where the holdup was to take place, and which was about two miles distant, I placed Mr. Manning on the front platform of the express and baggage car, which was immediately behind the engine. He was armed with a .44 Colt. Detective Frank Barnett of the Missouri Pacific, who, as has been said, had joined our party at Independence, where the transfer had been made to the Lexington branch train, was placed on the rear end of the express car, and armed with a repeating Winchester shotgun. I boarded the engine and took a seat on the engine box, while Mr. Kay was placed on the fireman's box on the opposite side. The fireman gave Kay his cap to wear, and I took the engineer's cap and put it on, so as to deceive any person upon the ground as to our identity. The real fireman and engineer stood on the hearth in front of the boiler head, as they had been instructed. They could attend to their duties in that place just as well as though they were seated on their respective boxes.

In this manner the train proceeded southward from the station toward the curve. When they reached it, I, being on the inside, was the first to see the signal. Adams' report had been verified to the letter and the hold-up party was on the spot in readiness.

The signal, which proved afterward to be a white lantern with a red handkerchief tied over it, thus giving it the appearance of a real danger signal, was swung backward and forward across the track vigorously. While the train was at least two hundred yards distant I called the engineer's attention to it. The train was then running at a speed of about thirty miles an hour.

"Slow up!" I said to the engineer. "Get your train under control, and by all means be sure to come to a full stop before passing the signal."

The engineer shut off steam, but he did not apply the air brakes, and, since there was a slight down-grade to the track, the train slackened speed very little. Either the engineer was too startled by the verification of my statement to remember the brakes, or else he acted under the influence of the not unnatural desire to keep on his journey without waiting for the promised battle. At any rate, perceiving that the train was bound to pass the signal, I threw on the reverse lever, or "plugged the engine," as the engineer would say, which caused the wheels to slip, and gradually brought the train to a standstill, though not before it had passed the curve.

Meanwhile the man with the lantern was standing in the middle of the track, swinging it vigorously. He did not move until the engine was almost on top of him, and it looked as if he was going to be run down. He leaped aside just in time to save himself as the train, with lessened speed but terrific momentum, swept by at the rate of about fifteen miles an hour. He sprang to the right-hand side, which was the opposite side to that on which I was posted, and immediately opened fire on the engine with what was afterward found to be a .45 Colt revolver. The upper part of the cab was riddled with bullets. The moment the firing began I sprang from my side of the engine to the gangway on the side opposite. It took me no more than an instant to get to that position; the gangway was just passing the bandit, and I had just time to take one shot at him. It was a good piece of marksmanship, for the man rolled into the ditch. At the same time another of the men was discovered upon the right side, and he also began firing at us, sending a couple of shots at Manning, who was on the front end of the express car, both of which missed his head by only a few inches. The train

went thundering on and was not brought to a halt until it had passed the spot where the signal had been shown probably by three train lengths, or fifteen hundred feet.

I had instructed Messrs. Kay and Manning that if any shooting occurred they should open fire upon any person whom they might see on the ground. Similar instructions had been given to Barnett. As soon as the train was brought to a standstill Kay, Manning and myself got down and started back to the curve, where I expected to find the dead or wounded man whom I had shot, and who had fallen into the ditch. After we had left the train the engineer began backing up faster than we could walk or run, and nearly ran the train over us.

A comic interlude was now provided. At Lexington, Mo., the train had picked up an extra coach, containing about twenty passengers, members of an itinerant theatrical troupe bound for Sedalia, where they were to give a performance. They were typical "barn-stormers," and every one of the male members was provided with some sort of revolver or popgun, with which he began shooting out of the car windows. We three detectives passed along in the midst of this flying cloud of bullets, but when we reached the spot where the robber had fallen he could not be found. There had been a light fall of snow, probably two inches, on the day before the hold-up occurred, and the tracks of the man in this were plainly visible, as well as a streak of blood about two inches in width, which led across the line from east to west to a road running north and south. The wounded man had taken this road, which led to Sedalia.

While we were trying to find the trail we saw a second man attempting to get through a barbed wire fence, which was in the right-of-way of the railroad on the east. His clothing had become fastened in the wire, and he was struggling desperately to extricate himself. He finally succeeded in this attempt, just as Manning and I reached the spot where his companion had fallen. He started to run in an easterly direction through a large, newly plowed field, which was covered with snow but not frozen.

Discovering that the wounded man was gone, and knowing that it would be a comparatively easy matter to take up his trail at a later time, we gave chase to the second man. Manning succeeded in jumping over the fence, but I, imagining that the robber had sprung the wires, and that I could follow where the other had led, tried to get through, with the result that I also got caught on the bars and released myself with difficulty. By this time Manning had got quite a lead, but I put on a sprint and soon overtook him, and so it was a neck and neck race for a hundred and fifty yards.

In the meantime the "barn-stormers" had taken the affair as a general jubilee, and had begun firing on friend and foe alike, somewhat on the principle of the Irishman at Donnybrook—that is to say, whenever they saw a head, they fired at it; and, as the heads were for the most part upon the side of law and order, Manning and I soon began to hear the bullets hissing about our ears. Even the express messenger, who knew that Manning and I were running across the field, joined in from the car with his Winchester rifle. However, disregarding this, since we could not do otherwise, we caught up with the robber and disarmed him. He fell to the ground moaning and covered with blood; evidently he was badly wounded, and probably during the chase, since both the pursuers had fired as we ran. Just as he fell, a bullet from the express messenger's Winchester struck the handle of Manning's revolver, splintering it, and nearly paralyzing the holder's hand and arm with the concussion.

As soon as the fallen man had been seized and disarmed Detective Barnett reached our party, and, jerking away the handkerchief which the robber had used as a mask, exclaimed: "Why, hello, Jim!" We thereby knew that this was West.

"Is that you, Frank?" answered West, sinking back upon the ground, apparently unconscious.

The conductor and members of the train crew now arrived on the scene, and West, who was apparently unable to walk, was carried back to the train. He was placed in the express car and examined for wounds, and it was soon discovered that he was shamming. He had not been shot, but had severed some small blood vessels in his wrist while struggling in the barbed wire, and had smeared his face and clothing with blood from these wounds. He then pretended to be drunk, but there was no smell of liquor on his breath.

Thinking that the wounded man could be located later, and not wishing to delay the train any longer, we stepped aboard and soon arrived in Sedalia. Being personally acquainted with Ell Stubblefield, and being sure that he was the man whom I had wounded, I at once sent Manning and Detective John Jackson of the Sedalia police department out to his brother's house, where Eli made his home, in the hope that they would intercept him there and arrest him. Then, with Frank Barnett, I returned on an engine from Sedalia to the scene of the attempted hold-up. Picking up the trail of the wounded man from his tracks, and the blood in the snow, we followed it out to the main road and on toward Sedalia.

A house occupied by a negro family was soon reached, and, on making inquiries there, we learned that just after the sound of the shooting had been heard a tall, slender, middle-aged man had stopped in front of the house and yelled to the occupants. He stated that he had been hurt, and that he



STUBBLEFIELD WAS CAPTURED NEAR HIS HOUSE.

would give them ten dollars if they would hitch up and drive him to Sedalia. They told him that it would be impossible to procure a horse at that time of night, and he departed for Sedalia, holding his right arm, and leaving a trail of blood along his tracks.

Having thus satisfied ourselves as to Stubblefield's objective, Barnett and I abandoned the hunt, returned to our engine, and were soon in Sedalia once more. Within two or three hours our conjecture that Stubblefield was on his way to the town proved correct, for the wounded man, who turned out to be Stubblefield, as had been expected, was captured near his house by Manning and the Sedalia police officer, who were waiting for him, in accordance with their instructions. Stubblefield was taken to the county jail, where West had already been incarcerated, and a physician was called to dress his wound. It was found that the bullet from my weapon had passed through West's right arm, breaking the bones at the elbow. The wound soon healed, but Stubblefield never had the use of the arm again. It always hung limp at his side.

West had a double reputation in Sedalia. He had been at one time superintendent of a Sunday school, and stood well in the estimation of the business people of the town. He was also known, among another class of citizens, as a poker player of parts. Early next morning West was released

from jail on a bond signed by two wealthy and prominent Sedalia business men, but later in the day, on learning all the facts in the case, among which was this, that two six-shooters had been found on West when he was searched, the bondsman surrendered him to the sheriff, and he was again locked up, remaining in prison until his trial.

Adams, the informant, who appears to have played a perfectly reputable part in the proceedings, stated to me on the following day that at the last moment the other four railroad men who had promised to join in the robbery, had weakened, and backed out. Stubblefield and West were, therefore, the only two whom he had taken out in his rig. He had driven to the scene of the attempted hold-up and waited there until the train arrived, but as soon as he was convinced that West and Stubblefield meant business, and the firing actually began, he did not wait to carry his part of the bargain to completion, but hastily drove back to Sedalia.

The other men who had promised to participate in the affair were all ex-railway men, with the exception of one, who was a butcher. They were not tried in connection with the crime, although their names were well known. In due course both West and Stubblefield were tried and convicted of the attempted hold-up and sent to the penitentiary for a long period of time.

## NOTHING LIKE DISCIPLINE AND DRILL.

That fine old English lawyer, Sir Edward Clarke, K. C., put considerable heart into men who are getting on in years when he said the other day that since he had gone in for drilling as a volunteer soldier he had never felt more fit in his life.

In Montreal, the members of the Home Guard, all men unfitted for active service, many of them elderly, or married business and professional men, say exactly the same thing. Sir Edward, by the way, relates a good story of the house of commons. He was once on a visit to that famous place, when one M. P. described Ireland as a sheep-producing country.

"I wonder," said someone else jokingly, "whether a certain politician who has had some trouble over Ireland would wish all the Irish people to be converted into sheep?"

"Oh, no," chimed in another M. P., "because then he could not tax them." "But," retorted a quiet-looking member who had been listening intently, "surely he could fleece them."

## MONUMENT TO GENERAL LEE.

Fortunately, there is a breezier and more refreshing side to political Washington, says a correspondent of the Philadelphia Inquirer. One of the new southern congressmen recently was walking down Pennsylvania avenue with an older southern member, and they stopped in front of a statue of Grant. They admired it for a few moments, and later in their walk stopped in front of a statue of Sherman.

"What puzzles me," said the new southern member, "is that here in the United States there is no monument to Robert E. Lee. The nation is now united, and Lee was one of our greatest men. There should be an impressive monument to him right here in the capital."

"Why, haven't you seen the monument to Lee?" asked the southern congressman. "It is the greatest monument ever erected to any man. I will take you over and show it to you right now."

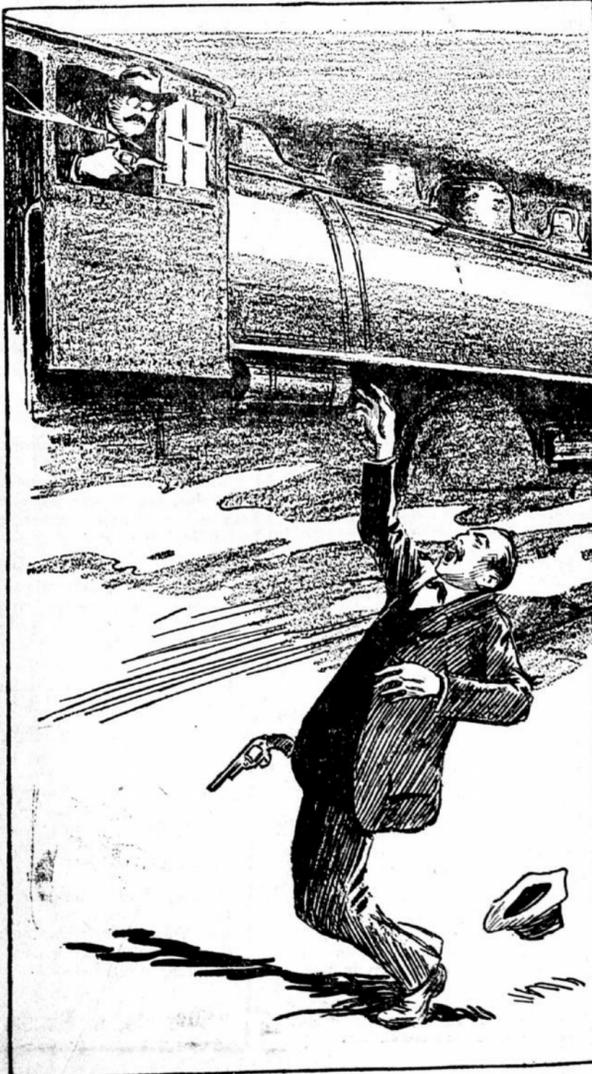
They walked rapidly for fifteen minutes, and the older southern member showed the newer one the pension building.

## END OF A COURTSHIP.

The course of true love was summarily deflected from its long-desired end in the case of the patient lover of whom a recent dispatch from Williamson, W. Va., makes mention. Aleck Chernoff, a rugged mountaineer, entered the courthouse at Williamson one day recently and asked for "the feller that fixes up the marriage papers." He was directed to the proper quarter and on meeting the official he said:

"Here's a license I done got in this here court 24 years ago, and I don't seem to have nary a chance to ever use it, so I reckon it best to bring it back and git the money I paid you-uns for it."

"You see," he explained, "me and Euphemia alwuz meant to git married, but she was so consarned contrary like that she was never ready to have the parson tie the knot when I was. I lowed that I could worry along a while with Euphemia in her tantrums; but after 24 years I got tired and told her either we-uns would git married or we wouldn't. Euphemia lowed we wouldn't, so I calkerlate we won't."—Youth's Companion.



I HAD JUST TIME TO TAKE ONE SHOT AT HIM.