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JIM CUMMINGS

OR

THE GREAT ADAMS EXPRESS ROBBERY

With a portrait of the notorious Jim Cummings and illustrations of scenes connected with the great robbery

By Frank Pinkerton

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Chicago

CHAPTER I.

THE CONSPIRATORS—THE FORGED LETTER—THE PLAN.

In the rear room of a small frame building, the front of which was occupied as a coal office, located on West Lake street, Chicago, three men were seated around a square pine table. The curtains of the window were not only drawn inside, but the heavy shutters were closed on the outside. A blanket was nailed over the only door of the room, and every thing and every action showed that great secrecy was a most important factor of the assembly.

The large argand burner of a student's lamp filled the small room with its white, strong light, The table was covered with railroad time-tables, maps, bits of paper, on which were written two names a great number of times, and pens of different makes and widths of point were scattered amidst the papers.

One man, a large, powerfully-built fellow, deep-chested, and long-limbed, was occupied in writing, again and again, the name of "J.B. Barrett." He had covered sheet after sheet with the name, looking first at a letter before him, but was still far from satisfied. "Damn a man who will make his 'J's' in such a heathenish way."

"Try it again, Wittrock," said one of his companions.

"Curse you," shouted the man called Wittrock. "How often must I tell you not to call me that name. By God, I'll bore a hole through you yet, d'ye mind, now."

"Oh, no harm been done, Cummings; no need of your flying in such a stew for nothing. We're all in the same box here, eh?"

"Well, you be more careful hereafter," said "Cummings," and again he bent to his laborious task of forging the name of "J.B. Barrett."

Nothing was heard for half an hour but the scratching of the pen, or the muttered curses of Cummings (as he was called).

Suddenly he threw down his pen with a laugh of triumph, and holding a piece of paper before him, exclaimed: "There, lads, there it is; there's the key that will unlock a little mint for us."

Throwing himself back in his chair, he drew a cigar from his pocket, and, lighting it, listened with great satisfaction to the words of praise uttered by his companions as they compared the forged with the genuine signature.

These three men were on the eve of a desperate enterprise. For months they had been planning and working together, and the time for action was rapidly approaching.

The one called "Cummings," the leader, was apparently, the youngest one of the three. There was nothing in his face to denote the criminal. A stranger looking at him, would imagine him to be a good-natured, jovial chap, a little shrewd perhaps, but fond of a good dinner, a good drink, a good cigar, and nothing else.

One of his colleagues, whom he called "Roe," evidently an alias, was smaller in size, but had a determined expression on his face, that showed him to be a man who would take a desperate chance if necessary.

The third man, called sometimes Weaver, and sometimes Williams, was the smallest one of the conspirators, and also the eldest. His frame, though small, was compact and muscular, but his face lacked both the determination of Roe and the frank, open expression of Cummings.

After scrutinizing the forgery for a time, Roe returned it to Cummings and said, "Jim, who has the run out on the Frisco when you make the plant?"

"A fellow named Fotheringham, a big chap, too. I was going to lay for the other messenger, Hart, who is a small man, and could be easily handled, but he has the day run now."

"This Fotheringham will have to be a dandy if he can tell whether
Barrett has written this or not, eh, Jim?"

"Aye, that he will. Let me once get in that car, and if the letter don't work, I'll give him a taste of the barker."

"No shooting, Jim, no shooting, I swear to God I'll back out if you spill a drop of blood."

Jim's eyes glittered, and he hissed between his teeth:

"You back out, Roe, and you'll see some shooting."

Roe laughed a nervous laugh, and said, as he pushed some blank letter-heads toward Cummings, "Who's goin' to back out, only I don't like the idea of shooting a man, even to get the plunder. Here's the Adam's Express letter-heads I got to-day. Try your hand on the letter."

Cummings, somewhat pacified, with careful and laborious strokes of the pen, wrote as follows:

"SPRINGFIELD, Mo., October 24th, '86.

MESSENGER, TRAIN No. 3, ST. L & ST. F. RTE:

DR. SIR: You will let the bearer, John Broson, Ride in your car to Peirce, and give him all the Instructions that you can. Yours,

J.B. Barrett, R.A."

"Hit it the first time. Look at that Roe; cast your eye on that elegant bit of literature, Weaver," and Cummings, greatly excited, paced up and down the room, whistling, and indulging in other signs of huge gratification.

"Well done, Jim, well done. Now write the other one, and we'll go and licker up."

Again Cummings picked up his facile pen, and was soon successful in writing the following letter, purporting to be from this same J. B. Barrett.

"SPRINGFIELD, Mo., Oct. 21, '86.

"JOHN BRONSON, Esq., St. Louis, Mo.

"DR. SIR: Come at once to Peirce City by train No. 3, leaving St. Louis 8:25 p.m. Inclosed find note to messenger on the train, which you can use for a pass in case you see Mr. Damsel in time. Agent at Peirce City will instruct you further.

"Respectfully, J. B. BARRETT, R. A."

Jim drew a long, deep sigh of relief as he muttered:

"Half the work is done; half the work is done."

Drawing the railroad map of the Chicago & Alton road toward him, he put the pen point on St. Louis, and slowing following the St. L. & S. F. Division, paused at Kirkwood.

"Roe, here's the place I shall tackle this messenger. It is rather close to St. Louis, but it's down grade and the train will be making fast time. She stops at Pacific—here, and we will jump the train there, strike for the river, and paddle down to the K. & S. W. You must jump on at the crossing near the limits, plug the bell cord so the damned messenger can't pull the rope on me, and I will have him foul."

Roe listened attentively to these instructions, nodding his head slowly several times to express his approval, and said:

"When will we go down?"

Jim Cummings, looking at the time-table, answered:

"This is—what date is this, Weaver?"

"October 11th."

"Two weeks from to-day will be the 25th. That is on—let's see, that is Tuesday."

"Two weeks from to-day, Roe, you will have to take the train at St. Louis; get your ticket to Kirkwood. I see by this time-table that No. 3 does stop there. When you get off, run ahead, plug the bell-cord, and I will wait till she gets up speed after leaving Kirkwood before I draw my deposit."

Thus did these three men plan a robbery that was to mulct the Adams Express Company of $100,000, baffle the renowned Pinkertons for weeks and excite universal admiration for its boldness, skill, and completeness.

The papers upon which Cummings had exercised his skill, were torn into little bits, the time-tables and maps were folded and placed in coat pockets, the lamp extinguished, and three men were soon strolling down Lake street as calmly as if they had no other object than to saunter into their favorite bar-room, and toss off a social drink or two.

CHAPTER II.

THE SUCCESS OF THE LETTERS—THE ATTACK—THE ROBBERS—THE ESCAPE.

The Union depot at St. Louis was ablaze with lights. The long Kansas City train was standing, all made up, the engine coupled on, and almost ready to pull out. Belated passengers were rushing frantically from the ticket window to the baggage-room, and then to the train, when a man, wearing side whiskers, and carrying a small valise, parted from his companion at the entrance to the depot, and, after buying a ticket to Kirkwood, entered the smoking car. His companion, a tall, well-built man, having a smooth face, and a very erect carriage, walked with a business-like step down the platform until he reached the express car. Tossing the valise which he carried into the car, he climbed in himself with the aid of the hand-rail on the side of the door, and, as the messenger came toward him, he held out his hand, saying:

"Is this Mr. Fotheringham?"

"Yes, that's my name."

"I have a letter from Mr. Bassett for you," and, taking it from his pocket, he handed it to the messenger.

Fotheringham read the letter carefully, and placing it in his pocket, said:

"Going to get a job, eh?"

"Yes, the old man said he would give me a show, and as soon as there was a regular run open, he would let me have it."

"Well, I'm pretty busy now; make yourself comfortable until we pull out, and then I'll post you up as best I can, Mr. Bronson."

Mr. "Bronson" pulled off his overcoat, and, seating himself in a chair, glanced around the car.

In one end packages, crates, butter, egg-cases, and parts of machinery were piled up. At the other end a small iron safe was lying. As it caught Bronson's eye an expression came over his face, which, if Fotheringham had seen, would have saved him a vast amount of trouble. But the messenger, too busy to notice his visitor, paid him no attention, and in a moment Bronson was puffing his cigar with a nonchalant air, that would disarm any suspicions which the messenger might have entertained, but he had none, as it was a common practice to send new men over his run, that he might "break them in."

The train had pulled out, and after passing the city limits, was flying through the suburbs at full speed.

Fotheringham, seated in front of his safe, with his way bills on his lap, was checking them off as Bronson called off each item of freight in the car.

The long shriek of the whistle and the jerking of the car caused by the tightening of the air brake on the wheels, showed the train to be approaching a station.

"This is Kirkwood," said Fotheringham, "nothing for them to-night."

The train was almost at a standstill, when Bronson, saying "What sort of a place is it?" threw back the door and peered out into the dark.

As he did so, a man passed swiftly by, and in passing glanced into the car. As Bronson looked, he saw it was the same man that had bought a ticket for Kirkwood and had ridden in the smoker.

The train moved on. Bronson shut the door and buttoned his coat. Fotheringham, still busy on his way bills, was whistling softly to himself, and sitting with his back to his fellow passenger.

Some unusual noise in the front end of the car caught his ear, and raising his head, he exclaimed:

"What's that?"

The answer came, not from the front of the car but from behind.

A strong muscular hand was placed on his neck. A brawny arm was thrown around his chest, and lifted from the chair, he was thrown violently to the floor of the car.

In a flash he realized his position. With an almost superhuman effort, he threw Bronson from him, and reaching around felt for his revolver. It was gone, and thrown to the other end of the car.

Little did the passengers on the train know of the stirring drama which was being enacted in the car before them. Little did they think as they leaned back in their comfortable seats, of the terrific struggle which was then taking place. On one hand it was a struggle for $100,000; on the other, for reputation, for honor, perhaps for life.

Fotheringham, strong as he vas (for he was large of frame, and muscular) was no match for his assailant. He struggled manfully, but was hurled again to the floor, and as he looked up, saw the cold barrel of a 32-calibre pointed at his head. Bronson's face, distorted with passion and stern with the fight, glared down at him, as he hissed through his teeth:

"Make a sound, and you are a dead man."

The messenger, seeing all was lost, lay passive upon the floor. The robber, whipping out a long, strong, silk handkerchief, tied his hands behind his back, and making a double-knotted gag of Fotheringham's handkerchief, gagged him. Searching the car he discovered a shawl-strap with which he tied the messenger's feet, and thus had him powerless as a log. Then, and not till then, did he speak aloud.

"Done, and well done, too."

The flush faded from his face, his eye became sullen, and drawing the messenger's chair to him he sat down. As he gazed at his discomfited prisoner an expression of intense relief came over his features. His forged letters had proved successful, his only formidable obstacle between himself and his anticipated booty lay stretched at his feet, helpless and harmless. The nature of the car prevented any interruption from the ends, as the only entrance was through the side doors, and he had all night before him to escape.

Now for the plunder. The key to the safe was in Fotheringham's pocket. It took but a second to secure it, and but another second to use it in unlocking the strong-box. The messenger, unable to prevent this in any way, looked on in intense mental agony. He saw that he would be suspected as an accomplice. The mere fact that one man could disarm, bind and gag him, would be used as a suspicious circumstance against him. Although he did not know the exact sum of money in the safe he was aware that it was of a very considerable amount, and he fairly writhed in his agony of mind. In an instant Cummings (or, as he had been called by the messenger, Bronson) was on his feet, revolver in hand, and again the cruel, murderous expression dwelt on his face, as he exclaimed:

"Lie still, damn you, lie still. If you attempt to create an alarm, I'll fill you so full of lead that some tenderfoot will locate you for a mineral claim. D'ye understand?"

After this facetious threat he paid no further attention to the messenger.

Emptying his valise of its contents of underclothing and linen, he stuffed it full of the packages of currency which the safe contained.

One package, containing $30,000, from the Continental Bank of St.
Louis, was consigned to the American National Bank of Kansas City.
Another large package held $12,000, from the Merchants National Bank of
St. Louis for the Merchants Bank of Forth Smith, Arkansas, and various
other packages, amounting altogether to $53,000.

With wonderful sang froid, Cummings stuffed this valuable booty in his valise, and then proceeded to open the bags containing coin. His keen knife-blade ripped bag after bag, but finding it all silver, he desisted, and turning to Fotheringham, demanded:

"Any gold aboard?"

Fotheringham shook his head in reply.

"Does that mean there is none, or you don't know?"

Again the messenger shook his head.

"Well, I reckon your right, all silver, too heavy and don't amount to much."

As he was talking, the whistle of the engine suddenly sound two short notes, and the air-brakes were applied.

The train stopped, and the noise of men walking on the gravel was heard.

As Fotheringham lay there, his ears strained to catch every sound, and hoping for the help that never came, his heart gave a joyful throb, as some one pounded noisily on the door. Almost at the same instant he felt the cold muzzle of a revolver against his head, and the ominous "click, click" was more eloquent than threats or words could be.

The pounding ceased, and in a short time the train moved on again.

Apparently not satisfied that the messenger was bound safe and fast, Cummings took the companion strap to the one which pinioned the feet of his victim, and passing it around his neck, fastened it to the handle of the safe in such a way that any extra exertion on Fotheringham's part would pull the safe over and choke him.

Opening the car door, he threw away the clothing which he had taken from his valise.

Returning to the messenger, he stooped over him, and took from his pocket the forged letter with which he gained entrance to the car.

Fotheringham tried to speak, but the gag permitted nothing but a rattling sound to escape.

"I know what you want, young fellow. You want this letter to prove that you had some sort of authority to let me ride. Sorry I can't accommodate you, my son, but those devilish Pinkertons will be after me in twenty-four hours, and this letter would be just meat to them. I'll fix you all right, though. My name's Cummings, Jim Cummings, and I'll write a letter to the St. Louis Globe-Democrat that will clear you Honest to God, I will. You've been pretty generous to-night; given me lots of swag, and I'll never go back on you.

"Give my love to Billy Pinkerton when you see him. Tell him Jim Cummings did this job."

As he uttered these words, the train commenced slacking up, and as it stopped, Cummings, opening the door, with his valuable valise, leaped to the ground, closed the door behind him, the darkness closed around him and he was gone.

Inside the car, a rifled safe, a bound and gagged messenger, and the Adams Express Company was poorer by $100,000 than it was when the 'Frisco train pulled out of the depot the evening before.

CHAPTER III.

PINKERTON TO THE RESCUE.

The next day the country knew of the robbery. Newspapers in every city had huge head lines, telling the story in the most graphic style.

JESSE JAMES OUTDONE! The Adams Express Company ROBBED OF $100,000!

THE EXPRESS MESSENGER FOUND GAGGED AND BOUND TO HIS OWN SAFE—THE ROBBER ESCAPES—ABSOLUTELY NO CLEWS—PINKERTON TO THE RESCUE!

Mr. Damsel, the superintendent of the St. Louis branch of the Adams Express Company, was pacing anxiously up and down his private office. Fotheringham was relating his exciting experience, which a stenographer immediately took down in shorthand. At frequent intervals Mr. Damsel would ask a searching question, to which the messenger replied in a straightforward manner and without

hesitation. It was a trying ordeal to him. Innocent as he was, his own testimony was against him. He knew it and felt it, but nothing that he could do or say would lighten the weight of the damaging evidence. He could but tell the facts and await developments. When he was through Mr. Damsel left him in the office, and immediately telegraphed to every station between Pacific and St. Louis to look for the linen and underclothing which the robbers had thrown from the car. The wires were working in all directions, giving a full description of Cummings and such other information as would lead to his discovery.

Local detectives were closeted with Mr. Damsel all day, but so shrewdly and cunningly had the express robber covered his tracks, that nothing but the bare description of the man could be used as a clew.

Fotheringham was put through the "sweating process" time and again, but, though he gave the most minute and detailed account of the affair, the detectives could find nothing to help them.

That Fotheringham "stood in" with the robber was the universal theory. The story of the letter and order from Mr. Barrett was received with derision and suspicion.

Mr. Damsel himself was almost confident that his employee had a hand in the robbery. It was a long and anxious day, and as it wore along and no new developments turned up, Mr. Damsel became more anxious and troubled: $100,000 is a large sum and the Adams Express Company had a reputation at stake. What was to be done?

Almost instantly the answer came: telegraph for Pinkerton.

The telegram was sent, and when William Pinkerton wired back that he would come at once. Mr. Damsel felt his load of responsibility begin to grow lighter, and he waited impatiently for the morning to come.

The next morning about 10 o'clock Mr. Damsel received a note, signed "Pinkerton," requesting him to call at room 84 of the Southern Hotel. He went at once. A pleasant-faced gentleman, with a heavy mustache and keen eyes, greeted him, and Mr. Damsel was shaking hands with the famous detective, on whose shoulders had fallen the mantle of his father, Allan Pinkerton, probably the finest detective the world has ever seen.

Mr. Damsel had his stenographer's notes, which had been transcribed on the type-writer, and Mr. Pinkerton carefully and slowly read every word.

"What sort of a man is this Fotheringham?"

"He is a large, well built, and I should say, muscular young fellow.
Has always been reliable before, and has been with us some years."

"Has he ever been arrested before?"

"He says twice. Once for shooting off a gun on Sunday, and again for knocking a man down for insulting a lady."

"You think he is guilty—that is, you think he had a hand in the robbery?"

"Mr. Pinkerton, I regret to say I do. It doesn't seem probable that a strong, hearty man would allow another man to disarm him, gag him, tie him hand and foot, get away with $100,000, and all that without a desperate struggle, and he hasn't the sign of a scratch or bruise on him."

"N-n-no, it doesn't. Still it could be done. You have him under arrest, then."

"Not exactly. He is in my office now, and apparently has no thought of trying to escape."

"Well, Mr. Damsel, I am inclined to think that this man Fotheringham knows no more of this robbery than he has told you. If he is in collusion with the robber, or robbers—for I think that more than one had to do with it—he would have made up a story in which two or more had attacked him. He would have had a cut in the arm, a bruised head or some such corroborating testimony to show. The fact that he was held up by a single man goes a good way, in my judgment, to prove him innocent of any criminal connection with the robbery. We must look elsewhere for the culprits."

"Had you not better see Fotheringham?"

"Of course I intend doing that. Did you secure the clothing which this so-called Cummings threw out of the train?"

"Telegrams have been sent out, and I hope to have it sent in by to-morrow."

"That is good—we may find something which we can grasp. The public generally have an idea that a detective can make something out of nothing that the merest film of a clew is all that is necessary with which to build up a strong substantial edifice of facts. It is only the Messieurs La Coqs and 'Old Sleuths' of books and illustrated weeklies that are possessed with the second sight, and can hunt down the shrewdest criminals, without being bound to such petty things as clews, circumstantial evidence or witnesses. We American detectives can generally make 4 by putting 2 and 2 together, but we must have a starting point, and an old shirt or a pair of stockings, such as this robber threw away, may contain just what we need."

A knock on the door, and an employee of the office entered.

"Mr. Damsel, the entire road has been carefully searched, and no trace of the clothing can be found."

"That's bad," said Mr. Pinkerton, "we should have found that."

Mr. Damsel bade the employee to return to the office, and turning to Mr. Pinkerton, said:

"The case is in your hands. Do what you want, if any man can run that Cummings down, you can."

"Well, I'll take it. I should advise you first to have Fotheringham arrested as an accomplice. While I do not think he is one, he may be; at any rate it will lead the principals in the case to believe we are on the wrong track, but I must confess there don't seem to be any track at all, wrong or right."

"I will do that. I will swear out a warrant to-day against him."

Mr. Damsel took his leave, and that night Fotheringham slept behind iron bars.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DETECTIVE AND THE MESSENGER.

After Mr. Damsel had left the hotel, Mr. Pinkerton sat in deep thought. He had carefully re-read Fotheringham's statement, but could find nothing that could be put out as a tracer; no little straw to tell which way the wind was blowing.

"Cummings, Cummings, Jim Cummings. By George, that can't be the Jim Cummings that used to flock with the Jesse James gang. That Cummings was a gray-haired man, while this Cummings is young, about 26 years old. Besides he is a much larger than Jesse James' Jim Cummings. That name is evidently assumed.

"This statement says he was dressed in a good suit of clothes, and wore a very flashy cravat. Furthermore, he bragged a good deal about what he would do with the money. Also that he would write a letter to the St. Louis Globe-Democrat exonerating the messenger. Well, a man who will brag like that, and wears flashy articles of neck-wear, is just the man that will talk too much, or make some bad break. If he writes that letter, he's a goner. There will be something in it that will give me a hold. The paper, the ink, the hand-writing, the place and time it was mailed—something that will give him away."

"I must see this messenger, and I must see him here; alone. He may be able to give me a little glimmer of light."

To think with "Billy" Pinkerton was to act.

He pressed the annunciator button, and sitting down, wrote a short note to Mr. Damsel, requesting him to bring Fotheringham with him to his room.

The bell-boy who answered the call bore the note away with him, and in a short time, Mr. Pinkerton, looking out of his window, saw Mr. Damsel in his buggy drive up to the hotel accompanied by a young man, whom Mr. Pinkerton recognized from the description given him, as the unfortunate Fotheringham, who had evidently, as yet, not been arrested.

It took but a few moments for Mr. Damsel to reach Room 84, and after introducing Fotheringham to the detective, left him there.

Fotheringham wore a worried and hunted look. The black rings under his eyes told of loss of sleep, and his whole demeanor was that of a discouraged person. Still he bore the keen scrutiny of the detective without flinching, and looking him squarely in the eye, said:

"Mr. Pinkerton, don't ask me to repeat my story again. I have told it time after time. I have been cross-questioned, and turned and twisted until I almost believe I committed the robbery myself, tied my own hands and feet, put the gag in my own mouth, and hid the money some place."

Mr. Pinkerton did not answer him, but gazing at him with those sharp, far-seeing eyes, which had ferreted out so many crimes, and had made so many criminals tremble, took in every detail of Fotheringham's features, as if reading his very soul. Fotheringham leaned back, closed his eyes wearily, as if it were a matter of the smallest consequence what might occur, and remained in that position until Mr. Pinkerton spoke.

"Mr. Fotheringham, I don't believe you had anything to do with the robbery, except being robbed."

"Thank God for those words, Mr. Pinkerton," exclaimed the messenger in broken tones, the tears welling to his eyes. "That's the first bit of comfort I've had since the dastardly villain first knocked me down."

"Can you not give me some peculiarity which you noticed about this Cummings? How did he talk?"

"Slowly, with a very pleasant voice."

"Did he have any marks about him—any scars?"

Fotheringham sat in deep thought for a while.

"He had a triangular gold filling on one of his front teeth, and he had a way of hanging his head a little to one side, as if he were deaf, but I did not see any scars, excepting a bit of court-plaster on one of the fingers of his right hand."

"Was he disguised at all?"

"Not a bit, at least I could see no disguise on him."

"How did he walk?"

"Very erect, and, yes, I noticed he limped a little, as if he had a sore foot."

"I see by this report," taking up the papers Mr. Damsel had left, "that you have given a very close and full description of his appearance, but that amounts to little. Disguises are easy, and the mere changing of clothing will effect a great difference."

"I am positive, from his features, that he was a hard drinker. He had been drinking before he came to the car, as I smelled it on his breath."

"Well, Mr. Fotheringham, I will not detain you any longer. If you are innocent, you know you have nothing to fear."

"Except the disgrace of being arrested."

"Possibly," said Mr. Pinkerton, shortly, and bowing his visitor out, he pondered long and deeply over the case; but he felt he was groping in the dark, for the robber had apparently left no trace behind him. He had appeared on the scene, done his work, and the dark shadows of the night had swallowed him up, and Mr. Pinkerton, for the time, was completely baffled.

"If he would only write that letter," he muttered, "and I believe he will—"

A tap at the door followed these words, and two men entered—both Pinkerton detectives.

One of them carried a bundle in his arms.

As Mr. Pinkerton caught sight of it, his face lightened up.

"Ah! You did get it?"

"Yes; found them in a ditch the other side of Kirkwood."

Mr. Pinkerton laughed, and taking the bundle, said:

"Mr. Damsel said they could not be found; but I knew you, Chip. It was a good move on your part to go after these clothes without waiting for orders. You are starting in well, my boy, and if you have the making of a detective in you, this case will bring it out."

Chip blushed. Such words of praise from his superior were worth working for. The youngest man on the force, he had his spurs to win, and the approbation of his chief was reward enough.

The bundle was untied, and disclosed a shirt, a pair of drawers, socks and a dirty handkerchief. As the clothing fell on the floor, the odor of some sort of liniment filled the room, and on the leg of the drawers, below the knee, a stain was seen. Examining it more closely, a little clotted blood was seen. The stain extended half way around the leg, and showed that the cut or bruise was quite an extensive one.

"No wonder he limped," said Mr. Pinkerton, as he dropped the drawers and picked up the handkerchief.

The handkerchief, a common linen one, had evidently been used as a bandage, for it was stained with the liniment, and covered with blood clots. In one corner had been written a name, but the only letters now readable were "W—r—k."

This was placed on the table and the shirt carefully examined.

Nothing, not even the maker's name, could be seen. It was a cheap shirt, such as could be bought at any store which labels everything belonging to a man as "Gents' Furnishing." The socks were common, and like thousands of similar socks.

"Not much of a find, Chip—the letters on the handkerchief can be found in a hundred different names —a sore knee is covered by a pair of trousers, and one out of every ten men you meet, limps."

The other detective, who had all this time been silent, now laid some Adams Express letter-heads on the table. On these were written "J. B. Barrett," in all forms of chirography—several sheets were covered with the name.

"Where did you get these?"

"Out of Fotheringham's trunk, in his room."

"By Jove, what a consummate actor that man is. Do you know, boys, up to this minute, I firmly believed that messenger was innocent—I have been sold like an ordinary fool," and Mr. Pinkerton looked at the tell-tale papers admiringly, for, although he felt a trifle chagrined at being taken in so nicely, he could not but pay tribute to the man who did it, for the man that could get the better of "Billy" Pinkerton, must be one of extraordinary ability.

"If you please," said Chip, "I do not see that the mere finding of this paper in Fotheringham's trunk should fasten suspicion on him. If he was shrewd enough to capture the money, he would certainly not leave such damaging evidence as this paper would be. It seems to me that it would be a very plausible theory to advance, that the real robbers placed this in his trunk to direct suspicion against him. In fact, it was the first thing to be seen when the lid was lifted, for I was with Barney when he searched the room."

Barney said nothing to his companion's remarks, but nodded his head to show that he acquiesced.

Mr. Pinkerton listened carefully, and merely saying, "we'll look at this later," gave a very careful and complete description of Cummings, which he directed Chip and Barney to take to the St. Louis branch of this firm, and from there send it through all the divisions and sub-divisions of this vast detective cob-web.

After issuing further and more orders relating to the case in hand, he put on his hat, and descended to the hotel office, followed by his two subordinates.

After the exciting episode in the express car had been brought to a close by Jim Cummings leaping from the car, the train moved on, and left him alone, the possessor of nearly $100,000. The game had been a desperate one, and well played, and nervy and cool as he was, the desperado was forced to seat himself on a pile of railroad ties, until he could regain possession of himself, for he trembled in every limb, and shook as with a chill. He pulled himself together, however, and picking up his valise, with its valuable contents, turned toward the river.

He stepped from tie to tie, feeling his way in the darkness, every sense on the alert, and straining his eyes to catch a glimpse of some landmark. He had walked nearly a mile when, from behind a pile of brush heaped up near the track, a man stepped forth. The double click of a revolver was heard, and in an imperative tone, the unknown man called out:

"Halt! Put your hands above your head. I've got the drop on you!"

Startled as he was by the sudden appearance of the man, and hardly recovered from his hard fight with the messenger, Cummings was too brave and too daring to yield so tamely. Dropping his valise, he sprang upon the audacious stranger so suddenly that he was taken completely by surprise. The sharp report of the revolver rang out upon the quiet night, and the two men, Cummings uppermost, fell upon the grading of the road. The men were very evenly matched, and the fortunes of war wavered from one to the other. The hoarse breathing, the muttered curses, and savage blows told that a desperate conflict was taking place. Clasped in each other's embrace, the men lay, side by side, neither able to gain the mastery. Far around the curve the rumbling of an approaching freight train was heard. Nearer and nearer it came, and still the men fought on. With a grip of iron Cummings held the stranger's throat to the rail, and with arms of steel clasped around Cummings, his assailant pressed him to the ground.

It was an even thing, a fair field and no favor, when the sudden flash of the headlight of the approaching engine, as it shot around the curve, caused both men to lose their hold and spring from the track. The strong, clear light flooded both with its brilliancy, and in that instant mutual recognition took place.

"Wittrock!"

"Moriarity!"

The train swept by, and the darkness again settled around the late combatants.

Cummings was the first to speak.

"How the devil did you get here, Dan?"

"Just what I was going to ask you, Fred."

"Then you didn't get my letter?"

"What letter."

"I wrote you from Chicago, to be on hand at the 'plant' to-night."

"Did you send it to Leavenworth?"

"Yes."

"I am on my way there now. Got busted in St. Louis, couldn't make a raise, and I commenced to count ties for Leavenworth."

"Yes, then you took me for some jay, and tried to hold me up. It's lucky I met you, I need you."

"Any money in it?"

"Slathers of it."

"What's your lay?"

Cummings hesitated a minute before replying, and then said:

"Dan! you went back on me once, I don't know that I can trust you, you are too—"

"Trust me! You give Dan Moriarity a chance to cover some tin, and he's yours, body and soul."

"What's your price to help me, and keep your mouth shut?"

"$2,000."

"It's a go," and Cummings held out his hand.

The compact was thus sealed, and lighting a match, Cummings commenced to look for his valise.

It had, fortunately, fallen outside the rails, and picking it up, Cummings led the way, followed by the

somewhat surprised and still more curious Moriarity.

At this point on the Missouri river, the bluffs rise abruptly from the banks. The railroad, winding around the curves, was literally hewn from the solid rock. Deep gullies and ravines, starting from the water, Intersected all portions of the country, and the thick underbrush made this place a safe and secure hiding-place for fugitives from justice, river pirates and moonshiners.

Cummings, at a point where one of these gullies branched off from the railroad, turned into it, and with confident steps, followed closely by Moriarity, scaled the rocky precipice. Half way up the toilsome ascent, he halted, and placing his fingers in his mouth, gave three shrill whistles. Two short, and one long drawn sounds.

It was immediately answered; and in an instant, a flaming torch sprang into view, and almost as quickly was extinguished.

A short climb, and turning sharply to the right, Cummings again stopped. The signal, repeated softly, was answered by a voice asking:

"Who comes there?"

To which Cummings replied:

"It is I, be not afraid," at the same time poking Moriarity in the ribs, and chuckling:

"I haven't forgotten my Bible yet, eh, Dan?"

A blanket was lifted to one side, and disclosed to view the entrance to a natural cave, into the wall of which was stuck a naming, pitch-pine knot. Entering, the blanket was dropped, and preceded by a man, whose features the fitful glare of the torch failed to reveal, the two adventurers were ushered into the main portion of the cavern.

In one corner the copper kettle and coiled worm of a whisky still told it was the abode of an illicit distiller, or a "moonshiner."

A large fire cast a ruddy glow over the cave, and blankets and cooking utensils were scattered about. As the guide stepped into the light, he turned around, his eyes first falling on the well-stuffed valise and then upon Cummings' face, which wore such an expression of success and satisfaction that he exclaimed, as he held out his hand:

"By the ghost of Jesse James, you did it, old man."

"This looks like it, don't it?" said the successful express-car robber, holding his valise to the light. "Don't you know this man, Haight?"

"Damme, if it isn't Dan Moriarity."

"The same old penny—Haight," and Moriarity clasped his hand.

Haight, as host, did the honors. An empty flour barrel, covered by a square board, made an acceptable table. Small whisky barrels did duty as chairs, and a substantial repast of boiled fish, partridges and gray squirrels, supplemented with steaming glasses of hot toddy, satisfied the inner man, and, for a time, caused them to forget the exciting train of events through which they had just passed.

After their hunger had been appeased pipes were lit, and the fragrant glass of spirits, filled to the brim, were placed conveniently and seductively near at hand.

Cummings then related, in detail, his night's exploit and ended by opening the valise and taking out the packages of currency which it contained. It was a strange picture to gaze upon. The fire-lit cave, shrouded outside with mystery and darkness, but its heart alive with light and warmth; the rude appliances and paraphernalia for distilling the contraband "mountain dew"; the floor strewn with blankets, cooking-tins, a rifle or two, and provisions, while, bathed in the warm glow of the cheerful fire, secure from pursuit and comfortably housed from the weather, the three men, with greedy eyes, drank in the enchanting vision of luxurious wealth, which lay, bound in its neat wrappers, upon the floor of the cave.

Not one of these men could be classed with professional criminals, Moriarity, perhaps, had several times done some "fine work," but was unknown in the strata of crime, and was never seen in the society of "experts."

His attack upon Cummings could be called his debut, just as Cummings' late success could be looked on as his first definite step within the portals of outlawry and crime. Haight, as an accessory to the robbery, had hardly taken his first plunge. Some time before this these same men, with others, had planned an extensive robbery on the same line, but Moriarity weakened at the last moment and the whole thing fell through. It was this incident which caused Cummings to doubt his trustworthiness. Still Moriarity had a certain amount of bull courage, of which Cummings was aware, and if his palm was but crossed by the almighty dollar he would be a valuable ally. For this reason Cummings had taken him again into his confidence.

For some moments the three men sat silently puffing their pipes and picturing the delight of spending their ill-gotten booty, when Cummings, rising from his seat, placed the money on the table and cut the strings which bound it together.

A hasty count revealed $53,000 in currency and about $40,000 in bonds, mortgage deeds, and other unconvertible valuables.

He had evidently fully considered his plans, and without any previous beating around the bush, proceeded to execute them.

Opening a package of smaller bills he divided it into three parts, giving Haight and Moriarity each a share. The remainder of the plunder he again divided into three portions, and taking the larger one for himself, proceeded to wrap it and tie it securely; his companions, taking their cue from him, doing likewise.

"Boys," he then said, "as soon as the robbery is discovered the company will turn hell itself upside down to find it. Pinkerton will be on our trail in forty-eight hours. The first thing they will do will be to suspect the messenger. He will be arrested, and while they are monkeying with him we must get out of the way. I told the poor devil I would write a letter to some paper, I think I said the Globe-Democrat, which would clear him, but we must make ourselves safe first.

"Dan, you must get to Leavenworth, find Cook, and have him plant what you have. Haight will go to Chicago and know what to do, while I—well—I am going south for my health."

Stopping abruptly he drew his revolver, and stepping up to Moriarity, placed the cold muzzle to his temple. His eyes, cold as steel and sharp as an arrow, were fastened upon Dan's very heart, and speaking with terrible earnestness, he said:

"Dan Moriarity, if ever you break faith with me, I'll kill you like a cur, so help me God!"

Moriarity stood the ordeal without flinching, and holding his right hand above his head, took a solemn oath never to betray, by word or deed, the trust which had been placed in him.

Without another word each man carefully placed his particular charge securely about his person. Every scrap of paper was gathered up, and, after extinguishing the fire, the three men left the cave, and in the dawn of the early morning descended to the railroad track.

Hands were shaken, the last words of advice given, and Cummings plunged into the labyrinth of gullies and underbrush, leaving his companions each to pursue his own way, Moriarity going west, while Haight, going east, sprang the fence, and entering a thick patch of bushes, brought out a horse, saddled and bridled. Mounting this he struck into a quick canter across the country toward St. Louis.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST CLEW FOUND.

Mr. Pinkerton had passed an anxious week, Never before had he been so completely baffled. The finding of the letter-heads with Bartlett's name written on them in Fotheringham's trunk had quite upset his theories. Yet the most searching examination could find nothing in the suspected messenger's previous movements, upon which to fasten any connection with the robbery.

The vast machinery of Pinkerton's Detective Agency was at work all over the country. His brightest and keenest operatives had been brought together in St. Louis, Kansas City, Leavenworth and Chicago. False clews were sprung every day, and run down to a disappointed termination. But all to no purpose.

Outwitted and baffled, Mr. Pinkerton was treading his apartment at the Southern Hotel with impatient steps; his brow was wrinkled with thought and his eyes heavy with loss of sleep. In his vast and varied experience with criminals he had never yet met one who had so completely covered his tracks as this same Jim Cummings. Of one thing he was satisfied, however, and that was, that no professional criminal had committed the robbery, and again that two or more men were concerned in it.

In Fotheringham's description of the robbery, he had mentioned hearing an unusual noise in the fore part of the car, as if some one were tapping on the partition, and on examining the car, the bell-cord was found to be plugged. This showed an accomplice, or perhaps more than one.

That it was not done by a professional was clear, because Mr. Pinkerton, having the entire directory and encyclopedia of crime and criminals at his fingers' end, knew of no one that would have gone about the affair as this man Cummings had done.

As everything else has its system, and each system has its followers, so robbery has its method, and each method its advocates and practitioners. This is so assuredly the fact that the detective almost instantly recognizes the hand which did the work by the manner in which the work was done.

This particular robbery was unique. An express car had never been looted in this manner before. "Therefore," said Mr. Pinkerton, "it was done by a new man, and although this new man had the nerve, brains and shrewdness necessary to successfully terminate his plans, yet he will lack the cunning and experience of an old hand in keeping clear of the detectives and the law, and will do some one thing which will put us upon his track."

He had just arrived at this comforting conclusion, when an impatient rap was heard on the door, followed almost instantly by Mr. Damsel opening it and entering the room.

In his hand he held a letter, and, full of excitement, he waved it over his head, as he said:

"He has written a letter."

A gleam of satisfaction was in Mr. Pinkerton's eye as he took the paper from Mr. Damsel, but his manner was entirely void of excitement, and his voice was calm and even, as he replied:

"I expected he would do something of that sort."

Mr. Damsel—his excitement somewhat allayed by the nonchalant manner with which the detective had received the news—seated himself on the sofa.

Mr. Pinkerton read the letter carefully.

It was headed "St. Joe, Missouri," and addressed to the editor of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, and a large number of sheets, closely written in a backhand, was signed "Yours truly, Jim Cummings." It stated, in substance, that the robbery had been carefully planned some time before the occurrence. That entrance had been gained to the express car by the presentation of a forged order from Route Agent Bartlett, and that Fotheringham was entirely innocent of the entire affair.

The letter related, minutely, all that occurred from the time the train left St. Louis until it reached Pacific.

It told how the messenger was attacked, gagged and bound, and, in fact, was such a complete expose of the robbery that Mr. Pinkerton laid it down with an incredulous smile, saying:

"Nothing to that, Mr. Damsel. That letter was not written by the robber, but is a practical joke, played by some one who gleaned all his information from the newspapers."

"Indeed," responded Mr. Damsel, "then what do you say to this?" and he handed Mr. Pinkerton two pieces of calendered white wrapping paper, showing the seals of the Adams Express Company upon it, the strings cut, but the paper still retaining the form of an oblong package.

Surprised and puzzled, Mr. Pinkerton saw they were the original wrappings of the $30,000 and $12,000 packages which had been taken from the safe by the robber. The addresses were still on the paper, and Mr. Damsel, in a most emphatic tone, said:

"I'm prepared to swear that they are genuine."

Mr. Pinkerton, still silent, re-read the letter, carefully weighing each word, and this time finishing it.

He came to one paragraph, which read:

"Now to prove these facts * * * * I took my gun, a Smith we had practiced on, and checked the package in the St. Louis Union Depot, under the initials J. M. Now if you want a good little gun and billy, go and get out the packages checked to J. M. in the Union Depot October 25th; there are probably seventy-five or eighty cents charges on it by this time, but the gun alone is worth $10. Also, if you want a double-barreled shot-gun, muzzle-loader, go along the bank of the Missouri River, on the north side, about a mile below St. Charles bridge, and about twenty feet along the bank, just east of that dike that runs out into the river, and you will find in a little gully a shot-gun and a musket. Be careful. I left them both loaded with buckshot and caps on the tubes. They were laying, wrapped up in an oil-cloth, with some weeds thrown over them. Also, down on the river just below the guns, I left my skiff and a lot of stuff, coffee-pot, skillet, and partially concealed, just west of the skiff, you will find a box of grub, coffee, bacon, etc. I came down the river in a skiff Tuesday night, October 26-27, from a point opposite Labodie. It is a run of thirty-five or thirty-six miles. They should all be there unless some one found them before you got there." * * * *

Mr. Pinkerton, in a brown study, tapping the table with his fingers, sat for some moments. Rising abruptly, he placed his hat on his head, and requesting Mr. Damsel to follow, left the room. In a short time he was in the Union Depot, and stepping up to the clerk of the parcel-room, asked for a package which had been left there October 25th, marked "J. M.," stating that he had lost his ticket. After some search, the clerk brought forward a parcel tied in a newspaper.

"This is marked J. M., and was left here October 25th."

"That is the one," said Mr. Pinkerton, and paying the charges, hastened back to the hotel.

In spite of his habitual calmness and sang froid, Mr. Pinkerton's hand trembled as he cut the string. As the paper was unwrapped, both men gave an exclamation of surprise and joy, for disclosed to view was a revolver, a billy, some shirts and papers.

"At last," cried Mr. Pinkerton, and he eagerly scanned the various articles. The revolver was an ordinary, self-cocking Smith & Wesson. The billy was the sort called "life-preservers." The Adams Express letter-heads were covered with the names "J. B. Barrett" and "W. H. Damsel." Mr. Pinkerton passed these to his companions.

"They are pretty fair forgeries. Hang me, if it don't look as though I had written that name myself."

The detective, all this time, was scrutinizing each article, hoping to find something new.

With the papers he took out a printed ballad-sheet of the kind sold on the streets by newsboys and fakirs. Turning it over, he saw something written on it, and looking closely, read, "——, Chestnut street."

The handwriting was the same as the handwriting of the letter. The first clew had been found.

CHAPTER VI.

"CHIP" BINGHAM.

George Bingham, or as he was familiarly called, "Chip" Bingham, was the youngest operative in Mr. Pinkerton's service. His talents, in the detective line, ranged considerably higher than did the general run of his associates. Possessing an analytical mind, he could take the effect, and, by logical conclusions, retrace its path to the fundamental cause, and following this principle, he had made many valuable discoveries in mystery-shrouded cases, and had, many times, picked the end of a clew from a seemingly hopeless snarl, and raveled the entire mesh of circumstantial evidence, and made from it a strong cord of substantiated facts. Mr. Pinkerton had early recognized this talent, and having, besides, a peculiar attachment to the handsome young fellow, he frequently placed delicate and intricate cases into his hands, always with good results. It was for Chip, then, he sent, when he had finished his examination of the valuable package.

Mr. Damsel, his mind somewhat freed from the trouble and worry it had carried since the robbery, had left Mr. Pinkerton alone and returned to his office.

Chip, on receipt of his superior's message, immediately repaired to Room 84. His downcast

countenance and disappointed air told of fruitless endeavors to catch even the slightest real clew. He said nothing as he entered the room, but with a gesture of hopeless failure he sank into a chair and awaited his chief's pleasure.

"Chip, I've got a starter."

With an indulgent smile Chip nodded his head, but failed to exhibit any extraordinary interest.

Mr. Pinkerton's eyes twinkled. He understood the situation, but time was valuable and he could not waste any in humorous by-play. So without further parleying he handed Chip the tell-tale letter.

The young detective, almost from the first word, put the letter down as a practical joke, perpetrated on the newspaper, but as the missive progressed he became interested, and when he had reached that portion which told of the package every fiber of his detective instinct was alive, and Mr. Pinkerton had no need of pointing to the precious parcel as corroborative evidence that the letter was genuine.

In an instant Chip was examining the contents. Every portion of the revolver, billy and letterheads was searched with deepest scrutiny. The printed sheet of ballad music was picked up, the verses read and the sheet turned.

An exclamation burst from his lips, as his eye caught the words, written in lead pencil, "——Chestnut Street," and placing it beside the letter, he saw it was written by the same hand. "The devil! Here is a starter!"

His face glowed with animation, his eyes had the alert look of a hound on a hot scent, and carefully noting the number in his memorandum book, without waiting instructions from Mr. Pinkerton, he picked up his hat and hurriedly left the room.

Mr. Pinkerton, in full sympathy with his subordinate, lit a cigar, and settled back for a comfortable smoke until Chip made his report.

Chip, regaining the street, engaged a hack standing near the hotel, and stopping it a short distance from the number he wanted on Chestnut street, walked the remaining distance to the house.

A sign "Board by the week or day," and another one, "Furnished rooms to let," showed it to be an ordinary boarding-house. Chip had fully decided within himself, during the ride, that the men who had left the parcel had also left St. Louis. While it was not so much an improbability that the men would still be in the city, it was far more probable that they would put some distance between themselves and the scene of their exploit. For this reason, Chip decided that a plain course would result in no unfortunate mishap or premature flushing of the game.

Ascending the steps, he rang the bell.

The landlady of the house herself opened the door.

Before Chip could speak, she said:

"You're a detective, aren't you?"

"Yes," said Chip, somewhat surprised, and regretting immediately that he had not made his entrance in a more detective-like manner.

"I've been expecting some of you. You want to know about those two men that stopped with me a short time before the 'Frisco express robbery?"

Seeing at once that he was conversing with a more than ordinary shrewd individual, Chip replied, "That's just what I'm here for. But why do you ask that question?"

"Well, I suspicioned something was wrong with them two men. They came here on the fifteenth of October, and paid me a week's board in advance. They kept their room almost all the time, and when I went in to clean it, I saw a lot of railroad time-tables and maps scattered around. One of them was always in the room. It was never left alone. A week before the robbery, the smaller man left, he said for Kansas City, and the larger man told me if a letter came to the house, directed to Williams, that is for him. Well, on the Friday before the robbery, such a letter did come, and the big man, after reading it, said he had to go to Kansas City at once, but he didn't leave the house until Monday, and the next day the robbery occurred."

"Can you give me a description of the men?"

The landlady thereupon gave a full description of the larger man, which Chip carefully inserted in his

note book, and recognized as the same given by Fotheringham of his assailant on that memorable night. But her description of the smaller of the two was somewhat vague, as she said he was only in the house a short time, and she saw very little of him.

"May I go up to the room?"

"Yes; come this way."

Entering the room, the first thing which met the detective's eye was a bottle containing some sort of liniment, having on it a label of a neighboring druggist, In a closet a pair of drawers were found, and with the dark brown stain below the knee was almost identical to that which Chip had found on the railroad track, and which the robber had thrown from the express car. Not satisfied with this, Chip ripped up the carpet, and as a reward for his labor found an express tag, or rather a portion of one, for the tag was torn in two pieces. On the tag Chip read the portion of an address, "——ority," and below, "——worth, Kansas." Further questioning of the garrulous landlady gained a description of the valise which the larger man carried away with him. It tallied with the description given by Fotheringham of the valise into which Jim Cummings had put the stolen money.

Gathering his trophies together, Chip bid his talkative lady friend good-day, and immediately bent his steps toward the drug store, from which had come the bottle of liniment.

No, the druggist could not recollect what particular person had bought that bottle, but if the young man would call on Doctor B——, he could probably ascertain the fact from him, as the liniment was put up from the Doctor's prescription. Chip, in a short time, was ushered into the Doctor's presence.

Yes, the Doctor not only recollected the man, but gave a very close description of him. The man had come to him, suffering from a bad bruise or cut on the leg below the knee. Nothing serious, but so painful that it caused him to limp. He had made out the prescription of the unguent which the bottle had contained, and the man had paid for it. But he gave no name, nor in what manner he had received the injury.

Chip, satisfied with his work, left the physician, and whistling for his jehu, drove back to the hotel.

That the large man who had boarded with the landlady at —— Chestnut street, and had bought and used the ointment, was identical with Jim Cummings, the express robber, Chip had not the shadow of a doubt. The smaller man was, of course, his accomplice. He had seen where the men had secreted themselves a week before the robbery, he vas even pretty certain of their movements during that time, but the question was where had they gone AFTER the deed was committed. Who and where was the accomplice? What other men had aided and abetted them in the scheme? With his mind full of these perplexing queries, he sought Mr. Pinkerton's room, and laid before him the result of his search.

Mr. Pinkerton listened attentively and picking up the torn express tag, examined it carefully.

It was a portion of an ordinary tag, such as is used by the Adams
Express Company.

It had been torn about the middle. The strings were still on it. From its appearance it had been addressed, and the person, not satisfied with his work, had torn it in two and thrown it on the floor, from which it had probably been swept in a corner, and eventually got under the edge of the carpet, where Chip had found it. It read.

ority

worth Kansas

[Illustration: a drawing of a torn ticket.]

On the reverse side in faint penciled characters were the words: "it to Cook," From the blurred appearance of the words it was evident that a rubber had been used to erase them. These words had escaped Chip's notice, but as soon as Mr. Pinkerton saw them, he said:

"I see it all, Chip. I see it all. A message was written on the tag, probably giving some instructions, such as 'Send it to Cook,' or 'Give it to Cook,' and the person sending it changing his mind about writing his instructions so openly tried to erase the words with a rubber, but failing to do it tore the tag up and addressed another one.

"The package to which this was to have been tied was sent to some man whose name ends in 'ority and who was in Leavenworth, Kansas. We can find that out to-morrow, Chip, so turn in and get some sleep."

The next morning the books of the company were overhauled, and after a long, patient and careful search it was found that on October 23d, two days before the robbery, a valise had been expressed to a Daniel Moriarity, Leavenworth, Kansas, charges prepaid, by a man named John Williams.

That evening Chip left St. Louis for Leavenworth and Mr. Pinkerton returned to Chicago.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRAMP.

About the middle of November, after the now famous express robbery had taken place, a man, roughly dressed in a coarse suit of blue, wearing a woolen shirt open at the neck, and, knotted around his throat, a gaudy silk handkerchief, was strolling leisurely along the east bottoms near Kansas City. His face was tanned by exposure to the sun, and his shoes had the flattened and battered condition which is the natural consequence of a long and weary tramp. He walked as if he had no particular objective point, and looked like one of those peripatetic gentry who toil not neither do they spin, the genus "tramp." He complacently puffed a short clay nose-warmer, with his hands in his pockets, and taking first one side and then the other of the road, as his fancy dictated, found himself near the old distillery at the outskirts of the city.

A saloon near at hand, with its front door invitingly open, attracted his attention, and the cheering sounds of a violin, scraping out some popular air, gave a further impetus to inclination, and the tramp turned to the open door and entered. Seated on an empty barrel, his foot executing vigorous time to his own music, sat the magician of the horse-hair bow.

Leaning against the bar, or seated at the small tables scattered around, the tramp saw a goodly number of the disciples of Bacchus, while from an inner room the clicking of ivory chips and half suppressed expressions of "I'll see you an' go you tenner better." "A full house pat, what 'er ye got," designated the altar at which the worshipers of "draw poker" were offering sacrifices.

The saloon consisted of one long, low room, on one side of which was located the conventional bar, with its background of glittering decanters and dazzling glasses and its "choice assortment of liquors"—to quote the sign which called attention to these necessary luxuries.

A large stove stood in the center of the room, and a number of small tables were placed around promiscuously, The bar-tender, a smooth-faced, beetle-browed rascal, was engaged in shaking dice for the drinks with a customer, and, to the music of the violin, a light-footed Irishman was executing his national jig, to the great delight and no small edification of his enthusiastic audience.

The wide sombreroes, perched back on the head, pointed out the cowboys who were making up for the lonesome days and nights on the plains.

It was a motley crowd, a fair specimen of the heterogeneous mass of humanity which floats hither and there all over our western States, and contained some villainous-looking fellows.

As the tramp entered, the interest in the jig was developing into enthusiasm. Hands were clapped, and fingers snapped to the time of the nimble heels and toes of the jaunty Corkonian. The violinist was settling down to vigorous work, and Pat, having the incentive of anticipated free drinks as a reward for his efforts, was executing the most intricate of steps.

The tramp lounged to the bar, followed by the suspicious glance of the bar-keeper, who assumed a more respectful demeanor as the object of his suspicions threw down a silver quarter and named his drink. It was quickly furnished, and as quickly disposed of. The dancer had finished his jig and accepted with alacrity the proffered offers to wet his whistle. As he stepped to the bar his glance fell upon the tramp.

"Are ye drinkin' this aivenin'?"

"I am that," responded the tramp,

"Faith, an' its not at yer own expinse, then," with a glance at the ragged clothing and "hard-up" appearance of the wanderer.

"An' a divil sight less at yours," retorted the tramp. "But by the same token, we both get our rosy by manes of our heels."

"Shure fir ye, lad. Its hard up I've been myself before the now, but its a cold day when Barney O'Hara will let a bog-trotter go dry—name your poison."

"Its the rale ould stuff I'll be a takin' straight," and the tramp spread his elbows on the counter and soon demonstrated his ability to gulp down the fiery fluid without any such effeminate trimmings as water in it. After the first glass had been emptied the tramp said:

"I've had a bit of luck to-day; what's your medicine?"

"The same," responded Barney.

The liquor was poured into the glasses, and the tramp, diving deep in his pockets, drew out some small silver currency, and, with a movement expressive of untold wealth, threw it on the counter.

As he did so, the bar-keeper uttered an oath of astonishment, several of the roysterers sprang forward, and Barney, with an exclamation of amazement, put his hand on a Pinkerton detective star, with its terrible eye in the center, which had fallen on the counter with the nickles and dimes the tramp had thrown down.

Dark looks and murderous eyes were turned on the tramp, and more than one hand was placed on a revolver, The bar-keeper with an ugly look, and bullying swagger, stepped from behind the bar and advanced on the tramp, his face distorted with rage, and his fists doubled in a most aggressive manner.

The tramp, without moving, and apparently ignorant of the sensation he had created, raised his glass to his lips, and with a hearty "Here's to ye, lads," tossed off the whisky.

As he replaced his glass, he became aware that he was the center of attention, and facing the bar-keeper, said:

"What's the row with ye? I paid fer the drinks,"

"What are you doin' with a detective's star?" said the bar-keeper,

"Haven't I a right to one; I dunno—finders keepers, losers weepers—I picked the bit of brass up on the road not over an hour ago."

The bar-keeper was not to be pacified by such a story, and in a threatening voice, he asked:

"Are you a man-hunter or not?"

The tramp threw a pitying glance of scorn at the pugilistic whisky-seller, as he replied:

"Be gorra, ye damned fool, do you think that I'd be after givin' myself away like this if I WAS one?"

"In course ye wouldn't," broke in Barney. "Don't be a fool, Jerry, this man is no detective," and Barney fastened the star to the vest which encircled the portly form of the bar-keeper.

"Now ye're one yerself, an' will be after runnin' us all in fer not detectin' enough of the elegant liquor ye handle."

To this the man could make no reply, save a deep, hoarse laugh, and resuming his professional position, was shortly engaged in alleviating the thirst of his patrons.

This little episode had just occurred, when the door of the inner room was thrown violently open and a man, his coat off, rushed up to the bar.

"Here, Jerry, break this fifty for me," at the same time throwing down a fifty-dollar bill, crisp and fresh.

"Your playin' in bad luck to-day, Cook?"

"Yes, damn it," said Cook. "Give me a drink for good luck."

As the bar-keeper uttered the name of Cook a quick, but hardly perceptible glance of intelligence passed between Barney and the tramp.

Cook hastily swallowed his whisky, rushed back to the poker table with a handful of five dollar bills, and quiet reigned over the place. The bar-keeper, who spied a possible good customer in the tramp,

had entered into a little conversation at the end of the counter, on which the tramp leaned, the embodiment of solid comfort, puffing his cigar vigorously, or allowing it to burn itself out in little rings of smoke.

"You're a stranger to these parts?"

With an expressive wink, the tramp replied:

"Not so much as ye think, I've spint many a noight around here."

"Night hawk, eh? an' I took you for a man-trailer."

"I've had the spalpeens after myself afore now," spoke the tramp, in a low, confidential whisper.

"You keep yourself devilish low, then, for I know all the lads, and it's the first time I've clapped these two eyes on you."

"Do ye think I mane to let the fly cops put their darbies on me, that I should be nosin' around in the broad day?"

"You're too fly for them, I see," said the bar-keeper, with a sagacious shake of his head. "You an' Barney are a pair."

"Barney? Ye mane the Irish lad that was just here a bit ago?"

"The same. He's square. He's one of you."

The tramp leaned forward, his eyes fastened on the bloodshot eyes of the drink-compounder, and in an earnest tone, asked:

"Is he a bye that could crack a plant with the loikes o' me?"

Impressed with the tone and manner of the tramp, the bar-keeper gazed quickly around the room, and in a still lower tone, replied:

"He's on a lay himself. Would you like to go his pal?" The tramp slowly nodded his head, and after receiving the whispered invitation to come around later, strolled out of the saloon; and so on up the road.

Turning a corner he nearly ran against Barney himself, who was sitting on a horse-block, enjoying a pipe and the sun.

Not a soul was in sight. Satisfying himself of that fact, Barney gazed at the tramp and said:

"By Jove, Chip, I thought you were a goner when that confounded star fell out."

Chip gave a deep sigh of relief, and taking off his hat, pointed to the perspiration which moistened the band:

"Don't that look as though I thought so, too, Sam?"

"How in the name of all that's lovely, did you happen to be so careless?"

"That's what it was, sheer carelessness. I suffered, though, for it. It would have been all up with me if the gang had not been so deucedly stupid. That Jerry is a villain, and no mistake. I told him that I was a profesh, and he told me that you were another, and had a plan to do some fine work without asking permission of the owners. So I am to meet him again to-night, and see if you will not take me as your pal. You have your cue, and will know how to act."

"Chip, did you notice that man Cook?"

"You mean, did I notice the fifty-dollar bill he threw down?"

"Well, both."

"Seems to me he didn't look like a man that ought to be carrying fifty-dollar bills around so recklessly."

"He's a cooper, runs that little shop over there, and hasn't done a stroke of work for a month."

The cooper-shop pointed out by Sam was a small frame building, having the sign, "Oscar Cook—Barrels and Kegs," painted over the door. It was a tumbled-down, rickety affair, evidently having seen

its best days.

Chip surveyed it intently, then turned to Sam, inquired:

"That express tag had on it something about a man named Cook, didn't it?"

"Yes, the words, 'it to Cook.'"

"Supposing that Dan Moriarity, whom we now know had some connection with the robbery, had taken the valise, which was sent from St. Louis to Leavenworth, had obeyed the order, for it was evidently an order which was written on the tag, and given 'it to Cook,' it would be fair to infer that the Cook mentioned had some hand in the pudding, too, and ought to be pretty flush about this time."

"You mean—"

"No, I don't mean that the Cook over in the saloon playing poker and the Cook mentioned on the tag are the same person, but we found no Dan Moriarity or Cook in Leavenworth but what was above suspicion, and I think that the men who were smart enough to plan and carry out a robbery such as this was would be shrewd enough to take every possible precaution against discovery. I mean that neither Moriarity or Cook are Leavenworth people, and for all we know to the contrary, may live here in Kansas City."

As Chip finished speaking, a man appeared in front of the cooper shop, and unlocking the door, entered.

"There is Cook, now," said Sam, making a movement as if to rise.

With a motion of the hand Chip cautioned him to remain where he was, and with lazy steps, lounged toward the shop.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTURE AND RESCUE.

The White Elephant was a large gambling hall in Kansas City, situated on one of the principal thoroughfares. It was centrally located, and night after night the brilliant lights and crowded tables bore witness to its rushing business.

On this evening the tiger was out with all its claws. Rouge et noir, roulette, faro, keno, and stud-poker were going in full blast. The proprietor, his elegant diamonds flashing in the light, was seated on a raised platform from whence he could survey the entire company—his face, impassive as marble and unreadable as the sphinx, was turned toward the faro lay-out, which this evening appeared to be the center of attraction.

Among the players sat one whose tall form and athletic frame would have been noticeable under any circumstances, but was now more so, as it towered above his fellow-gamesters who crowded around the table.

Before him lay a high pile of chips. He played with the nonchalant air of one who was there merely to pass away a vacant hour, but his stakes were high and he played every shot. His calm, impassioned countenance bore the unmistakable stamp of the professional gambler, and, serene as a quiet mill-pond, he bore his losses or pocketed his winnings with the enviable sang froid which results from a long and intimate acquaintance with the green-baized table.

Every night for a week had this man occupied the same seat, and with careless imperturbability had mulcted the bank of several thousands.

Rieley, the proprietor, himself one of the coolest dare-devil gamblers in the West, had recognized a kindred spirit, but to all advances and efforts to make his acquaintance the stranger had turned a cool shoulder, and his identity was still a matter of conjecture.

Rieley was watching him closely this evening, so intently, indeed, that the stranger, with a look of annoyance, swept the chips into his hat and stepping up to the banker cashed them in and walked out

of the room. As he emerged from the door he came in violent contact with a man just entering.

"I beg your pardon."

"Not at—by Jove! Moriarity, you here too?"

"Blest if it isn't Jim!"

"Hush! you fool, speak lower."

"Been up bucking the tiger?"

"I've been making a damned fool of myself. Rieley watched me too close for comfort, and I am going to vamoose."

"When?"

"None of your business. I want you to come with me to-night. I must see Cook."

"Don't do it, Jim. Pinkerton's men are as thick as blackberries. You will run into one of them if you don't lay low.

"No danger for me. One of them has a room next to mine at the hotel, and I played billiards with him this afternoon."

"You're a cool one, Jim. Too cool. It will get you into trouble yet."

"Damn your croaking, man. Do you show the white feather now?"

"Not I. I only warned you."

"Well, put a clapper to your jaw, and come along."

Boarding a street car, the men stood on the front platform smoking during the long ride to the terminus of the road.

Leaving the car, they plunged through the darkness over the same path trod by the tramp earlier in the afternoon.

The dark form of the distillery loomed up ahead of them, gloomy and lonesome.

Overhead not a star was to be seen, and save an occasional drunkard staggering home, the two men were alone on the road.

A short distance beyond the distillery the cooper-shop squatted beside the street, and the dim flicker of a candle cast its pitiful light through the dirt-encrusted window.

As Moriarity and Cummings stepped from the shadow of the distillery, an indistinct form stole behind them, and keeping just within sight, followed the two men as they wended their lonely way to Cook's shop.

Disdaining all attempts at concealment, Cummings rapped loudly on the door.

The sound of clinking glasses was heard, and a voice, heavy and thick, growled out, "Come in."

A vigorous shove opened the door, and Cummings was about to step inside, but at the sight of another man, a ragged tramp, drinking with Cook, he stopped short.

"Come in, b'hoy, come in; d-d-don't keep the d-d-door open; come right in," stuttered Cook, too drunk to speak intelligibly.

The tramp, elevating his glass above his head, with an inviting gesture, shouted the words of the old drinking song:

"Drink, puppy, drink, let every puppy drink
That's old enough to stand and to swallow.
For we'll pass the bottle round, when we've become a hound,
And merrily we'll drink and we'll hallo."

Cook attempted to join in the chorus, but his voice failed him, his head sank down upon his breast, and, in a drunken stupor, he rolled from his seat, prone upon the ground.

The tramp, rising to his feet, staggered to the side of his companion, and steadying himself with the aid of a chair, made futile attempts to raise his comrade to a perpendicular position. His knees bent under him, the chair fell from his unsteady grasp, and murmuring, "We'll pass the bottle round," he lurched forward, and falling across the recumbent Cook, passed from the worship of Bacchus to the arms of Morpheus, seemingly dead drunk.

With a bitter curse of rage Cummings stepped forward, and, with rough hands, separated the boon companions, thrusting the tramp without ceremony under the table, Moriarity in the meantime shaking Cook in vain attempts to rouse him from his maudlin stupor. Cook, however, was too far "under the influence" to be aroused, and to the vigorous shakings and punchings would respond only with a hiccough and part of the refrain "puppies drink."

Cummings, in a towering rage at finding Cook in such a helpless condition, paced the small shop with impatient tread, all the time pouring imprecations upon Cook's devoted head. A sudden turn in his short beat brought him facing the window, and flattened against the dirty pane was the face of a man gazing intently into the room.

Another second and the face had disappeared.

Cummings stopped abruptly at the sight of the apparition, his face became livid, and a shade of terror flashed across his countenance. It was but an instant, though, that he stood thus, and calling to Moriarity to follow, he dashed through the door, drawing his ready revolver from his side coat-pocket at the same time, and catching a fleeting glimpse of a flying shadow, sped after it.

Moriarity, somewhat dazed at the unexpected turn of affairs, had risen to his feet, and stood blankly gazing at the open door, not comprehending what had occurred. A movement made by the pseudo tramp, caused him to turn around, and he was gazing straight into the open barrel of a dangerous-looking revolver, held by a steady hand, and cool daring eyes were glancing over the shining barrel, as a voice, decided and commanding, said:

"Hands out, Dan Moriarity, I want you."

Chip, as he was stretched on the floor feigning drunkenness, had kept his ears open, although obliged to keep his eyes closed.

The single candle which lit the room, furnished light too indistinct for him to see the faces of the two visitors, and as he acted his character of the drunken man, he cudgeled his brains to account for their visit.

The sudden disappearance of Cummings, and his calling out, "Moriarity, follow me," cleared the mystery.

He comprehended the situation at once.

While he did not know it was Jim Cummings that had been in the room, his mind with lightning speed grouped the torn express tag, the words "it to Cook," the man Cook, who lay beside him drunk, the fifty-dollar bill which he had changed at the bar-room, together with Dan Moriarity, and quick to reach his conclusions, he saw that it was the Moriarity he wanted, accompanied by some one who had come to see Cook.

Half opening his eyes he saw that Moriarity was standing up, nonplussed at something, and instantly he drew his revolver, and as Moriarity turned around covered him and ordered him to hold out his hands.

Staggered again the second time by seeing a ragged tramp, who a few seconds before was stretched at his feet in a drunken slumber, now erect, perfectly sober, and having the drop on him, Moriarity became more bewildered, and passively held out his hands.

The sharp click of steel handcuffs brought the dazed man to his senses, but too late.

He opened his mouth to cry for aid, but a strong hand was laid on his wind-pipe and the cry died before it was born.

The cold barrel of the revolver against his ear, and the detective's "shut up or I'll shoot," was too strong an argument to combat, and Moriarity submitted to being pushed hurriedly from the room into the open air and dark night.

Chip was beginning to congratulate himself on the important capture he had made, and with his hand on his captive's collar, and his revolver to his ear, was moving towards the center of the street, when a

whistling "swish" was heard, the dull thud of a slung shot on the detective's head followed, and, every muscle relaxed, he sank a senseless man in the dust of the road.

"Help me pick him up," said Cummings, "and be quick about it, there's another beak around."

"I can't. I've got his darbies on."

Cummings stooped down, and lifting Chip in his arms, walked rapidly down the road toward the river.

"What are you going to do with him, Jim?"

"Chuck him through the ice. He knows too much."

With the senseless man in his arms, Cummings hurried forward, nor paused until he reached the river bank.

The weather had been piercingly cold for a week, although no snow had fallen, and the river was frozen solid from bank to bank.

To this fact Chip owed his life. When the train robber came to the ice, he sounded it with his heel. It was solid and firm, not even an air hole to be seen.

Baffled in his murderous designs, he debated for a second whether it would not be the best thing to leave the detective on the ice, and let him freeze to death, but the publicity of the place, its proximity to the city, and the risk of having been shadowed by the man whom he had caught gazing through the window, caused him to think of some secure place wherein to put the senseless Chip. He first searched the wounded man's pockets, and, finding the key, released the handcuffs from Moriarity.

The latter, seeing Cummings hesitate, and divining the cause, said in a questioning voice:

"Why not take him to the widow's, Jim?"

"I would a damned sight rather put him through the ice, but its too thick for me. Do you think we can carry him between us?"

"It would never do to let people see us two with a dead man between us."

"Then you must go up town and get a hack."

Moriarity turned back to the shore, and climbing the bank, hurried in the direction of the city.

Left alone with his victim, the desperado bent over him, placing his hand on Chip's heart. It beat steadily, though not strongly, and Cummings experienced a feeling of relief when he felt the regular pulsations.

He had never yet shed blood, and his first passion having died out, he was glad that the thick ice had defeated his first purpose.

The stunned detective stirred, the cold, crisp air was reviving him, and Cummings, his better nature asserting itself, hastily doffed his overcoat and threw it over the recumbent form of his captive.

It was not very long before the noise of carriage wheels were heard, and Moriarity running out on the ice assisted Cummings in carrying Chip to the land and placed him in the carriage, which he had caught on the way to town.

The driver, who had been told that "one of the boys had got more than he could carry," did not concern himself to investigate too closely, and having received his order, drove briskly from the scene.

The darkness and open country gave way to gas-lights and paved streets, over which the carriage rattled at a lively pace. Turning into a side street, Dan pulled the check-strap, and the carriage turned to the curb and stopped.

The detective, still unconscious, was lifted out, the driver paid and dismissed, and the two men, bearing Chip between them, entered a dark, narrow alley.

Proceeding up this for some distance, they entered the low door of a basement and placed their still insensible burden on the floor.

The damp, moldy smell of an underground room filled the air, and but for a slender beam of light which flashed beneath an adjoining door the place was dark as night.

Softly stealing to the door, Moriarity applied his ear to the key-hole, and hearing no sounds within, gave a peculiar double rap on the panel.

Receiving no answer, he cautiously opened the door and disclosed a small, square room, having a low ceiling, and lighted by a single low-burning gas jet.

On the walls hung a large astronomical map, showing the solar system, and divided with the girdle of the zodiac into its various constellations.

A grinning skull, mounted on a black pedestal, stood on a small table in the center of the room, and on shelves against the wall were ranged a number of curiously-shaped bottles.

It was, in fact, the divining-room of a professional fortune-teller.

The room was vacant when Moriarity opened the door, but as he threw it back, a small bell was sounded.

Almost instantly heavy curtains which hung opposite the door were pushed aside, and the fortune-teller appeared.

Advancing with stately strides, her tall form erect and her hands clasped before her, she fastened a pair of cruel, glittering eyes on Moriarity and in a deep voice asked:

"Why this intrusion at this late hour?"

"Oh! drop that stuff, Nance; it won't go down with us; we're no gulls to have pretty things told us by giving you a dollar."

Recognizing her visitor, Nance, in her natural tone, inquired sharply:

"What do you want at this time of night?"

"In the first place we want you to keep your mouth shut. In the next place you must find a place for a man we've got here, and keep him for a while."

"You're a loving nephew, you are, Dan Moriarity, Oh! you come around and see your old aunt when you're up to some devilment, I'm bound."

Moriarity, not deigning to reply to this speech, had gone back to his companion, and now returned with the form of the detective between them.

"My God! you haven't killed him, Dan?"

"He has a pretty sore head, I reckon, but nothing worse. Take us up-stairs."

Following Nance, the men carried Chip behind the curtain, through another room, and ascended a flight of stairs.

Nance threw open a door and Chip was placed upon a bed. The room was sumptuously, even elegantly, furnished. Pictures adorned the walls, a heavy carpet deadened the sound of the feet, and rich curtains kept back the too-inquisitive light.

Chip, wounded and insensible, was in the house of the "widow," the rendezvous of a daring band of robbers and the birth-place of many a dashing raid or successful bank robbery.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE TOILS.

The dark shadow that had followed Cummings and Moriarity from the distillery to Cook's cooper-shop was none other than the assumed Barney O'Hara, who had aired his heels so jauntily in the saloon that afternoon.

Watching on the outside while Chip was working Cook, he had spotted and shadowed the two men as they came down the road.

The careless exposure of his face to Cummings through the window was the cause of the latter's sudden attempt to catch him.

His nimble heels again stood him in good stead, and in the darkness he easily eluded his pursuer.

Cummings gave up the chase, and returning just in time, had stopped Chip's success by knocking him down with a slungshot and carrying him off.

When Barney, or, rather, Sam, returned to renew his investigation, he found the shop empty, save the intoxicated Cook.

Thinking his late pursuer and his companion had taken the alarm, and that Chip was now doubtless shadowing them, he walked into the shop, and, true to his detective instincts and education, began a diligent search of the place.

He was actively engaged in this work when the sound of hasty footsteps reached his ears. Throwing himself flat on the floor, behind a pile of barrel staves, he drew his revolver and waited. The steps passed by, however, and Sam quickly but quietly left the shop.

He could barely see the form of a man walking rapidly down the street to the horse-car track.

As he passed the window of the saloon the light fell on him, and Sam saw it was one of the two men who had just left the cooper-shop.

Following closely, using all his skill as a successful shadow, he trailed the man to the car, and boarding the front platform rode into town.

Passing a livery stable the man left the car, still followed by Sam.

When Moriarity, for it was he whom Sam was trailing, rode back to the river, Sam was perched on behind the hack.

He saw the wounded Chip placed inside, thanks to the darkness, and still hanging on the back of the carriage was carried back to town.

When the two train robbers turned into the alley Sam was right behind them, so close that he could hear their labored breathing. Suddenly, as if they had been swallowed by the earth, he was left alone in the dark, nonplussed and outwitted.

Not a point of light was visible, and settling himself against the wall of a building, Sam started in for an all-night watch.

He understood the case at once. Chip had been knocked down by the renegades, and, probably still insensible, had been carried to their haunt. Knocked down, either because they had discovered his disguise, or had suspected him.

He was now firmly convinced that if Cook was not an accomplice in the train robbery, he was involved in something criminal, and Sam regretted that he had not been more thorough in his investigations. Now that Chip was in the hands of his enemies, all others sank into insignificance; so with keen eyes and sharp ears, Sam kept his solitary vigil.

The gray dawn of the morning had taken the place of the night, and Sam, under the shadow of a convenient shed door had heard or seen nothing pass his post. The day grew stronger, and, chilled to the bone, the disappointed detective left the alley and wended his way to his boarding-house.

The cause of the sudden disappearance of the two robbers the reader is acquainted with, and the reason Sam failed to see them again was because they had left the house by another exit.

The widow, acting as a go-between and a fence for the light-fingered gentry who patronized her establishment, hid her real calling with the guise of a fortune-teller, and her house, poorly furnished, damp and moldy when entered from the alley, was well furnished in the upper stories.

The room in which Chip was confined was the sybil's chief pride. Every article of furniture, every bit of painting, the carpets, and even the base-burning stove, were the trophies of successful robberies.

The very sheets and towels had been deftly purloined by the widow herself.

It was this stronghold of the "gang," to which Chip, battered and insensible, had been brought by his captors.

Cummings, who from his actions was no stranger to the house, in brief authoritative tones, bade the witch to take charge of this prisoner until further disposition could be made of him.

The widow listened to his words, and with the submission which all his associates rendered to him, promised to do all he commanded.

The first gleam of the morning warned the two men that they must seek their cover, for despite Jim's natural boldness and daring, he was cautious and careful. Instead of descending to the room which had its entrance from the alley, they mounted another flight of stairs, and gaining the roof by means of the scuttle, walked the flat mansard until another hatch-door was reached, and through it they entered a quiet, unassuming appearing house, which stood on the side street from which the alley branched.

The house, though completely furnished, was vacant, and the men reached the street without meeting any one.

Cummings and Moriarity having left, the widow, for the first time ventured to look at her new charge. Her keen eyes noted the disguise which Chip had adopted. The wicked blow which had brought him to this plight had moved the red wig to one side and disclosed the dark clustering hair, now bathed and soaked in his blood.

He was still unconscious, but his strong constitution was regaining its sway, and he moved uneasily on his soft couch.

The widow, now remembering the commands which Cummings had laid upon her, hastened to bring water, and washed the wound. The slung shot had struck squarely across the crown of the head, but the cut was not very large or deep, and the widow, with ready skill, bound it neatly with bandages, and holding a brandy flask to his mouth forced some of its contents down his throat.

The color came back to the detective's face, and in a few moments his eyes opened, and with a dazed expression wandered over the room.

The widow, as she noticed the first signs of returning consciousness had retired from the room, now, with consummate skill, put a kindly, even tender, look toward the sufferer as she reappeared through the door.

Chip, still very much bewildered, his head feeling as though it was whirling off his shoulders, heard a pleasant voice asking: "And how is my poor boy, now?"

Chip gazed vacantly at her, as he responded:

"Who are you? Where am I—my head—"

"Come, come, don't talk. Take this medicine like a good boy, and go to sleep."

With childlike obedience the detective swallowed the draught, which soon took possession of his senses, and he fell asleep.

The widow quietly sat beside him until the opiate had taken full effect. Then muttering "You are safe for four and twenty hours," she descended to her divining-room, leaving the detective deep in slumber, and in complete ignorance of his surroundings.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE WATCH.

Sam Slade and Chip had been comrades at arms for almost two years. Many a dashing capture had they made Adventures and hair-breadth escapes were of frequent occurrence with the two "dare-devils," as the force had dubbed them, and before now each had saved the other's life by some bold stroke or skillful strategy.

Satisfied that Chip was in danger, if not of his life at least of his liberty, Sam hastened to his room, and with the aid of soap and water resumed his natural appearance. The jaunty-looking Irish lad, Barney O'Hara, would never be recognized in the young gentleman who looked at you through gold-

rimmed spectacles, with soft gray eyes, and whose sober demeanor and grave countenance bore the stamp of the student or minister.

It was this metamorphized individual that walked languidly to the breakfast table and responded in gentle tones to the woman's salutations which greeted him. Breakfast served and over, Sam again sought his room. His boarding-house had been selected entirely on account of this room. The room had once been occupied by a physician as his office, and, standing on the corner of two streets, had a side entrance to it besides the entrance from the main portion of the house.

Thus the detective could slip in and out entirely unobserved by the boarders or his landlady, the latter supposing him to be a man of enough means to enable him to live without daily labor.

Sam had given her this idea, and supplemented it by stating he was engaged in literary pursuits.

Reaching his room, Sam wrote out a full report for the last twenty-four hours (this constituted his literary labors) to be forwarded to Mr. Pinkerton in Chicago.

After his report was finished, he hastily threw off his clothing, and replaced his sober suit of gray by the flashy costume of a man about town, he stood before his mirror to make up his face.

No actor was more clever than Sam in artistic and realistic disguises. His smooth face was skillfully covered by a beard, short-cropped, his nose was given the slightest rosy tint, and putting on a light overcoat, the studious young gentleman of half an hour ago was transformed into a howling swell.

Tan-colored gloves and a heavy, silver-headed cane completed his costume. Thus arrayed he sallied forth.

It was now nearly noon. The streets were crowded, and Sam kept his eyes well opened, carelessly but keenly scrutinizing every man he met.

One saloon after another was visited, but no sight of the mysterious men who had downed Chip could be obtained.

He had carefully noted his bearings when he left the alley in the morning, so he had no trouble in finding the correct locality again.

His hat was tipped rakishly over his left eye as he swaggered up the alley and entered a beer vault for which the alley was really the entrance. By good luck, no customers were present, and Sam engaged in a lively conversation with the bartender.

Skillful pumping, judiciously mixed with high-priced drinks, soon gave
Sam the entire history of the denizens of the locality.

It was beside the shed door of the beer vault that Sam had kept his solitary watch and ward the previous night, so that somewhere about this point Chip had been carried by his captors.

Gazing through the window, Sam saw a mass of debris; old cans, ashes and the like were scattered in the center of the court or alley, while on both sides, near the buildings, a narrow board walk was laid.

Now, Sam knew that when he entered the place he was on the right-hand side, immediately behind his game.

If they had crossed over to the side on which the beer vault stood, the crunching of the ashes or the noise of the old cans, which would be very apt to be moved, would have advised him of that fact.

Putting these facts together, Sam was almost certain that they had not entered the beer cellar.

Just opposite stood a half-open door, which, flush with the court, would have accounted for the sudden disappearance of the men if they had turned suddenly and entered it. These observations were made by the detective while he was engaged in a lively and pungent conversation with the burly bar-keeper.

The saloon made a good post of observation, and Sam settled himself for an all-day patron if necessary. Taking a seat near the window, he called for a glass of beer, and tilting back his chair took a careful survey of the premises.

The alley was what is termed a "blind alley." On each side were low doors entering the basements of the houses, and the population consisted of rag-pickers, second-hand clothiers and one pawnshop. It was just such a place as one would expect to meet the lowest types of humanity. Dirty children were playing in the half-deserted place, their blue lips and pinched faces speaking eloquently of their

poverty. Italian hand-organ grinders were sitting on their door-steps, and slatternly women were leaning from their windows, exchanging gossip in loud, shrill tones. Occasionally a man would walk hurriedly up the narrow walk, carrying a suspicious bundle, and eyeing nervously every person he might meet, dodging suddenly into some one of the doors. All this Sam saw, but his eyes seldom left the half-open door immediately opposite.

He had been at his post nearly an hour, smoking a cigar or supping his liquor, the bar-keeper not caring what his customer did or what he was, so long as he ordered and paid for an occasional drink, when there appeared at the door of the house which the detective was so closely watching a tall, dark-complexioned woman. Her eyes, strikingly brilliant, swept the place, but the shadows of the beer-cellar prevented her seeing the interested person who noted every movement she made. The woman, after gazing up and down the court, threw her shawl over her head, and with long, gliding steps, walked toward the street.

The bar-keeper who was standing beside Sam, as the female passed down the court, said with an outward jerk of his thumb:

"Rum old gal that."

"Friend of yours?" lazily inquired the detective.

"Naw. I don't have nothin' to do with her, nor she with me. She's a fortune-teller, she is."

"One of them kind that lays out the cards, and spells out your fortune, eh?"

"I dunno. I never was in her den."

"Wonder if she could give me a luck charm?" asked Sam.

"If you've got the dust, she can make you anything. Them as lives around here says she's a witch. Maybe so. I think she's some cursed half-breed, myself. None too good now, I tell you."

"Lived here long?"

"Who? Me?"

"No, the woman."

"I've been here five years, and she was here before me."

"I suppose she has plenty of customers, eh?"

"You bet she has. The fool-killer ought to lay around here for a while.
There were two dandy blokes come out of there this morning."

Sam started, and inwardly cursed his stupidity in letting his game get away from him. The two men of which the bar-keeper spoke, were probably the very persons he wanted, so, in an indifferent tone, he inquired:

"What's her office hours?"

"Any time night or day I reckon. The two swells came out about 10, I guess. Maybe later."

"She don't throw on much style?"

"Don't she though. Silks ain't nothin' to her. She's a clipper when she agonizes."

Fearing, if he kept up the conversation much longer, that the bar-keeper would suspect his game, Sam called for another cigar, and picking up a deck of cards which lay on the table, suggested a game of "seven up." The bar-keeper seated himself with his back to the window, Sam still holding his post of survey.

The game was only just begun, when the fortune-teller, carrying a small bottle, apparently of medicine, returned and entered the door.

Sam's interest in the game died out shortly after, and patrons beginning to appear, the bar-keeper took his accustomed place behind the bar.

The room gradually filled up, and taking advantage of a little crowd near the door, Sam quietly slipped through the door and walked straight across to the fortune-teller's house.

As he entered, the inner door was opened and the dark woman herself appeared.

With inimitable assurance the detective removed his hat and advanced toward her.

Drawing herself up to her full height, the sibyl in a deep, solemn voice said:

"What brings you here?"

"I'm in hard luck. Got scooped up to the White Elephant and want you to give me a luck charm."

The eyes of the hag glittered greedily as Sam held out a five-dollar bill, and throwing the door wide open she bade him enter.

As Sam did so his experienced eye took in the whole room, the skull, charts, bottles and even the cards did not escape his gaze.

Nance pushed forward a chair, and telling him under pain of breaking the spell not to utter a word, she retired behind the curtain.

Left alone Sam took a more deliberate survey of the apartment and could hardly repress an exclamation of satisfaction as he saw lying on the floor the old slouch hat which Chip had worn the preceding day. His face, however, showed nothing as Nance reappeared bearing in one hand a peculiar lamp, scrolled and formed in a fanciful pattern and in the other a large book bound in parchment, covered with hieroglyphics. Putting the lamp on the table she extinguished the gas, and the pale-blue flame of the alcohol in the lamp cast its ghastly beams over the strange place.

Muttering rapidly to herself she threw powder on the flame, causing a green flash to appear each time, with her eyes fastened on the open pages of the book.

Amused at the hollow fraud, Sam looked on, very much interested and racking his brain to devise some means of gaining a further entrance to the house. From its outside appearance he knew he must be in one of the rear rooms, and if Chip was not behind the curtain he must be in an upper story. While he was thus occupied the fortune-teller had finished her incantations, and, taking from a drawer a small amulet sewed in oil skin, handed it to the detective.

"Take this, my son—the stars are auspicious. It will bring you and keep near you good luck and high fortune. Now, depart in peace, for I am weary and would fain seek rest."

His answer surprised her, for, rising abruptly, he struck a match, and, lighting the gas jet, pushed aside the curtains.

With a scream of rage, Nance sprang forward.

"Go but another step, and I'll tear your heart out!"

Disregarding her, the detective pushed forward and threw open the door leading to the ascending stairs.

In a trice he had mounted them and turning to the right, entered a room. His astonishment was so great that he half stopped, for the apartment was furnished in almost regal style; richly-upholstered furniture and oil paintings contrasted so vividly with the squalor and misery of the lower part of the house that the audacious detective could scarcely believe his senses.

A smothered cry of rage and terror behind him warned him, and turning swiftly he beheld Nance, with wild eyes and disheveled hair, springing toward him. In her uplifted hand gleamed the glittering blade of a stilletto, and like a fury she rushed upon the bold intruder.

The trained hand flew to the pocket and the ready revolver leaped forth.

Nance staggered back, the dagger falling from her nerveless hand, as in abject terror she crouched on a chair.

"Don't shoot! don't shoot! See, I won't hurt you," she moaned.

Grasping her by the wrist, and pressing the revolver to her head, Sam said, sternly, and in a voice that would brook no delay:

"What have you done with the man brought here last night?"

Nance pointed to the next room, too frightened to speak, and thrusting her forward, Sam continued his search.

Chip, his head covered with a bandage, and still somewhat confused, recognized his comrade as he entered the room. His mind was clear enough, however, to appreciate the situation, when the terror-stricken hag, pointing her long skinny finger at him, quivered in a tremulous voice: "He's alive; don't you see he's alive?"

Overjoyed at finding Chip safe and still alive, Sam clasped his hands.

"Can you walk, Chip?" he asked,

"I don't know, Sam. I had a devilish close call," and Chip threw back the covers and essayed to step from the bed. His limbs trembled, and throwing up his hands despairingly, he sank back again. A flask of brandy stood on the table, and in an instant Sam had the cork out and had poured some of its contents down his friend's throat.

The generous fluid warmed the blood and revived the strength of the wounded detective, who, making another attempt, stood on his feet.

Throwing his arm around Chip's waist, Sam bade the thoroughly cowed woman to go before him, and was moving slowly to the door when a sharp, stern voice commanded:

"Stop!"

The detectives looked up, and standing in the open door, a revolver in each hand, stood Jim Cummings.

CHAPTER XI.

A MIDNIGHT FLIGHT.

THE two detectives were in a tight fix. One of them sorely wounded; the other, handicapped by his almost helpless comrade, would stand small chance against the burly man who checked their path. But Sam, who was nearly as large in build as was his opponent, and in an even fight, would not have hesitated to bear down upon him, slipped his arm from around Chip, and prepared himself for a desperate struggle.

As his arm passed his side pocket, he felt his revolver. Keeping Chip before him, he slipped his hand onto it, and drew it out, Chip keeping Cummings from observing the movements. The scent of approaching danger had acted on Chip as a strong restorative, and his eyes met those of his late captor unflinchingly as he cried:

"We know you now, Jim Cummings; you've betrayed yourself," and Chip again looked at the triangular gold which his parted lips disclosed on one of his teeth.

Up to this moment the desperado had imagined himself to be unknown, but at the words Chip uttered, he started, and with eyes burning with rage, and features twitching with fury, he turned to Nance, who, still under the spell of complete terror, was huddled in a corner, her hands over her face, not daring to meet the outlaw's eye.

"Ah," he hissed, "you did this," and like a flash his revolver covered her, and the whip-like report rang out. The answering voice of Sam's pistol echoed the first, and when the smoke had lifted, Cummings had disappeared.

Without stopping to look after the hag, Sam lifted Chip in his arms, and hastily descended the stairs, It was dark when the alley was reached, and slowly walking to the corner, a hack was called and the two friends drove rapidly towards Sam's boarding-place.

Stopping but just a second to tuck his friend in bed, Sam hastened to the Central Police Station and, in a few words, placed the case before the chief. The sergeant in charge at the time detailed five men to return with the detective. The house was entered and searched from basement to garret, but the birds had flown. The worn condition of the steps leading to the roof attracted Sam's attention, and further investigation disclosed the fact that this scuttle-way was the means of exit. Sam thus ascertained why his long, weary watch had been fruitless.

After Cummings fired at the fortune-teller he turned quickly and ran up the steps to the roof of the house and so escaped through the vacant dwelling which faced the street. Believing that the old woman had either betrayed him or had been frightened into giving the desired information he decided to "vamoose the ranch" and that quickly. Moriarity must trust to his own good luck, for time was pressing and to save himself he must take an immediate departure.

A thousand schemes passed through his head and a hundred disguises presented themselves to him as he hurried toward his room. Side streets and back alleys were taken and more than once he doubled on his track to ascertain if he was followed. Satisfied that, as yet, no one was on his track, Cummings allowed his fears to vanish. He was still safe and if he could only reach his "den" in safety he could lay low until the first wind had blown over. He knew that in a short time the whole city would be scoured for the noted Jim Cummings, and he laughed derisively as he thought of the open manner he had moved in the town since the robbery. No disguise had been attempted, no great secrecy and if it had not been for the unfortunate affair of the cooper-shop, he might have lived there for years without any suspicions being directed toward him. Although he had moved so openly and boldly he had kept to himself, not even telling Moriarity the location of his residence. To this place he now hurried. It was a large room in a first-class boarding-house whose landlady and boarders would have been horror-stricken had they known that "Mr. Williams," the jolly, good-natured young fellow who had proved such a valuable acquisition to their after-dinner gatherings, was the desperate free-booter who had walked away with the valuable express package.

Cummings was no ordinary robber. Endowed by nature with cool nerves, an active brain and athletic frame, he had all the requirements necessary to make a successful and daring criminal. That he was so the preceding pages have testified. Now that he was threatened with discovery, he did not rush blindly into danger by attempting to flee from it, but he did the exact opposite.

He knew that every train would be watched, that telegrams would stretch out in all directions, and the detectives, now on a hot scent, would crowd him night and day. All these thoughts passed through his mind, as he leaned back in a comfortable chair and puffed his Havana. And he decided it would be best to remain closely to his room until the hue and cry had subsided, and play invalid.

For a week he stirred not from the house. And then thinking the first heat had passed, he commenced strolling out after dark.

One evening, having lighted a cigar, he was walking leisurely up the avenue, all fears of discovery set at rest by his fancied security, when his dream was rudely disturbed by a hand placed lightly on his shoulder. Quick as a panther, he sprang to one side, placing himself on the defensive, and his hand upon his pistol ready for any emergency. His startled gaze met a pitiful sight. Ragged and tattered, his hands, trembling and face blanched with the first touch of delirium tremens, stood Oscar Cook. Tottering up to Cummings, he whispered in tremulous tones:

"Jim, they're after me. They most nabbed me. Save me, Jim, save me!"

Alarmed lest the poor wretch would attract attention, Cummings placed his arm around him, and half-carrying, half-dragging him, bore him to his room. Slipping the latch of the door, he turned up the gas.

Cook sank into a chair, his elbows on his knees and his face buried in his hands. Every muscle was twitching, his eyes, staring stonily ahead, were bloodshot and fevered. Horror was printed on his face, and his fingers, curved like bird's claws, moved spasmodically over his head.

"They're after me, Jim, they're after me," he repeated, again and again.

Greatly disturbed by the sudden appearance of the wretched Cook, Cummings hardly knew how to meet the emergency. If he kept Cook with him, the tremens would come on, and in the delirium of the frenzy Cook would probably say something which would betray Cummings. On the other hand, if he left the house to place Cook in some safe quarters, he courted detection.

He was in a tight box, and this, with the events which had just occurred and his close call of the week previous, made him somewhat nervous. As he looked at the miserable wretch before him he saw that he wore the high-heeled boots and spurs of the cowboys, who make Kansas City a rendezvous. In an instant his course was plain and he proceeded to execute it.

Handing Cook a large glass full of brandy, he bade him drink it. The half-crazed man needed no urging, but clutching the glass he drank it down greedily. Its effect was almost instantaneous. His face lost the horrible expression, his fingers straightened out, and the trembling ceased. Cummings watched him closely, and knowing that the liquor would only sustain him for a short time, he said:

"Cook, where's your horse?"

"Down at the livery stable on the next block."

"Can you get me one at the same place?"

"Yes, a good one, too."

"We must get out of here. The place is too hot for us. All the trains are watched, so we must leave a-horseback. Go get your horse, hire one for me, and we'll vamoose at once."

Cook started up with alacrity, for as long as the brandy was potent the tremens would not effect him.

Cummings hastily changed his apparel, putting on a pair of high boots and over them the fringed leather chapparels. A wide sombrero replaced the derby hat, and when fully costumed he had on the business rig of a typical cow-boy.

He had hardly completed these arrangements when the noise of horse-hoofs on the pavement was heard. Opening the shutter Cummings waved his hand, and placing his revolver in the holster ran down the steps.

He had written a note to his landlady saying that pressing business of the most urgent kind had suddenly called him out of town, and it was uncertain when he could return. This he left on the table and the landlady saw him no more.

The horses were fresh, and striking into a canter the two men made for the open country. The excitement and motion combined with the bracing air drove the fumes of the liquor from Cook's head, and before many miles had been passed he was comparatively free from the terrible malady which threatened to consume him.

The suburbs were passed, and under the clear sky and bright stars, the willing horses spurned the frozen mud from beneath their feet as they flew, neck and neck, down the road. Neither men had spoken a word since the start, but sitting low in the saddle, gave the horses loose reins nor checked them an instant.

They had left the road and were speeding over the frozen prairie, skirting a small clump of scrub oak, when just before them, a solitary horseman could be seen, leisurely walking his steed. At the sudden appearance of the stranger, both men instinctively reined in their horses and pulled up short. The man at that moment, heard them, and giving a hasty look backward, drove his spurs into his horse, dashed forward at full speed.

In sheer deviltry, Cummings did likewise, followed by Cook, and gave chase to the flying horseman. It was nearly dawn. The gray light was brightening the landscape, and, observing his game more closely, Cummings saw something familiar in his form; and when he glanced over his shoulder to see his pursuers, the heavy mustache could be seen, even in that uncertain light.

Placing his fingers to his lips, Jim gave three whistles, two short and one long sounds. The shrill tones reached the stranger, who turned half around in his saddle and saw Cummings waving his hat. Checking his speed somewhat he allowed the distance between them to become less, but holding his horse well in hand, if any signs of treachery were observed he could have some chance of escaping.

As the two men swept toward him they cried as in one voice:

"Moriarity!"

Moriarity, for such it was, immediately drew up his horse and the three friends were soon shaking hands.

"The fly-cops made it too hot for me, boys," said Dan. "I came within an ace of being caught. One of the beaks had his hands on me, but I knocked him down and lit out."

"Where are you bound for now?" asked Cummings.

"Down to Swanson's ranche."

"We were heading the same way," said Cummings.

Swanson's ranche, situated in the northeastern part of the Indian Territory, near Coulby's Bluff, was about one hundred and fifty miles south of Kansas City. The rolling prairie which stretched between was interspersed with ranches, and an occasional small town, but for the greater part was wild and

uninhabited.

Swanson, an Americanized Norwegian, had married a Cherokee squaw, which enabled him to locate in the Indian country. His reputation was none of the best, but his unscrupulous character and well-known skill with the Winchester caused him to be feared, and an officer of the law would think twice before making any attempts to disturb him. It was at this place that the three fugitives were seeking refuge.

The sun had risen, and it was broad day when Cummings, who naturally took the lead, commanded a halt.

A clump of cotton-wood trees on the verge of a small, shallow creek offered a good camping ground.

Hobbling their horses, after taking the saddles from them, they allowed them to graze at will, and the party busied themselves in collecting wood for a fire.

A few sheep which had escaped from some ranch were grazing near the spot, and Moriarity, who had his Winchester, dropped one by a well-directed ball back of the shoulder.

The warm fleece was taken from the still quivering body, and the appetizing smell of mutton steaks reminded the hungry men that the breakfast hour had long since passed. The meal over, nature asserted her claims, and the thoroughly tired-out travelers wrapped themselves in their blankets and fell asleep.

They were not disturbed, for the trail which they had taken was seldom traveled over, and it was late in the afternoon when they were once more on their way.

The trail led over the beds of dried-up streams, and skirted the numerous patches of scrub oak and cotton-wood trees which were scattered all over the prairie. The long prairie grass sometimes brushed the feet of the horsemen, and coveys of prairie chickens flew up and scurried away as the three outlaws galloped past. Mile after mile was left behind, the tough Indian ponies they bestrode keeping the tireless lope for which they are noted without slacking the pace or becoming exhausted. The three riders were expert horsemen, and had been accustomed to the saddle almost from infancy.

Little was said and few words spoken by the men as they skimmed over the prairie save to call attention to some obstacle in the way, or to some change in the trail, which stretched before them plain and distinct.

The few Indians and half-breeds they met paid no attention to them, thinking them to be cowboys bound for their camp, and in fact they did resemble those hardy specimens of plainsmen who range this country herding cattle or sheep.

When the chill of the night had set in, Cummings ordered a second halt, and the horses, hobbled, commenced to graze on the short buffalo-grass which spread underfoot. The remainder of the carcass of mutton which Moriarity had shot had been strapped back of his saddle, and was now cut up into suitable sizes for the fire which Cook had built. The meat, laid on the glowing embers, was soon cooked and, their hunger appeased, the men, wrapped in their blankets, their feet to the fire, composed themselves for slumber.

The long hours of the night passed on, the fire had died out, when Cummings, awakened by a sudden feeling of chilliness, rose to his feet and piled some twigs and branches together to make a blaze. As he stooped to the ground the faint, far-off beats of horses' hoofs reached his quick ear.

"Dan! Cook! Wake up! Get up lively!" he cried, as he made a dash for his saddle and threw it on his horse. "They are after us."

The camp was instantly in commotion, the saddles thrown over the horses and tightened with ready and experienced hands, and vaulting into the saddles the three men rode out into the bright moonlight as a company of ten men, armed to the teeth, swept like a whirlwind around the edge of the timber.

A yell reached the ears of the three fugitives as they galloped out on the prairie and a voice, clear and commanding, rang out in tones familiar to Moriarity, who had heard them in the cooper-shop when the tramp commanded him to hold out his hands.

"There they are lads. Forward!"

Uttering a deep round oath Dan turned in his saddle, giving the horse the head, and leveling his rifle fired point-blank at the pursuing party.

A cry of derision greeted the shot, and Cummings, saying "Hold your shots, you fool," drove his spurs cruelly into the horse's flanks and, followed closely by his companions, dashed down the trail toward Swanson's ranche.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PURSUIT.

Chip and Sam were not the only Pinkerton men in Kansas City at this time engaged on the Adams Express robbery case, for from the time Cook awoke from the drunken stupor in which Cummings and Moriarity found him at the cooper-shop on the night when Chip was captured he had been shadowed constantly by Barney, who with Chip had found the letter heads in Fotheringham's trunk.

Day and night had Barney followed him, and he was but a short distance behind when Cummings took Cook on the verge of the delirium tremens to his room.

When Cook came back with the horses and with Cummings rode away, Barney hastened to Chip, who, fully recovered from the terrible blow on the head, had again assumed his duties, and reported the fact to him.

Sam, who was on the lookout for Moriarity, was notified at once, and the three detectives, laying the matter before the chief of police, were furnished with seven mounted men armed to the teeth, and all of them old Texas rangers.

This formidable troop had left the city scarcely an hour after the robbers had started. The direction they took and the nature of the country pointed to Swanson's ranche as the point for which the outlaws were making.

All night long the posse rode, and had they not taken a wrong trail, would have caught up to the robbers at their first camp.

Retracing their path, a short halt only was made, saddle girths were tightened, the rifles closely inspected, and Chip, giving the cry of "Forward," led the company on the hot scent.

Like a good general, Chip spread his men to the right and left of the trail, so that in moving forward a wide swath of country was swept.

The first camp which the outlaws had made was discovered by the scout on the left flank. Raising the Texan yell, the rank closed in and gathered around the spot.

One of the men, an old Indian hunter, burnt by the sun to living bronze, and scarred by the many hand-to-hand conflicts he had had with the red savages, leaped from his horse, his keen eyes fastened to the ground, read the signs which the outlaws had left as if they were printed words.

Pointing to the fire and the remnants of the burnt meat and bones near it, he said:

"They ain't more'n three hours ahead of us, and there's more than the two. Three fellars ate their grub here this morning."

"How do you make that out?" said Chip.

"Well, Cap'n, I've fit Ingins and herded cattle more'n twenty year, off an' on, and if there ain't been three men here not over three hour ago, I lose my reckonin'. See here, in this soft place where the sun has melted the ground a bit, is hoof-marks, and they belong to three different horses."

"Perhaps they stole a horse?"

"Mebbe so, and mebben't so. I reckon it mebben't so. Cause why? The fellar as walked over this patch wore boots and spurs, long rowels on 'em, too. See where they cut the mud. Here is another one, a derned sight smaller foot, and here is one that had a sharp heel. No, Cap'n, they picked up a man somewhar along the road."

To this the others who had come out with the detectives gave their unqualified assent, and Chip cried:

"Three hours ahead is a good lead on us, boys. We must climb along."

The command was again given, and, rendered more eager and enthusiastic by the knowledge that only thirty miles was between them and their game, the men moved forward with a cheer.

Another short halt was made for supper and the trail was again covered just as the robbers had about commenced to sleep. A sharp lookout was maintained and the bright light of the full moon turned night into day and made the task so much the easier.

As they rode around the edge of the timber in which Cummings and his companions were secreted they had no suspicion that they had gained so rapidly on the flying renegades, so that the sudden appearance of the men for whom they were searching somewhat surprised them. Giving their peculiar yell they pressed forward with a great burst of speed, not even checking the gait when the ball which Moriarity sent whistled over them.

Instantly several rifles were leveled at the flying robbers, and had not Chip commanded them not to shoot it would have fared ill with Jim Cummings and his companions.

With the speed of the wind the horses flew down the trail, the rapid hoof beats rang out on the still night and sent the slinking coyotes howling to their lairs. Just peering above the horizon could be seen the dark outlines of Goody's Bluff, fifteen miles away, and if Cummings could but reach its shadow he was safe, even from the posse which was pursuing him, for he would then be in the Indian Territory. Looking back at his pursuers, who in a solid group were following him so closely that he could almost distinguish their features, so bright was the night, he saw that their horses were not driven at the full height of their speed, but were rather being held back. Alarmed at this he communicated his fears to his companions, who, one on each side, were bending forward in the saddle, urging and caressing their horses to get all there was out of them, and right gamely did the stanch animals respond to the touch of the spur or pat of the hand, as they beat out mile after mile behind them, the hoof-beats echoed by the flying party behind. With starting eye-balls eagerly fixed on the dim outlines of the bluff, the hunted men watched it grow larger and more distinct, and hope began to revive in their breasts when a sharp "ping" of a rifle, followed by the whistle of the ball passing over their heads broke the silence of the wordless chase.

As with one impulse, each man threw himself flat on his horse's neck, but did not for an instant relax speed or spur. Another shot followed, and Chip's voice, ringing and clear, shouted:

"If you don't halt, we'll shoot your horses."

"Shoot and be damned," said Jim Cummings, almost exultingly, as he drew his revolver from his belt. "Two can play at that game," and drawing a hasty bead on Chip, he pulled the trigger.

Chip's horse, giving a convulsive leap to one side, staggered a little, and fell behind, but was soon in the lead again, apparently unhurt.

"Boys," shouted Cummings, "d'ye see that dry creek bed. On the other side we're safe," The pursuing posse, hearing these words, and knowing their full import, gave spurs to their horses, and the distance between the two parties closed up so rapidly that the three outlaws could hear the heavy breathing of the following horses.

Their own animals began to show signs of distress, and the dry creek bed was still a long, long distance off.

Nearer and nearer crept Chip and his men, the thirteen men, pursuers and pursued, was almost in one party. Chip, who lead, and Cummings, who rode behind his comrades, were not a horse's length apart.

Slowly the gallant beast Chip bestrode pushed forward, gaining little by little until his nose almost reached the flank of Jim's steed.

"Jim Cummings, do you surrender?" and the sharp click of a revolver was heard.

With a malignant scowl Cummings half turned in his saddle, and saying:

"No, damn me, no; not while I live," placed his revolver at the head of
Chip's mount and sent the ball crashing to its brain.

Down in its tracks shot the noble steed, the dark, rich blood jetting from the ghastly hole, and deluging Chip with its crimson flood.

Chip, with the address of an experienced horseman, had lighted upon his feet, his revolver still clutched in his hand.

The sudden fall of the leading horse had caused the remainder of the party to haul up short to avoid running horse and rider down. This left the road clear before him, and Chip, dropping on his knee took a long careful sight at Cummings and fired.

A sudden swerve of Jim's horse saved him, but uttering a cry of pain, Cook's steed, struck in a vital point, stopped short, and trembling in every limb slowly sank to the ground. Cook, taken so unexpectedly, had shot over his horse's head, and now lay, unconscious, in the center of the trail, his two companions, driving the spurs deeper into the flanks of their almost exhausted animals, dashed down the banks of the dividing line and stood safe on Indian Territory.

The unconscious Cook was at once surrounded by the detectives and posse, and a generous dose of brandy poured down his throat brought him to his senses.

Chagrined beyond measure at the escape of his man, just when he was about to put his hand on him, and at the loss of his horse, Chip was in no humor to allow a technical boundary line to keep him from capturing his men, who, riding around the edge of an elevation on the prairie were now lost to sight.

"Brodey," he said, turning to the ranger who had been the guide of the expedition from the time it started from Kansas City, "how far is it to Swanson's ranche?"

"A matter of twenty-five miles, as the crow flies."

"How far by the trail?"

"Well, Cap'n," responded Brodey, reflectively, as he threw his knee over the pommel of his saddle, "lemme see. The trail goes by that there belt of timber, then jines the stage-road to Allewe, an' follows that a piece, then it shunts off to the west straight for the bluff thar, purty nearly a bee-line. Thirty mile, sure—mebbe less."

"Is that the Indian Territory 'tother side of the divide?"

"Jesso—Cherokee Nation."

"What sort of a man is this Swanson?"

"Half-buffalo, half-painter, an' other half crocodile. He's wuss than a half-breed Apache, an would as soon shoot a man as to drink, an' Swanson's a right powerful punisher of the whisky-jug."

"Yes! yes! I know all that, but is he cunning, shrewd, sharp, you know?"

"Got eyes like an Injun, ears like a coyote an' a nose sharp as a gopher snake."

"He must be a tough combination, but I'll do it, all the same."

"Do what, Chip?" asked Sam.

"Go down to Swanson's and bring in my man."

"Bars and buffler skins," cried Brodey. "You don't mean to say that you will do such a blame fool thing as that. Sho!"

"Not alone, Chip," said Sam. "I go with you."

"See hyar, young fellers," expostulated Brodey. "Do ye know what your doin'! Got any idee ye'll come back alive! I've been in some tough places before now, but shoot my worthless carcass if I want to go to Swanson's. He's killed a man, torn out his heart and eaten it raw, fer a fact."

"Pshaw, who would believe such a yarn as that, man."

"Swar to gosh it's true," continued Brodey. "I don't believe thar's a man in the States what's got as much devil to thar square inch as this man Swanson. Better not go, Cap'n. I'd hate tremendous to have you killed."

Chip laughed lightly, as he stroked the neck of the Ranger's horse, and said:

"Brodey, I've been a detective for five years, and in those five years I've looked almost sure death in the face more than a score of times. I have seen the knife raised which was to be buried in my heart the next second. I have felt the revolver spit its flames plump in my face. I have been tied hand and feet

and laid across the rail, with a lightning express train not over a thousand feet off, coming down like the wind, and I am a live man to-day. The man isn't born yet that can kill me."

Chip said all this in a modest tone and no signs of braggadocio, for it was all true, and his listeners knew he was telling facts by his bearing and manner.

"Yes," broke in Sam, "and I was with you on several of these occasions, and what's more, I shall be with you on this one you are planning."

"I want you should be—but enough of this talk. We can do nothing more now. Our men have given us the slip. Dismount, boys, and give the nags a breathing spell."

Cook, by this time, had regained his senses, and was sitting up in the middle of the trail rubbing his shoulder and wearing a most woebegone and dazed look upon his expressive countenance. Observing this, Chip walked toward him, and imitating a drunken stagger, sang:

"Drink, puppies, drink; let every puppy drink, That's old enough to stand and to swallow."

As the first strains fell on his ears, Cook started, and regarding Chip with questioning eyes, inquired:

"Who are you fellows anyway; can't you let peaceable travelers alone without shooting their horses?"

"Oh! you were peaceable travelers, were you? Well, now, that's strange, we took you to be some horse thieves that have been skurrying around these parts lately."

"Do you think I look like a horse-thief?" indignantly.

"Is that your own horse?"

"Not exactly. I hired—"

"Ah! yes, you hired it—they all say that—you hired it some time ago and have forgotten to pay the bill —"

"Well, I didn't either, I hired it for a week, and—"

"Really, Mr. Cook, you were going to make quite a visit—"

"My name ain't Cook."

"No? Let us call you Mr. Cook just for the sake of the argument. It's a good name, is Cook. I used to know a fellow named Cook once. He had a cooper-shop on the east bottoms, Kansas City. I went over to see him a week or so ago, and we had a high old time I can assure you. Cook was a very amusing gentleman. He could sing like Brignoli. What was that song he could sing so nicely? Oh! yes, I have it."

"For we'll pass the bottle 'round When we've—"

"The tramp!" ejaculated Cook looking at Chip with amazement.

"The same, at your service, Mr. Cook, for that is your name, isn't it?"

"I'm caught," confessed the puzzled Cook. "What are you making game of me for? What do you want me for?"

"Nothing, nothing. We were afraid you might prolong your anticipated visit to such a length that we grew homesick for you, so I got some of the boys together, a sort of a picnic, you know, to ask you not to stay too long," bantered Chip. "We really can't take 'no' for an answer, Mr. Cook, really you must consider our feelings and return with us."

"I guess I can't help myself," said Cook grimly.

"It does look a little that way, don't it?"

Cook shook his head as he arose to his feet, and stooping over his dead horse unloosed the girth and drew off the saddle, nor did he make any objection when Chip secured his revolver and ammunition belt. Escape was entirely cut off from him and he accepted his capture in a resigned spirit, because he could not help himself.

"Brodey, how far is the railroad from here?"

"About fifteen miles over thar," pointing toward the east, "Blue Jacket lies thar, and is on the

Missouri, Kansas and Texas."

"We'll make for it. You take the prisoner behind you and I will mount with Sam."

The cavalcade were soon in motion, leaving the dead horses to be devoured by the buzzards and coyotes which were already beginning to gather around.

Arriving at Blue Jacket, the party left Chip and his prisoner, and turning to the north cantered off for Kansas City.

CHAPTER XIII. SWANSON'S RANCHE—THE DETECTIVES IN ROBBER'S RETREAT—THE SUCCESS OF THE DOCTOR—ANOTHER ROBBERY PLANNED.

In the center of a beautiful valley, with high, rugged bluffs rising on all sides, and intersected by a clear stream of spring water, which fell in tiny cascades and little waterfalls, turning and twisting like a silver snake, stood Swanson's Ranche. The low frame building, surrounded on four sides by a wide porch, and standing on a gentle elevation which fell away to the creek, was the home of the redoubtable Swanson, who was monarch of all he surveyed for miles around. The evening was rapidly advancing into night, and the large open fireplace, huge and yawning, was roaring with the cheerful fire which Swanson's obedient squaw had built, that her liege lord might not be chilled by the cold wind which whistled over the plains.

The floor of the large room, covered with fur rugs and huge buffalo-skins, was made of pounded clay, and the feet of many years had hardened it to almost stone-like solidity.

Saddles, lariats, rifles, high boots, and all the trappings and harness belonging to a cowboy's outfit littered the place, and stretched out on the robes and furs, in easy, careless attitudes, lay some half-dozen men.

Jim Cummings and Dan Moriarity were of the number. Thick clouds of tobacco smoke curled and eddied to the low ceiling, and seated near the fire to get the benefit of the light were a couple of card-playing ranchmen, indulging in a game of California Jack.

Standing with his back to the blaze, his feet spread apart, and his hands deep in his pockets, stood the owner of the ranche—Swanson. Cast in a Herculean mold, he stood over six feet tall, his broad shoulders surmounted by a neck like a bull, and his red, cunning face, almost hid from sight by the thick, bushy whiskers which covered it.

He had been relating, with great gusto, some adventure in which he had played a prominent part, and raising his broad hand in the air he brought it down on a table near him, as he exclaimed:

"And if any detective comes skulking around this shanty, I swear I'll cut out his sneaking heart, and make him eat it raw"—when the sound of horses broke the thread of his discourse, and a voice was heard shouting:

"Hello-o-o, the house!"

"Yes, an be right smart about it, dis chile most froze."

A young fellow near the door sprang to open it, and thrusting his head out, said:

"Come in, there's no dogs around."

"Dats all right, honey, we ain't got no fear of de hounds, me an' the Doctor ain't."

"Keep quiet, you black imp," said the voice which had first been heard, "Hobble the nags and bring in my saddle, boys."

"All right, sah; I's hearin' you, sah."

To this conversation, which had taken place outside, the men in the room had listened with great

interest. Anything was welcome that served to break the monotony of ranche life, and a stir of expectation went through the room as the two strangers were heard dismounting.

The door opened and the new-comers entered.

"By the great horn spoon if this ain't the old hoss doctor hisself!" exclaimed Swanson, as he reached out his huge paw. "I thought the Apaches had lifted your scalp years ago."

"You can't kill a good hoss doctor, Swanson," replied the Doctor, grasping the offered hand and giving it a hearty shake. "Good hoss doctors don't grow on every bush."

"Boys," said Swanson, turning the Doctor around. "This hyar gentleman is Doctor Skinner—"

"Late graduate of the Philadelphia Veterinary Surgical Institute. Has practised in seventeen States and four Territories. Can cure anything on hoofs, from the devil to the five-legged broncho of Arizona, which has four legs, one on each corner, and one attached to his left flank. With it, he can travel faster than the swiftest race horse, and when hunted by the native red men, he throws it over his neck, and smiles urbanely upon his baffled pursuers."

Swanson roared with delight as the Doctor rolled this off his tongue, and slapping him on the back, cried:

"You're the same old codger. Haven't changed an inch in seven years. You've got to stay here a week, two weeks, a month. I've plenty of sick stock, and some of the boys have horses that need polishing."

"Yes, sah!" broke in the Doctor's companion, a full-blooded negro.
"We's gwine to camp down hyar shuah a monf—"

"Hold your tongue, Scip," said the Doctor. "I'm the talking man here. Yes! gentlemen," addressing the attentive cowboys, "I can cure anything that touches the ground—biped, quadruped, or centipede—glanders, botts, greased hoofs, heaves, blind staggers, it makes no odds. My universal, self-acting, double compound elixir of equestrian ointment will perform a cure in each and every case. It is cheap! It is sure! It is patented! It is the best, and it is here. You may roll up, you may tumble up, you may walk up, any way to get up, or send your money up, and you will receive a two-quart bottle of this precious liquid, of which I am the sole owner, proprietor and manufacturer."

Again Swanson expressed his unbounded delight, and the audience signified their entire approbation by shouting:

"Go it, old hoss; keep it up!"

When the doctor first entered, Cummings, who was extended on a large bear skin, fastened a searching look on him, taking in every feature and article of wearing apparel, and Moriarity, who was stretched near him, regarded the new-comer with suspicious eyes, but when they witnessed the cordial greeting which Swanson gave, they dismissed their suspicions and entering into the spirit of the evening, applauded as loudly and noisily as the rest.

Scip, who had been attending to the horses outside, now stuck his head through the door and shouted:

"Tole you what it was, Massa Doctor, dis yer chile can't tote dat bundle in alone, nohow."

"All right, Scip, I'll help you," and disregarding, with a wave of his hands, the proffers of assistance which were tendered him, the doctor stepped onto the porch and found Scip struggling with a large pack, strapped to the back of a broncho, tugging and jerking, and swearing under his breath at "the old fool rope."

Coming close to him the doctor said aloud:

"Be careful you black imp of Satan; what are you so rough about?" and then followed in a whisper, "the men are both there, Chip."

Scip, or rather, Chip, adopting the same tactics, replied:

"Honey, I's handlin' dis yeah smoof as cottonseed oil"—whispering, "what a rascally-looking lot."

The Doctor and Scip were none other than the two detectives. When Chip reached Kansas City he hunted around for some suitable disguise which would carry him through in safety. In his perplexity he went to the chief of police, with whom he was on the most friendly terms, and put the case before him.

The chief said:

"About seven years ago there used to be an old fraud named Skinner, a sort of horse-doctor, who stepped somewhat over the line and walked off with some other fellow's nag. He is now putting in his time at Jefferson City. He was hale fellow well met with all that gang, especially Swanson, and I think if you could run down to Jefferson City, put the case before the warden, you could get pointers from him."

That afternoon Chip was in Jefferson City, and walking over to the penitentiary, found the warden willing, and Skinner was called to the visitor's cage.

He had three years more to serve, and, on being told that any service he could render the State would be taken into account and to his credit, he gave Chip a minute and detailed description of his costume, manner of doing business, and brought up many interesting reminiscenses, which Chip carefully noted.

Sam, who had a peculiar talent for disguises, was to take the part of Doctor Skinner, and Chip as his negro servant could slip in and out without attracting much attention.

It was in these assumed characters that the detectives made their entre into Swanson's habitat.

Further private conversation was barred by the massive form of Swanson filling the door, and urging his friend the Doctor to let "his nigger" take charge of the stock.

"Can't be did, colonel," said the Doctor, "can't be trusted alone near this pack. Scip has too much love for the bottom of the flask to allow him too much freedom here."

"Well, I'll send one of the boys out. Hyar, you, Abe; mosey out thar and yank that pack in hyar."

Abe, a strong, strapping young plainsman, lifted the pack to his shoulder, and, followed by the "Easy, young man; step lightly; glass, you know; this side up with care," of the doctor, deposited it upon the floor.

Opening the pack the Doctor held aloft a large square bottle, on which was pasted a yellow label, "Dr. Skinner's Incomparable Horse Healer," commenced rapidly to dilate upon the peculiar excellence of the nostrum.

"Gentleman, what is good for the noble brute is good for man. This compound, this superior selection of seventeen separate solvents is warranted to dissipate the most chronic complaints. It will incite slumber, mend the broken heart, cause the hair to grow, is good for chapped hands, sore eyes and ingrowing toe-nails. It is a panacea for all evils and a trial will cost you nothing."

He passed the bottle to Swanson, who stood listening to his glib tongue in amused wonder, and invited him to test the medicine. Nothing loth, the giant took a huge drink.

"Whisky," he shouted, joyfully, "the real, old stuff," and smacking his lips he again applied them to the bottle. It was passed around, and the doctor at once became the most popular man on the ranche.

Scip, who had finally succeeded in securing his horses to his satisfaction, during which time he had made a tour of the premises and obtained the lay of the land, now entered the room and pushing his way through the crowd gathered around the Doctor and his bottle of "cure all," spread his hands to the fire, standing beside Cummings.

"Where did you pick up the darkey, Doctor?" inquired Swanson, designating Scip by a jerk of his thumb.

"The hard fact is, gentlemen, that we picked each other up. I was 1907 and Scip was 1908.

"How's that?"

"I repeat. I was 1907 and Scip was 1908."

"You mean to say you were doing—"

"Simply that and nothing more, I found a halter in the road one day and picked it up, carrying it with me, and it wasn't until a most officious individual in blue coat and brass buttons came along and rudely placed a pair of exquisite steel bracelets on my delicate wrists, that I learned that a horse was tied at the other end of the halter, and the gentleman who is supposed to dispense justice in Kansas City urged me to remove to Jefferson City for a time; that is all. The number of my room was 1907 and my colored friend here had the apartment next to mine."

"Yah, yah," laughed Scip, "we bof did our time together, suah."

This new claim on Swanson's friendship had its effect, and the generous quantities of whisky which he had swallowed having put him into an extraordinary good humor, he threw his arms around the doctor and vowed he would keep him all his life.

Thus the two detectives by a bold piece of strategy, had gained entrance to the express robbers' asylum and had been offered the right hand of fellowship. The evening wore on, cards were produced, and the click of the ivory poker chips was heard above the low hum of conversation. The doctor did not care to take a hand, and Scip, apparently tired out with his day's journey, had thrown himself on a buffalo-robe in a corner, and seemed fast asleep.

The Doctor, his eyes half closed, and slowly puffing his pipe, closely and keenly eyed every face in the room; but most of all, he gazed at Swanson, who, partly overcome by liquor, was leaning back in an easy, cane-bottomed chair, looking into the fire. A malignant frown, ever and anon, knit his low brow, and his cruel mouth curled so as to show his teeth, as his thoughts passed through his befuddled brain.

Cummings and Moriarity, who had withdrawn from the main party, had their heads together, earnestly engaged in conversation. Cummings was evidently endeavoring to persuade his fainter hearted comrade to do something, for he often bent a significant look on Swanson, or pointed his thumb toward him, but Moriarity, whose eyes were half indicative of fear, would shake his head as if in expostulation.

The Doctor saw all this, through his half-closed eyes and strained his ears to catch even the slightest shred of their consultation, but the outlaws talked in such low tones that he was unable to hear anything.

A glance at Skip, who was gently snoring near them, put his mind at rest, for he saw that the darkey was taking in every word that dropped, feigning sleep all the time. A sudden movement by some of the men, roused Swanson, and looking at a huge silver watch, he ordered them all to bed at once. Which command was obeyed by all except Cummings, Moriarity, the Doctor and Scip.

An inner room, fitted with bunks, was used as the dormitory, but the two robbers, as special guests had rooms to themselves. Going to a cupboard, and bringing out an armful of blankets, Swanson threw them on the floor.

"There my hearty, you and your boy will have to camp out here to-night.
We're crowded, so make yourself comfortable," and then bidding them
"Good-night," he staggered to his bed.

Nothing could suit the detectives better than this. A room to themselves, a warm fire, plenty of blankets and no suspicions of their true character.

Smoothing the blankets over the bear skins, the two friends lay down and a whispered conversation commenced.

"What were Cummings and Moriarity talking about, Chip?" said Sam, in a cautious tone.

"Cummings wants to rob the old man, Swanson. He says he's got thousands of dollars salted somewhere around here and thinks they might as well make hay while the sun shines, but Dan was afraid to do it."

"What a precious pair of rascals, but we can use this idea first-rate to get them over the line again."

"I thought of the same thing as they were talking. If you could only bring it up without awaking any suspicions, we might offer to help him do the job."

"Trust me for that, old fellow. Even if we have to commit actual robbery, I'll do it."

"Well, keep your eyes open, and don't be caught sleeping. Go to sleep, now. I'll keep first watch."

This was the regular system of the two operators. While one slept the other kept watch and to this fact a large portion of their success was due.

The ranche became quiet, its denizens all sleeping, and the night passed without any disturbance.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DOCTOR TURNS CONSPIRATOR—THE PLOT TO ROB THE RANCHE.

The pseudo doctor had been at the ranche a week, during which he had become quite chummy with Jim Cummings and Dan Moriarity, who, finding that time hung very heavy on their hands, welcomed the jovial, story-telling doctor and spent most of their time in his company.

Swanson, who was moving his stock further west and making preparations for the spring round-up, was obliged to be in the saddle all day and sometimes late at night. Although a hard drinker, an unscrupulous rascal and an inveterate gambler, he was a good stock-raiser, and kept good care of his cattle. He employed a large force of cowboys or herders, and, acting himself as captain of the round-up, he would absent himself from home for days at a time.

One morning the Doctor, flashing a significant glance toward Scip, which said, "Take your cue and follow me," remarked in a careless tone:

"I reckon the old man must have considerable dust salted down by this time."

As the remark was a general one made to Cummings, Moriarity and Scip, the latter answered:

"Yes, sah; Mass Swanson got a pile of gold laid up for a rainy day, suah."

The Doctor continued:

"He's had more than the average run of good luck the last few years. He told me the other day that he only lost a few head all year, and was just going to ship a big lot to Chicago."

Cummings, blowing a blue column of tobacco smoke toward the rafters, said:

"It's always been a question to me where he keeps his money. There's no bank around here."

"Oh! he's a shrewd old chap, Swanson is," replied the Doctor. "He has a private bank somewhere near here probably."

"Seems to me that would be pretty risky," said Cummings. "If he keeps it planted around here what would hinder some one from finding the cache and getting off with the plunder?"

"I made that very remark to him," the Doctor answered; "and he laughed and said it would take something smarter than a cowboy or an Injun to find it, but there are others beside cowboys and Injuns that come this way," with a meaning smile. Cummings noted the smile, and glancing at Moriarity, said:

"How would you go at it, Doctor, if you were to make the attempt?"

The Doctor laughed quietly, as if he appreciated the joke, and leaning back in his chair, his thumbs in the arm-holes of his vest, his feet stretched on a chair before him, he answered:

"Well, Cummings, I don't know as I would like to do it. Swanson's a good friend of mine, and—"

"Hang it all, man, who the devil asked you to do it?" replied Jim, hotly. "I was only joking; do you think I wanted you to—"

"Not at all, my dear fellow, not at all," said the Doctor, in a soothing tone. "No one supposed for a minute that you thought of such a thing, but if I was going to do a job like that I wouldn't care to do it alone. Two, certainly not more than three, more to help would be necessary. I would go at it about this way: The first thing would be to find out where Swanson kept his money. It is doubtless kept in close proximity to this place, evidently well secreted, for Swanson is not a man to let his right hand know what his left hand is doing. I think I would be apt to get him full some evening, then let him win a big pot from me in poker, and, feigning drunkenness, I would watch very keenly what he did with the money. You may depend on it, it is somewhere in this house. After I ascertained the hiding-place I would surprise the old fellow in his sleep with the aid of my confederates, and gagging him, and then binding his arms and feet, would rob his bank at my pleasure. THAT is the way I should do it."

Cummings had followed every word, nodding his approval and manifesting his interest in various ways, and, without noticing what he was saying, muttered to himself, but so loud that the Doctor overheard it, "Just the way I would do it, and I will yet."

"What makes you think Swanson keeps his wealth on the premises,

Doctor?" asked Moriarity.

"Safest and most convenient place," replied the Doctor, "He probably has had a special hole or cranny made for it, a double wall of some room, behind some picture or something like that. I recollect a chap that had a picture in his room, fastened close to the wall just like that picture there," and the Doctor pointed to the only picture in the house, a representation of the ranche painted by some wandering artist. "It was a painting of a man's face and by pressing the eye a spring was released and the whole picture swung back, showing a cavity back of it in which the old miser kept his valuables."

Scip, who was always cutting some caper, here rose to his feet, saying

"Dunno, but mebbe Massa Swanson keep he truck behind that chromiow. Heah now, I'se Massa Swanson," and Scip imitated Swanson's gait, "I'se playin' poker wid you gemmen. I'se out o' cash; Massa Cummins thar, he got a king full, and lay ovah my bob-tail flush, I say, 'Hole on thar, Massa Cummins, I'se got to unlock de combinashun of my safe.' Den I walk ovah to de picture, an' I hit a crack with my fist, so Well, I be damned!"

The rest sprang to their feet in astonishment for, illustrating his remarks, Scip had struck the center of the oil painting with his hand, and stood dumb-founded, for the picture noiselessly swung forward and disclosed a large recess in the wall in which little sacks of some sort of money were piled one on the other. Scip, who was evidently the most surprised one of the party, was, however, the first to regain his composure. Pushing the frame to its place again the sharp click of the spring lock was heard, and turning swiftly around he caught meaning glances passing between Cummings and Moriarity.

"Humph!" he said to himself, "Swanson's money is as good as gone now unless we nab these two rascals soon."

The Doctor, who had reseated himself, remarked in a tone of wonder,

"Really, this is a most remarkable coincidence, most remarkable indeed."

"Oh! shut up that mummery, Doctor," broke in Cummings roughly, as he reared his head and squared his shoulders evidently intending to make a strike, "You and your nigger knew all about this, so you may as well own up."

The Doctor, receiving a nod from Scip, leaned forward, his eyes fastened intently on Cummings and his voice sunk to a low whisper, replied:

"And you may as well own up, too. We're all in the same boat. That is just what you are here for, and if you think I am fool enough to loaf around this hole a week for nothing, it shows you don't know me. I need you two and you need Scip and myself. Come, is it a bargain?"

In answer Cummings held out his hand. The Doctor grasped it cordially and holding his left hand to Moriarity, who took it, said:

"We four, for Scip is my pal, can do it OK, We can—"

"Why not do it now," said Cummings, with energy. "Our horses are here and we can put a whole day between us and the ranche before Swanson returns."

Now this was just what Sam (the Doctor) did not want. During the week which he and Scip had been spending at the ranche, seven or eight new men had been taken in by Swanson, who, as was before said, was getting in shape for the spring round-up. Of these new men six were Pinkerton detectives, and at this particular time were several miles from the ranche herding cattle. It was necessary that these men should be notified by Scip of the plot, and be ready to spring the trap as soon as the game was in the toils. For this reason the Doctor did not want the robbery to occur before the next night at the earliest. So shaking his head decidedly, he said in an emphatic manner:

"No, it won't do; it would spoil the whole thing. All the money is in the shape of specie and tied up in bags. We have nothing in which to carry it, and would have to load it as it is on our horses. Besides, Swanson is expecting a large payment for his last shipment to-day. I know this, as he told me so, and we may make ten thousand dollars by waiting a day longer."

After some demurring, Cummings acquiesced, although with very bad grace.

"All right, have it your own way; but no later than to-morrow night."

"To-morrow night it is, then," said the Doctor; then, as if struck with some suspicion, he turned suddenly and said:

"And the Lord have mercy on your soul, Jim Cummings, if you or your mate play us false."

"No fear of that, Doctor," replied the train robber. "You'll find me true blue at any rate—you're a man after my own heart. I wish I had known you sooner."

"Why?"

"Because, last October I did a little job and was almost nabbed because one of my pals weakened."

Moriarity looked somewhat confused, but apparently not noticing it (but in reality nothing escaped the hawk eyes of the disguised detective) the Doctor said:

"Last October! By Jove, you ARE the Jim Cummings that did up the Adams Express Co. The papers were full of it. If there is any man I have wanted to meet it is you." And the Doctor with great enthusiasm grasped the express robber's hand with every expression of intense admiration beaming from his eyes.

His vanity tickled by this expression of homage, Cummings drew himself to his full height, and replied:

"Well, yes, I did that work, and if you will stick by me we can work another one just as good."

"I'm with you, and when I say 'I,' it means Scip, too, for he is a treasure."

Scip ducked his head as he said:

"We's a hull team and a dog under the waggin, but, Massa Doctor, I'se goin' out to look after the bosses," and he left the room.

Moriarity, picking up a rifle and cartridge belt, said he was going out for a canter and see what luck he could have in the way of game. This left Cummings and the Doctor alone.

Glancing out the window they saw Moriarity gallop off, and a short distance behind Scip on his horse, following.

"Where did you pick up that darkey, Doctor?" asked Cummings.

"In St. Louis, about five years ago. He is a good one, faithful and brave, and will never squeal. He is just the man to help us on this new deal."

The subject of this conversation was all this time galloping over the level prairie, following closely behind Moriarity, who, with his rifle thrown across the pommel of his saddle, was on the look out for anything in the way of game which might come along.

As they rode along they would meet one of the herders sitting at ease on his horse, or galloping madly after some refractory steer that was making a break for freedom. They had, in their ride, passed four of these men, and to every one Scip gave a signal, merely the wave of his hand in a peculiar manner, to which the men had responded likewise. They were nearing another stand, the ranchman, astride his pony, stood against the sky like a bronze bit of sculpture. As they came within speaking distance Scip, drawing in his horse, said.

"I's goin' to loaf aroun' heah a bit, Massa Dan, I'll wait fer you."

"All right," responded Dan, who gave his horse the spurs and swiftly disappeared behind the swell of land. Scip, walking his nag, drew near the cowboy.

"Hye thar, honey, got any 'bacco?"

"Plenty, blacky, plenty,"

"Den give me some."

"What is it, Chip?" asked the cowboy as Moriarity swept out of sight.

"We have work to do to-morrow night, Barney, you must get the boys together, go down the divide to the ford and cross over, ready to come when I whistle. To-morrow night we must bag our game."

"We will be there, Chip, and I am glad of it, for its devilish monotonous staying out here all day."

"There will be a break in the monotony that will suit you. Be sure to be at the other side of the ford before twelve to-morrow night."

Chip then explained to him the details of the projected robbery and the plan of capturing the outlaws as soon as they had crossed into Kansas, for the divide was the southern state line of that state.

Barney, again repeating his statement that he would be there, loped his horse after some cattle that was straying too far off, and Chip, or rather Scip, stretching himself on the ground, awaited Moriarity's return.

They arrived home in time for supper, and found Swanson had returned from Blue Jacket, where he had gone that morning, and the fact that he had made up beds for the Doctor and Scip in a side room was accepted by Cummings as proof that he had received the money he expected and wanted the room to himself that he might put his wealth behind the picture unobserved.

The next day the ranche was deserted save by the four conspirators, who made preparations for the robbery of Swanson's money which was to take place that night. The picture was tried until the proper point for touching the hidden spring was found. A supply of food was quietly secreted in a bag and hid near the divide. Some heavy flour sacks made of canvas were ripped open and suitable bags for carrying the money were made from the pieces. All these preparations were made without interruption or discovery, and excepting a long ride which Scip made in the afternoon, ostensibly for the purpose of exercising his horse but really that he might again see the detectives who were acting as cowboys, the day wore along without any incident out of the ordinary way.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ROBBERY—CUMMINGS' NARROW ESCAPE—THE CAPTURE OF MORIARITY—JIM CUMMINGS SLIPS FROM THE TOILS—MR. PINKERTON TAKES A HAND.

The ranche was asleep. Heavy breathing and deep snores from the sleeping-rooms indicated that slumber had fallen on all the inmates. Swanson, who had been repeatedly urged to drink by Cummings and Moriarity and had accepted every invitation, was stretched on his back a drunken mass of stupidity.

The stamping of the horses and distant movements of the thousands of head of cattle alone broke the silence of the night and the darkness had cast its pall over the entire place.

In the large room Scip and the Doctor coolly and calmly awaited the hour of their triumph. Fear was a stranger to both, and as they quietly conversed in whispered accents it would be difficult to believe that they were about to engage in a most desperate enterprise. In another room lay Cummings and Moriarity, completely dressed. The former, with his habitual sang froid, was whispering to Moriarity, who, somewhat excited, was calmed by his companion's nonchalance, and as the hour for the work drew near became like him. A stealthy step, noiseless as an Indian's, interrupted the conversation, and the faint rap on the door gave them the long-looked-for signal.

Creeping on their hands and knees down the hall past Swanson's door, through which his hoarse breathing could be heard, the two men entered the room in which the treasure was stored. The dying embers in the fire-place created a dull glow, showing the Doctor and Scip, booted and spurred, standing in the center of the room. Softly Cummings approached the picture, his finger found the spring through the canvas and, pressing it hard, the frame swung slowly forward as if reluctant to give up its precious charge.

Rapidly taking one bag after another from the cavity Cummings passed them to Moriarity, who placed them in the bags prepared for them.

The Doctor and Scip had gone outside and now brought the four horses nearer the door. This they did that they might have as little to do with the robbery as possible, and they had so managed it that Jim and Dan had done the actual theft.

Moriarity had brought two of the bags which the Doctor had placed on his own and Scip's horse and had gone back for the third, when the door from the inner hall opened, and, his tangled hair hanging in mats over his eyes, his clothing disarranged, his face purple with rage and a revolver in each hand, Swanson appeared before the surprised robbers.

The dim light of the fire showed the picture open, and befogged as his brain was by the whisky, he

realized he was being robbed, and with a roar like a mad bull he sprang upon Cummings.

Swift as a flash Cummings' fist, sent forward with all the force of his powerful frame, struck the ranchman under the ear, and tossing his arms above his head he fell like a dead man on the floor.

The sound of many feet hurrying to the scene was heard and, leaving the bag which he was about to take when Swanson sprang on him, Cummings bolted through the door, vaulted on his horse and followed closely by his companions, rushed swiftly into the darkness. It was none too soon, for at once a half score of men poured from the house, and the vicious snap of the rifles, followed by the pin-n-n-g of the bullets, as they cut the air close to their heads, caused the four men to drive their spurs into their ponies until the blood dropped from their lacerated flanks.

Galloping swiftly to where the herding ponies were tethered, Cummings sprang from his horse and, whipping out his keen bowie knife, cut lariat after lariat, stampeding the whole herd. This done he remounted his horse, saying,

"NOW, we can take our time. They won't get a horse to saddle under an hour," cantered off with an easy, strength-saving gait.

"Curse that Swanson," broke in Cummings, after riding in silence a few moments. "Curse him, he kept me from making an extra ten thousand by his cursed appearance."

Neither the Doctor nor Scip replied to this outburst from the disappointed outlaw. The time for action was coming, and as fast as their horses could gallop, the two outlaws were riding toward the trap laid for them. Leaning forward, with the skill of an expert pickpocket, Scip drew the revolver from the holster on Cummings' saddle, and dropped it in the dry grass which bordered the trail. Watching his opportunity, he pushed his horse against Moriarity, and in the slight confusion caused by the collision, he managed to obtain Dan's revolver in the same way. A whisper told the doctor that this had been done, and the disguised detectives each rode beside the man which they were to capture, the Doctor keeping his eye on Cummings and Scip ready to pull Moriarity off his horse at the proper time.

On the other side of the river, or divide, dark shadows stood under the few cottonwood trees, motionless and quiet as the grave, their ears strained to catch the first sound of their quarry, and their hands grasping the ready revolver.

The far-off sound of galloping horses warned them that the time to act had come, and soon the splashing of the water in the creek told them to stand ready.

The voice of Scip was heard saying in loud tones:

"Heah's de trail, gemmen, ovah dis yah way."

The scurry of hoofs as the horses clambered up the steep banks, the low-spoken words of encouragement which were given their steeds by the robbers, and suddenly the shrill whistle giving the long-looked-for signal rang out on the still air.

As Scip gave the whistle he passed his arm around Moriarity, saying:

"Dan Moriarity, you are my prisoner."

His words were instantly followed by the rush of the detectives who had been lying in ambush, and Moriarity, taken completely by surprise, threw his hands above his head in token of surrender, and then passively submitted to having the darbies snapped on his wrists.

Cummings, at the first note of the vibrating signal, had his eyes opened. His hand flew to his holster, and the mocking laugh of the detective followed the discovery that his revolver was gone.

Sam laid his hand on the outlaw's shoulder, and pressing his revolver against his head, called on him to surrender.

Throwing his hands over his head as Moriarity had done, he suddenly brought his clinched fists full against Sam's temple, putting into the blow the strength of three men. Without a groan the detective's head sank forward, his revolver dropped from his nerveless grasp, and he lay unconscious on his horse's back.

A yell of exultation, and Cummings, turning his horse, dashed down the bank, through the stream, and disappeared in the darkness on the other side.

Instantly the detectives followed, leaving two men to guard Moriarity, for in the darkness Sam's condition was not noticed, but seeing the folly of attempting a pursuit in so dark a night, Chip's whistle

recalled them, and the chagrined and disappointed operatives gathered around the cottonwood trees.

Sam, who had merely been stunned, soon recovered, and with the aid of some brandy Richard was himself once more.

The notorious Jim Cummings had escaped, but two of his accomplices, Cook and Moriarity, were in the clutches of the law.

Dan maintained a dogged silence as the cavalcade cantered toward Kansas City, nor did he speak a word until he was safe behind the bars in that city.

"You have caught me by a dirty, shabby trick, but you will never lay your hands on Jim Cummings," he boasted.

To this Chip replied with a smile, "We'll see, Daniel, we'll see. Make yourself comfortable, for you will stay here a good long time, my cock robin."

A growl and a curse was all that Dan deigned to answer, and turning on his heel Chip left the prison.

Mr. Pinkerton, who had received almost daily reports of what had occurred, which reports Chip had contrived to mail through some one of the detectives disguised as cowboys, now telegraphed that he would be in Kansas City the following night. Chip and Sam met him at the railway station and he accompanied them to Chip's room.

A full and detailed recital of all that occurred was given him by his subordinates, who then put the case in his hands.

"Boys," he said, "we must get one of these men, either Cook or Moriarity, to squeal."

"They are both afraid of Jim Cummings, I can see that in every word they speak," said Chip, "they would rather go to Jefferson City than to turn State's evidence."

"We must work on them in some other manner, then. Sam," turning to the detective, "are you a good hand at forgery?"

"I can imitate most any one's handwriting," said Sam. "Sit down and I will dictate a letter to you."

Sam, taking some paper from the table, wrote as Mr. Pinkerton dictated.

MR. WILLIAM PINKERTON:

DEAR SIR—The letter I wrote to the St. Louis Globe-Democrat is all correct, excepting that I did not tell who plugged the bell-cord. The man, Dan Moriarity, who is now under arrest in Kansas City, was the man who did it. He also forged the order which I gave to the messenger Fotheringham, and was the one who planned the robbery. I make this statement, relying on your word of honor to secure me a light sentence if I turn State's evidence and give information leading to the recovery of the money which I secured.

Yours truly, JIM CUMMINGS.

Mr. Pinkerton, taking from his pocket-book the train robber's letter which he wrote to the St. Louis newspaper, handed it to Sam.

"There is a letter in Jim's handwriting. Now sit down and write this letter in the same hand."

In an hour the detective had completed his work and laid the forged letter before his superior. It was cleverly done, and Mr. Pinkerton felt satisfied.

"Now for the jail," he said, and accompanied by his two "bowers," as he often called them, he left the room and walked to the Kansas City jail.

CHAPTER XVI.

MORIARITY IN THE SWEAT-BOX—THE SUCCESS OF THE FORGED LETTER—MORIARITY CONFESSES.

Dan Moriarity, seated on a bare plank bench in his cell, was passing away the weary hours in figuring how he was to get out of the bad scrape into which he had plunged. He was now fully satisfied that the detectives were very certain that he had a hand in the express-car robbery—but how did they get hold of that dangerous fact? Not through Cook, for since his incarceration in the jail Dan had talked with Cook in the corridors, and Cook had sworn by all that was good and holy that he had not divulged a single word, and knowing that Cook stood in mortal fear of Cummings, as did he himself, Dan believed him.

It was not at all probable that either Haight or Weaver had given the thing away in Chicago, for Dan knew from Cummings that they had not been disturbed, and Cummings had not, or would not have given any information. Then how did the cursed "man-hunters" find out that he had helped in the affair?

Dan was busily engaged in trying to solve this knotty question when the bailiff in charge entered the door and told Dan to follow him to the office.

When Dan reached the room he found three gentlemen awaiting him, all strange faces to the robber. The eldest of the three, as he came in, pointed to a chair, and with commanding brevity and in a tone which indicated that he was used to being obeyed, told him to sit down.

The full glare of the light streaming in through the window fell full upon his face, while the remainder of the party, their faces turned toward him, were comparatively in the shadow, thus having him at a disadvantage. As was before remarked, Moriarity possessed a certain amount of bull courage, and seeing he was in for it, and feeling that he was to be put through the sweating process he sat erect in his chair, his lips compressed and his whole demeanor that of a cornered man determined to fight.

Mr. Pinkerton saw that and with courteous suavity inquired, "Is this Mr. Moriarity?"

"What's the use of asking me; you know well enough who I am," replied Dan, in short, curt syllables.

"Of course, of course; but I thought I might be mistaken."

"Well, you aren't."

"Now, Mr. Moriarity, I think if you are inclined to you can get yourself out of this scrape."

"Ya-as, I suppose so.

"You will let me introduce myself. My name is William Pinkerton."

Dan looked at the great detective with interest and a certain amount of awe, which, however, he quickly overcame and determined to keep a stiffer upper lip than ever.

"Oh! You're Billy Pinkerton, are you?"

"Yes, I am Billy Pinkerton, and I've been hunting for you for some time."

"Well, you ought to be satisfied; you've caught me."

"More than satisfied, Mr. Moriarity, for I've caught your friend too."

"Cook?"

"Oh, he was jailed before you."

"You don't mean Jim?"

"Exactly."

"You can't stuff me with any such yarn as that."

"Would you like to see him?" asked Mr. Pinkerton, quickly.

"Seeing's believing."

Turning to the bailiff Mr. Pinkerton inquired:

"What cell is Jim Cummings in?"

"Forty-three, sir."

"Will you take us there?"

"Yes, sir. This way, please."

The detectives with Moriarity followed the turnkey and passing the entire length of the corridor paused in front of cell forty-three.

The door of solid sheet steel had a small circular opening in it through which the guards could inspect their prisoners.

Opening this Mr. Pinkerton looked in, then stepping back told Moriarity to step forward.

Dan applied his eye to the opening and in surprised tones exclaimed,
"By God, it IS Jim."

He again looked and clinching his fist pounded on the door. "Jim! Jim!" he cried. "They got you at—"

"Here, none of that," said the bailiff in a gruff tone. "None of that,
I say," and taking Dan by the arm he marched him back to the office.

"You see, Mr. Moriarity, I told the truth," said Mr. Pinkerton in a pleasant voice.

"Looks like it," growled Dan. "But I don't see how the devil you did it."

"Very easily done. He gave himself up."

"What's that?" shouted Dan as he almost bounded from his chair.

"He gave himself up, I said," repeated Mr. Pinkerton.

"Jim Cummings gave himself up," said Dan slowly as if trying to grasp the idea.

"Exactly. He saw we had him and that he couldn't get away, so to make his sentence as light as possible he did the best thing he could do and surrendered."

Almost dumbfounded by this surprise Dan sat speechless and stared blankly at the detective.

"Do you know, Mr. Moriarity," Mr. Pinkerton continued, "you strike me as being remarkably clever."

Arousing himself Dan answered in a savage tone:

"What are you driving at now?"

"I mean that up to the time that Cummings surrendered himself we thought he was the principal man in the case, the prime mover and director of the whole affair, but now we find we are mistaken. That is why I say you are clever. You simply used him as a cat's paw, and played hide and seek with our whole force, and a man that can do that as long as you did is remarkably clever," and Mr. Pinkerton smiled admiringly at the man who sat before him. Puzzled at the words, and trying to see beneath the surface, Dan said: "Oh! come now, stop your chaffing, I won't squeal, and you can't make me. What do you want me for anyway?"

Mr. Pinkerton's face became stern, and dropping the tone of levity which he had employed, he opened the letter Sam had forged, and suddenly handing it to Dan, said:

"We want to know if what Jim Cummings says there is true."

Somewhat impressed by Mr. Pinkerton's manner, Dan commenced to read the letter.

At first he hardly understood its purport, but slowly the realization of his friend's treachery came over him, and springing to his feet he brought his fist down on his chair and shouted in angry tones:

"It's a damned lie!"

Without noticing the baliff or the detectives, he paced the floor with angry strides, his eyes flashing and the veins in his forehead swelling until they stood out like whip cords.

The baliff, at a sign from Mr. Pinkerton, stationed himself at the door, but too excited to notice the movement, Dan continued to walk to and fro like a caged lion.

"That is why he gave himself up, the coward—the lying turn-tale! The treacherous dog! Swearing it off on me to save a few years of his miserable life out of jail. See here!" stopping suddenly before Mr. Pinkerton, "That traitor made me swear I would never squeal. All I got out of the whole swag was two

thousand dollars, but even then, if he had done the square thing, I would have kept mum, though I were sent down to rock-pile. But the man that would play that low, scaley trick on me is going to suffer for it. What do you want to know?"

"Now you are getting sensible," said Mr. Pinkerton. "We want to get the money. You know where it is? We know that last October a valise was sent to you from St. Louis to Leavenworth, which you were to give to Cook. We know that Cook received some of the stolen money. You had some, too. We have shadowed you all over Kansas City. You have been seen in the White Elephant playing faro, you were followed to the widow's fortune-telling room. We know where you lived, and have letters which you received from Jim Cummings.

"That isn't his name," broke in Dan.

Mr. Pinkerton stopped. He saw he had Dan up to the proper point, and where before he would have died rather than given a grain of information in connection with the case, he was now anxious to tell all he knew of it. Dan continued:

"Jim Cummings isn't his right name any more'n it's mine. His name is Fred Wittrock, and he lives in Chicago."

"Where?"

"At—West Lake street."

"Will you swear to that?"

"Yes, I will; he runs a coalyard there. He and a man named Weaver. I had nothing to do with robbing the car. It was all done before I ran across Wittrock near Pacific, and he gave me $2,000 to keep my mouth shut and help plant the plunder."

"Do you know where it is planted?"

"Part of it, yes. Weaver and another fellow named Haight have some hid in Chicago. Some is hid in the graveyard near Leaven worth, and some of it behind Cook's cooper-shop."

"Has Fotheringham got any of it?"

"Fotheringham hadn't anything to do with it—any more'n you did—Wittrock knocked him down and he couldn't help himself."

"Mr. Moriarity, if all this is true, you will be benefited by the information you have given," then turning to the baliff, he said, "We are through now." Moriarity, still cursing Cummings, was led back to the cell, and the detectives left the jail for Chip's boarding-house.

"It's plain sailing now, boys," said Mr. Pinkerton; "this end has been worked dry, and you must return to Chicago with me. Cummings, or rather Wittrock, if Moriarity has spoken the truth, will certainly make for Chicago, and you must be ready for him."

The next day the three detectives were on their way to Chicago, leaving Barney, who had played the part of Jim Cummings in cell 43, to remain in Kansas City and hunt for the "planted swag."

CHAPTER XVII.

JIM CUMMINGS IN CHICAGO—THE SPOTTED HOUSE—SHADOWED BY CHIP—JIM CUMMINGS ARRESTED.

When Jim Cummings, by his bold strike for liberty, escaped the trap set for him, he pushed his horse to its highest speed until he had put miles between himself and the spot where the detectives had made the attempt to capture him.

He saw that Dan was captured, and with Cook also in jail he felt the toils of the law tightening around him. He must get out of the United States. To Canada, Mexico, Brazil, it mattered little, but he must first secure some of the money he had taken from the express car. To go to Kansas City or Leavenworth to raise it was like putting his head into the noose.

Chicago was the only place open for him, and to Chicago he must go as fast as horse and steam could get him there.

While he was thinking of all these things his horse was plunging through the dark over the plain, skirting the timber, dashing through streams of water without staying his speed, and at last the ring of its hoofs striking the steel rail, and the crunching of the gravel informed Jim that he was crossing a railroad track.

He pulled in his panting steed, and, far on the horizon, he saw the approaching head-light of an engine.

In the hurry and confusion incident to his escape, the outlaw had lost his bearings, but knew that this must be the M., T. & K. R. R., and shining over the head-light he saw the Great Dipper circling in the heavens.

The train was, then, a south-bound train, either passenger or freight. Looking south along the track, he spied a small light twinkling through the night; and now, having recovered his reckoning, he surmised it was the water-tank some miles below Blue Jacket.

He must reach that before the train arrived. Putting spurs to his horse, he flew down the track, the gravel flying in all directions, his sure-footed animal keeping the ties, nor did he pull rein or slack his speed until the large tank of the water station rose above him. Jumping from his horse, he walked to the keeper's shanty. The man was awake and trimming his lantern, nor did he exhibit any surprise at the advent of his belated visitor.

"What train is this coming?" asked Jim.

"Galveston express," answered the man.

"Does she take water here?"

"Every time."

"By Jove, that's lucky. I was on my way to Blue Jacket to catch it and got turned around."

"Where's your horse?"

"Out near the tank. I will be back in five days and if you will take care of it I will make it all right for you."

"That's O K. I often do that for the boys; but here's your train."

The long train of cars drew up and came to a standstill as Jim left the shanty. Climbing aboard the smoker he found a seat and was soon on the way to Galveston Arriving there he took a gulf steamer to New Orleans, where he boarded an Illinois Central train and came to Chicago, where he arrived a week after his escape from the detectives.

Late in the evening of the day on which he arrived he boarded a West Lake street car and jumping off at—Lake street, knocked at the door of a small frame building over which was the sign "F. Wittrock and Co., Hard and Soft Coal."

No lights were visible and for some time no answer came. Finally the noise of shuffling feet were heard and a clear voice inquired:

"Who's there?"

"It is I, be not afraid," answered Cummings.

"Thunder and lightning, it's Fred," exclaimed the voice in accents of great astonishment.

"Well, why the devil don't you let me in, then?" asked Cummings, his mouth close to the keyhole.

"Not the front door, Fred. Go to the corner, then up the cross street and come back through the coal yard."

Cummings did as he was told and entering the yard was met by Weaver, who dragged him into the house, and after carefully closing the door, lit the lamp and said:

"Dan's arrested."

"Tell me something I don't know, you fool."

"So is Cook."

"If you have any news to tell me out with it; if you haven't go get the money. This cursed country is getting too hot for me. I'm off for Brazil."

"The money is safe. Haight will be here soon. You are safe here."

"Don't you be too sure about that. I thought I was safe down at Swanson's ranche, and damn it, two of those Pinkerton detectives ate with me, slept with me and gambled with me. They had their hands on me once but I floored one and got away. Dan, the coward, threw up his hand the first bluff and was walked off with the darbies on him."

"Jim, suppose he should turn informer?"

A terrible frown blackened the outlaw's brow, his eyes became hard and steely, and raising his hand above his head, he said:

"So help me God, I would hunt him up, tear his cowardly heart from his breast and choke him to death with it, if I had to go to prison to do it and was hung for it."

An involuntary shudder passed through Weaver as he heard these fearful words and he hastened to say:

"No danger of Dan's squealing, Fred. He's true blue."

"If he don't give the express robbery away he can easily get out of this other scrape. You see we had a lay to get away with Swanson's money and the two detectives went in with us. That is how they got Dan and nearly captured me. If Dan keeps his mouth shut they can't prove anything against him on account of the Adams Express affair. So, you see, if he is wise he will keep mum."

While the two men were thus conversing Chip and Sam were seated before an open window on the second floor of the house opposite the coal office. The city directory readily gave them the address of Wittrock's coalyard, and securing this room a constant watch had been kept on the spotted house.

Nothing suspicious had been noted during the day; customers had passed in and out, and Sam had even bought a half ton of coal which was carried to his room. The two men who ran the coalyard, whose names were found to be Weaver and Haight, were well spoken of in the neighborhood and did not look to be the sort of stuff out of which train robbers were manufactured.

While buying the coal Sam had purposely called Weaver "Mr. Wittrock."

"That isn't my name," said Weaver, "Me and my pardner bought out
Wittrock last October."

"Excuse me," said Sam; "I saw the name over the door and thought you were the gentleman."

"We don't like to pull down the sign. People know the yard by that name, an' we don't care, so long as they buy the coal."

This was said so frankly and openly that Sam almost believed it to be true. But the case was beginning to be too interesting to allow risks to be taken, so the detectives kept their long and tedious watch night and day. They had failed to see Cummings when he leaped from the car, for a team crossing the track had delayed the car long enough for him to get into the shadows on the other side of the street, so that the detectives little knew that the man they wanted was only just across the street from them.

They recognized Haight when he let himself in with a latch-key, but as this was not unusual, they thought little of it.

When Cummings left the coal office, he passed through the alley, and going south to Randolph street, returned to the hotel for the night.

The next day two of the Pinkerton force relieved Sam and Chip, who immediately went to their room at the Commercial Hotel, where they boarded.

As Chip was eating his supper that evening and glancing over the Evening Journal, a large broad-shouldered man, wearing a heavy mustache, passed the table, and, seating himself at another one, faced the detective.

It was part of Chip's religion never to allow any man to pass him or remain near him without looking at him carefully, so lowering the paper until his eye could see just above the upper edge, he glanced at the new-comer. A thrill like an electric shock passed through him, for in every feature, except the heavy mustache, Chip saw Jim Cummings, the Adams Express robber.

The broad girth of his shoulders, the triangular gold-filling of his front tooth, the peculiar manner of hanging his head slightly on one side as if he were a trifle deaf, all belonged to Jim Cummings, all but the mustache. Was it real or false? If real, the man was not the noted robber, but if false—well, if it were false Chip had a bit of paper in his pocket which would take it off.

He felt in his pocket for the warrant, and to his disgust recollected that Sam had it.

He could do nothing without it.

He timed his supper so nicely with that of the suspected man that they both rose together, Chip passing out first; but going down the stairs he fell back and the electric light revealed to the keen eyes of the detective that the mustache was false.

It WAS the train robber.

Cummings, simply stopping a moment to buy a cigar, walked through the office, then crossed Lake on Dearborn street and walked to Randolph, closely followed by Chip.

A Randolph street car came along and Jim sprang on the front platform, Chip jumping on the rear one. Passing through the car, he opened the front door and stood beside Cummings, who was puffing his cigar, his coat collar pulled up and his fur cap drawn down over his ears.

Pulling a cigar from his pocket, Chip felt for some matches, but apparently not finding any, he asked:

"I beg your pardon, but would you mind giving me some fire?"

Cummings held out his lighted cigar, at the same time darting a searching look at his questioner, but in the handsome, well-dressed, almost dandified young man before him, he failed to recognize the uncouth, grimacing Scip of Swanson's ranche.

The pair rode along together, and after passing Halsted street some distance, Chip saw that he was getting ready to jump off at the next cross street, so, as soon as the car reached the street, Chip stepped off and walked briskly toward Lake street.

Cummings rode to the other crossing and did the same, utterly without any suspicion whatever.

Although Chip walked straight ahead, he kept his eye on the dark figure moving parallel to his course on the other side, and saw it turn abruptly to the left and enter the alley.

Quickening his steps, Chip hurried to the house in which the watch was kept, and bounding up the steps, to his delight, found Sam in the room.

"Cummings is over there," said Chip, excitedly.

"Sure?"

"As certain as I am that I live."

"Come on, then!" and Sam ran down the steps, followed by Chip and the other two detectives.

As they reached the foot of the stairs the door of the coal office opened and three men stepped out on the sidewalk.

"The devil," said Chip, "that is more than I bargained for."

The three men stood a moment conversing, then the detectives heard
Cummings say:

"I'll be back in an hour," as he turned east and walked away.

The other two, Weaver and Haight, turned in the opposite direction and sauntered slowly along.

Turning to the two men who had been sent to relieve them, Chip said:

"Follow those two, and arrest them if possible without any noise; your warrant covers them."

By this time Cummings was some little distance below them, strolling leisurely along, and at the next corner the detectives saw him enter a saloon.

Crossing the street, their revolvers in their side coat-pockets ready for use, Sam and Chip entered the saloon.

Cummings, without the false mustache, which he had either removed or lost (in fact it dropped off as he entered the coalyard) had just ordered a drink as the detectives entered.

Without a second's hesitation Chip stepped up to him, and placing his hand on the train robber's shoulder, said quietly:

"Fred Wittrock, alias Jim Cummings, I want you."

Wittrock sprang back as though he had been shot, and glaring like an enraged lion, seemed about to rush upon the audacious detective.

In a twinkling the cold barrels of two revolvers were leveled at his head and, with the address and skill of a practiced adept, Sam passed his twisted steel wire "come alongs" around the outlaw's wrist, and Jim Cummings' career stopped short. Any attempt at escape was hopeless, and in silent surrender he held out his other hand and Chip snapped the hand-cuffs on him.

Before the people in the saloon had recovered from their astonishment, the detectives had taken desperate prisoner away, and finding a livery stable near drove to the Pinkerton headquarters. Haight and Weaver had not gone a block before the two detectives arrested them without any struggle, so that within one short half hour the three principals of the GREAT ADAMS EXPRESS robbery were placed behind the bars.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JIM CUMMINGS IN PINKERTON'S SWEAT-BOX—HIS CONFESSION.

All night long "Jim Cummings" walked the narrow limits of his room—still undaunted and fearless as of old. The gravity of his position only made him the more daring, and when the first beams of the morning broke through the barred window he had recovered his usual grit and nerve, and determined to die hard and game. Mr. Pinkerton, alone, came into the room just as the outlaw had finished the excellent breakfast which had been served him. Jim looked up, and holding out his hand, in a cheery voice said:

"Good morning, Mr. Pinkerton."

For a second Mr. Pinkerton hardly knew what to say. He was prepared to encounter either a desperate or a sullen prisoner, and was somewhat taken back when he received such a cordial greeting. It was but a second, and fully alive to all the tricks and maneuvers practiced by arrested criminals, he was on the qui vive.

"Good morning, Mr. 'Cummings'. I trust you have had a good breakfast?"

"Oh, fair."

"You slept well?"

"Tip-top."

"I trust you will be able to amuse yourself during the day."

"I won't amuse you, that's certain."

"You have been doing that for some time."

"That's all right. Now, what am I here for?"

"Just so. What ARE you here for?"

"You've got the wrong man, Mr. Pinkerton."

"Indeed?"

"Just now you called me 'Mr. Cummings'."

"I should, perhaps, have said Mr. Wittrock."

"What did you call me 'Cummings' for, then."

"As you christened yourself you ought to know."

"I'm arrested, of course, now for what?"

"To tell the fact, Mr. Wittrock, it is because some time last October you played a little joke on the Adams Express Company, and they appreciated it so highly that they hired me to find you so that they could tell you so."

"You dare accuse me of committing that robbery?"

"That's about the size of it."

"Why, man, I wasn't within five hundred miles of the place when it occurred."

"Where were you?"

"I was in New Orleans."

"Positive of that?"

"I can PROVE it."

"You can?"

"Yes, I can. You go over to my coalyard at—West Lake street, and ask my partner, Weaver. He will tell you where I was at that time."

"Is he your partner?"

"Yes."

"Strange, very strange. He said he bought you out last October."

"You've been there, have you?"

"That is what he said."

"He lies."

"Or you do."

"You wouldn't dare say that outside of this room."

"Don't get excited, Mr. Wittrock. We have had enough bantering. You might as well make a clean breast of the whole affair, for we have a clear case against you."

"I tell you I was at New Orleans at the time."

"You were not. Listen to me and I can prove you are a liar."

Wittrock flushed, and he began to get angry, which was just what Mr. Pinkerton wanted, and glaring at his persecutor he folded his arms and settled defiantly back in his chair. Mr. Pinkerton quietly continued:

"A week before the robbery was committed you and a man named Haight took a room at Chestnut street. On the twenty-third of October you sent a valise to Daniel Moriarity at Leavenworth, Kansas, and a letter instructing him to give its contents to Oscar Cook, of Kansas City. A few days after you committed the robbery, and in a cave near Pacific, you, with Moriarity and Haight, divided the ill-gotten wealth. You then rowed down the river to St. Louis, or near there, and from thence went to Kansas City. You were often seen playing faro at the White Elephant, and one night you knocked one of my men senseless when he had arrested Moriarity, and took him to old Nance, the widow. Still later, you, Cook and Moriarity took refuge at Swanson's ranche in the Indian Territory, and after attempting to rob your

host, which attempt was frustrated by my men, you came, in some roundabout way, to Chicago, where you put up at the Commercial Hotel, disguised by a false mustache. Every evening you went to West Lake street, and last night you were arrested. Now, Mr. Wittrock, what have you to say?"

"That's a very pretty yarn; but as I don't happen to be the man that did all that I don't see how it concerns me."

"Look at that and tell me what you have to say," and Mr. Pinkerton laid before him the sworn deposition of Daniel Moriarity, in which all the facts that Mr. Pinkerton had been relating were set forth, Wittrock did not show a trace of feeling other than amusement, as he read the long and legally worded document, and passing it back to Mr. Pinkerton with a gesture of disdain, he said:

"So on the strength of that cock-and-bull story you mean to hold me for that robbery?"

"Partly so."

"There isn't a word of truth in it. That man, Moriarity, is a noted liar."

"Ah!" said Mr. Pinkerton, quickly, "you know Moriarity?"

"That is—I mean—yes, I sort of know him," stammered Wittrock, in confusion; "I have heard of him."

"You are in desperate straits, Mr. Wittrock," said the detective. "In such desperate straits that you are doing the worst possible thing—denying all that is proved true. We have you safe and secure, and enough evidence against you to send you to Jefferson City for a long term of years. You can lighten your sentence by one thing."

"You don't catch me that way, I am not to be taken in by soft words, and all the traps you set for me won't make me confess that I had anything to do with the robbery. You've arrested me without cause, and if there is any law in the land I'll make you suffer for it," and Wittrock walked excitedly around the room.

Mr. Pinkerton did not reply to this, but touching a bell, told the man who opened the door to bring in the other prisoners.

Wittrock had resumed his seat, his head bowed forward and eyes cast down, but hearing the door opening, he glanced up and saw Weaver and Haight, followed by two detectives, ushered into his room.

Both of them looked discouraged and broken-spirited. The heart had been taken from them by their arrest, and Wittrock's boldness and defiant manner began to melt as he saw his faint-hearted accomplices.

"You here, too," he exclaimed.

"Looks like it, don't it," said Haight, with a grim smile.

"You may as well own up, Fred," said Weaver, "they have the drop on us."

"Coward!" hissed Wittrock. Then turning suddenly to Mr. Pinkerton, he said:

"That cur is right, you have the drop on us."

"Then you confess you committed the robbery?"

"Yes," he answered, curtly.

"Was Fotheringham in the ring, too?"

"Fotheringham hadn't a thing to do with it."

"How came it, then, that we found some of the Adams express letter heads in his trunk, and which were not the ones printed for the company?"

"Did you do that?"

"Yes; ten or twenty sheets."

"He never got them from us. The first time I ever saw him was when I jumped on his car in St. Louis."

Mr. Pinkerton looked at the frank, open face of the train robber, and wondered that such a man could have committed the crime for which he was now locked up in the "Pinkerton strong box." His manner

and tone of sincerity, when he declared Fotheringham innocent of any complicity with him or his companions, carried conviction with it. He believed himself that a blunder had been made, and Fotheringham was wrongfully accused.

"I said, a short time ago," he continued, addressing Wittrock, "that you could lighten your sentence if you wanted to do so."

"How?"

"Tell me where you have hid the money."

Wittrock hesitated, and glanced at his companions. Perhaps he saw in their faces, that if he didn't tell, they would. He was willing, however, to give them the same benefit accorded him, and pointing to Weaver, he said:

"Weaver knows where the money is planted in Chicago, and Cook has some hid around his shanty in Kansas City. I put some under the large tree, just east of the gate of the old graveyard at Leavenworth."

A sign from Mr. Pinkerton to one of the detectives, and taking Weaver with him, the man left the room.

Shortly after, Mr. Pinkerton, with the remaining detectives, also took his leave, and the two express robbers were alone.

The door had scarcely closed, when, dropping his cool and calm demeanor, Wittrock sprang from his chair and confronting Haight with flaming eyes, he whispered in terrible tones:

"Moriarity turned informer, he swore away our liberty, and all our work has been turned to naught by the cowardly traitor. Listen to me, Haight, listen well, and when you see the poltroon tell him that Jim Cummings swore he would cut his heart out. Aye! *I* WILL DO IT, though he were guarded behind double bars. I'll search him out and tear the traitor heart from his breast and make him eat it, by God—make him eat it."

A gurgling sound and hissing gasps recalled the furious man to his senses, and he saw that in his frenzy of anger he had clutched his companion by the throat and was choking him purple in the face.

A few gasps, and Haight had recovered his breath, rubbing his throat ruefully, and edging away from his dangerous and excited companion.

His passionate outburst over Wittrock regained his composure, and lighting a cigar, gave one to Haight, remarking in a light tone:

"I beg your pardon, old man, I didn't mean to hurt you."

"Next time don't take me for Moriarity," puffing the peace-offering.

"Do you know whom I would like to see? Those two chaps that arrested me."

As if in answer to his call the door opened, and Sam, with Chip following, entered.

Wittrock recognized them, and with a hearty "Good-morning, gentlemen," motioned them to a seat, with as little ceremony as if the room was in his own house.

"Good-morning, Jim," said Chip, "I'm sorry we had to pull you in last night."

"It was a ground-hog case, eh?"

"You don't seem to recognize us," said Sam.

"Yes, I do; you gave me enough cause last night to remember you all my life."

"Suah enough, Massa Cummins," broke in Chip, imitating Scip's voice.

Wittrock gazed at the speaker, and in astonishment, cried:

"Scip!"

"Suah as you bawn, honey, I's de same ole Scip."

"And you?" turning to Sam.

"Doctor Skinner, at your service,"

"Then you're the two I have to thank for my being here."

"We helped the thing a little."

As they were talking, Weaver returned with the detective, bringing several packages of money, still in the original wrappers, which Wittrock had taken from the safe of the express car.

The sight of the recovered plunder placed a quietus on the arrested men, who now saw that the last link in the chain had been forged, and felt the walls of the penitentiary looming up before them.

Settling into a stubborn silence, they sullenly refused to utter another word, and maintained this position until they were placed on the train for St. Louis, where they were locked up to answer the indictments which the grand jury had already found against them.

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Fotheringham, who had all this time laid in jail, still protested his innocence. He stated that the letter heads found in his trunk he had taken from the general desk in the company's office, and that the reason the signatures of Route Agent Bartlett was found on the paper, was due to the fact that he was about to write for a permit for a vacation Christmas, and simply practised writing the name.

This explanation was received with smiles, but his friends came to the rescue, and proved that he was in the habit of writing names on every bit of paper which came to hand. That this eccentricity was well known, and his explanation should be received with favor. The grand jury, however, found an indictment against him, and he was held as an accomplice to the robbery.

APPENDIX.

WHEN the now noted express car robbers, Wittrock, Haight and Weaver, were brought up for trial, they pleaded "guilty," and were sentenced to a term of years in the Missouri State penitentiary at Jefferson City. A few days later the train carried them to that city, and as they passed the various places, Wittrock pointed out the gully in which was located the moonshiner's cave where the plunder was divided, and then, as the train rounded the curve, he depicted, in graphic language, the struggle between Moriarity and himself, which was only ended by the freight train bearing down on them.

When the train arrived at Jefferson City the three prisoners were driven to the warden's office of the penitentiary, and, after going through the regular formalities, the striped suits were put on them, and they became CONVICTS.

Oscar Cook was sentenced to a term of years on the charge of being an accessory after the fact, but Moriarity, in consideration of the valuable services he had rendered the State, was not prosecuted.

The house of Nance, the widow, fortune-teller and "fence," was broken up, and with it the rendezvous of one of the most daring bands of highwaymen which had ever infested that section of the country, Nance escaped the clutches of the law and disappeared from sight.

The detective work in connection with this case was as skillful, daring and successful as any that have made the detectives of Paris world famous.

Starting with the bit of torn express tag and following, thread by thread, the broken bits of clews which were discovered by the hawk eyes of the operatives until the arrest of Cook, it was as pretty a piece of business as ever brought criminals to their just punishment.

A most remarkable fact connected with the robbery and the subsequent detection of its participators, is that from first to last not a single human life was taken.

Unlike Jesse or Frank James, Redney Burns, Frank Rande or other noted outlaws, who always shot before a move was made, Jim Cummings pitted brute strength and brain power against brute strength and brain power. He doubtless would not have hesitated to take life if pushed to the last extremity, but he placed more reliance on his cunning, shrewdness and ready brain than on the deadly bullet.

Jesse James on a fleet horse, a revolver in each hand, and surrounded by his band of horse thieves and cutthroats, was audacious and bold, and would not hesitate to take desperate chances, but it is doubtful if he would have quietly and with business-like foresight, prepared for every emergency, forged a letter on a forged letter-head of an express company, gained access to the car, and, single-handed, attack and bind a man nearly as strong as himself, and then leisurely helped himself to his booty.

The writer is not holding Jim Cummings up in a laudatory spirit, or as an object to be envied and

imitated, but as everything else has its degrees of comparison, so has the methods employed in committing robbery, and the address, audacity, skill, success and intelligence displayed by Jim Cummings in robbing the Adams Express Company of a cool $53,000, cannot help but excite a feeling akin to admiration. As this was his first attempt, it would take subsequent years to measure the height which he might attain as a highwayman. It may be that the modern Jack Sheppard had his career nipped in the bud by the Pinkerton Detective Agency. That "eye that never sleeps" must have winked pretty often, when it learned of the various and narrow escapes Jim Cummings had from its agents, and Mr. Pinkerton confessed afterward, that he passed many anxious nights and days on account of Jim Cummings. The money was gathered together from the various sources designated by the robbers, and when counted was found to be almost the whole sum originally put in the safe, The robbery was committed in the latter part of October, and the early part of the following January found the principals wearing the convicts' stripes.

* * * * *

The foregoing narrative would be incomplete did it not relate the incidents which brought Swanson's ranche to a pile of ashes, and Swanson himself to an untimely end.

When Cummings and Moriarity, with Sam and Chip, the detectives, disguised as the Doctor and Scip, his negro servant, dashed away from the ranche, carrying the greater part of his wealth, Swanson was lying, an unconscious man, on the floor of the large room. The blow which felled him to the ground had been given with the full force of Cummings' right arm, and partly overcome by the copious libations of which he had partaken previous to his short but decisive fight with the train robber, it was several hours before he regained his senses. His men had rushed to the pony herd at the first alarm, only to find a stampede had loosened all the horses, and they were helpless to pursue the robbers.

Swanson's rage, when he fully realized that he had been robbed, was something terrible. He roamed the vicinity of the ranche armed to the heel, cursing and foaming at the mouth, pouring maledictions of the most blasphemous character upon the men who had repaid his hospitality with such a scurvy trick.

When finally the ponies had been corralled, he vaulted on one, and galloping with the speed of the wind, set out in pursuit of the robbers who had mulcted him of his wealth. All the day he ranged the country, until his horse, completely exhausted, refused to move another step. His own excited passion had calmed down somewhat, so hobbling his horse, he threw himself on the open prairie and sank into a deep slumber.

During his absence a strange procession rode up to the ranche.

A large band of Cherokee Indians and half-breeds, headed by a chief of the tribe, loped up the trail, and dismounting, asked for Swanson.

The angry tones and flashing eyes of the red men portended a storm, and suspicious of coming danger to the master of the ranche, a cowboy mounted his pony and galloped off to warn Swanson.

For several months previous the Indians had been missing stock from their herds of cattle. Steers and yearlings had mysteriously disappeared, even under the keen eyes and sharp ears of the Cherokees themselves. All efforts to discover the thieves had proved fruitless, until chagrined and mortified by their ill success, the Indians resolved to let nothing escape nor a stone unturned which would lead to the detection of the parties making away with their cattle.

Relays of scouts were detailed, and a few days previous to their appearance at Swanson's ranche the first trail had been found, which they followed with all the skill and cunning that have made the red men of America peculiarly famous. Day and night the pursuit had been followed, and it led them direct to Swanson's.

He had long been suspected of such methods of procuring his stock, but so cunningly had he managed to cover his tracks that he had escaped being caught lip to this time.

His day of punishment had arrived, and his executioners were gathered around the ranche awaiting his return.

The cowboy had failed to find him, and the early morning found Swanson returning home. The Indians had posted scouts in all directions, and when one of them galloped in, conveying the intelligence that Swanson was coming, the temporary camp was awakened, and with their blankets over their heads, the Indians patiently waited for their victim.

All unsuspicious of danger, he came at a hard gallop over the range, nor did he discover his visitors until he wheeled around the corner of the house and found himself in their midst.

A dozen hands immediately grappled him, dragging him from the saddle and pinioned his arms behind him. Not a word had been spoken, their silence and his own guilty conscience told him that he had no mercy to hope for. As husband of a Cherokee squaw, he was looked on as a member of their tribe, and as such would be tried by their methods, found guilty or not guilty; and if guilty, he knew he would be shot at once.

His reckless, bold spirit asserted itself at this critical period, and holding his head erect, he asked, speaking the Cherokee tongue:

"Am I a coyote, that my brother traps me in this way?"

The dignified chief, folding his arms across his breast, his face stern and forbidding, replied:

"Coyote! No, dog of a pale-face. The coyote would yelp in mockery to hear you call yourself one."

"That isn't answering my question, Eagle Claw, What I want to know is, why am I jumped on in this way?" asked Swanson, his tone pacific and calm, and his manner free from anger, for he saw that it would require a deal of diplomacy to get him out of the scrape.

"You shall be answered, but not here," and the chief, Eagle Claw, placing his curved hand to his mouth, emitted a shrill, piercing yell which was repeated by the line of scouts until the most remote vidette heard, and headed his horse to the ranche. The Indians in some parts of the Territory are partly civilized and live in organized towns and villages, electing their head men from time to time. Others are wild and uncivilized, wandering from place to place, pitching their tepees of buffalo hide on the bank of some rippling stream, or, sequestered in some lovely valley, engage in the pursuit of game and in the care of their herds of ponies and cattle.

It was to the latter class that Eagle Claw and his band belonged. Gaudy paint, vemillion and yellow, smeared their faces in all the fantastic designs which their grotesque imaginations could invent. The tanned buckskin leggins, fringed and beaded, were supported at the waist by a belt of leather embroidered and figured. A blanket thrown carelessly over the shoulder completed the costume, with the addition of mocassins made of rawhide. Their ponies were selected from the cream of their stock, and the gorgeous trappings of the saddles and harness made a most picturesque scene as the cavalcade filed over the plains.

Riding between two stalwart specimens of the Cherokee tribe, Swanson was closely guarded. All the answer he could get for his indignant questionings was a surly "Humph," or a sullen admonition to keep quiet. The chief led the party due southwest from Swanson's ranche, and all day long the sturdy ponies were kept at the long, swinging lope which enables them to cover miles during a day.

Late in the afternoon the chief, raising in his stirrups, gave a peculiar, vibrating yell, which was immediately taken up by his followers until the welkin rang with the penetrating sounds.

Like a faint echo an answering yell came back, and soon the forms of horsemen, dashing over the range, could be discerned.

Familiar with all the Indian customs Swanson recognized the yell. It told the camp that the scouting party had returned successful.

A short canter and the entire band wheeled around the edge of a tract of timber and came out upon the village, pitched on the banks of a stream of water, the tepees grouped in a circle around the chief's wigwam, the blue smoke curling lazily through the aperture at the top, and the welcome smell of cooking meats permeating the place. Swanson was given in charge of a guard and escorted to a vacant tepee, where he was firmly bound, hand and foot, and thrown upon a pile of fur robes.

A large fire had been built near Eagle Claw's wigwam, and one by one the sub-chiefs, head-men and old Indians of the tribe gravely stalked toward it and seated themselves in the circle.

Rising from his place Eagle Claw ordered the prisoner to be brought forward.

As Swanson caught sight of the council-fire, the stern faces surrounding it, and the grave air of his captors, his guilty heart sank within him, and, trembling in every joint, he was hardly able to totter to the place assigned him. The Indians noted his condition with scornful eyes, and Eagle Claw, advancing from the rest, said:

"How now, does the coyote tremble because he is asked to join the council with his brethren?"

The mocking words brought Swanson's pluck back again, and drawing himself to his full height he answered:

"You red devil! Don't brother me. Drop that beating around the bush and out with the truth."

"'Tis well. A liar is a curse to his people. The Cherokees are men of truth and have but a single tongue."

"The Cherokees are the biggest rascals in the Territory, the meanest horse-thieves, and couldn't tell the truth to save their rascally necks from the halter," said Swanson.

The Indian's eyes flashed ominously at these words, and rising his voice, he said:

"My brother has a long tongue. It might be well if it were cut out; but we know he is joking, for is he not a Cherokee himself?"

"Not I. You can't make a mustang out of a broken-down broncho and you can't make a white man out of an Indian."

"But you took one of the fairest of our young maidens to your tepee, and—"

"Fairest young maiden? I took the skinniest rack-a-bones in the tribe. The old hag! She was too lazy to earn her salt, and was the biggest fool that ever wore calico."

A terrible look of rage came into Eagle Claw's face, for Swanson had married his own sister, and such an insult was not to be brooked. But with all the powers of dissimulation which the Indian possesses, he forced a smile to his lips, and, blandly speaking, pointed to the thongs around Swanson's arms.

"It is not well that our brother should be tied that way," and drawing his keen knife, he cut the thongs, and Swanson freed his arms.

His arms free, all of Swanson's courage returned. Hastily glancing around the circle, he suddenly shot out his right arm. Reeling backward, Eagle Claw fell to the ground, and the Indians saw something pass them like the wind, straight for the pony herd.

In an instant the camp was in commotion, hoarse yells came from tawny throats, and in swift pursuit of the flying Swanson the braves ran after him.

He had the start, however, and agile and athletic to a remarkable degree, his hands pressed to his side, his mouth closed and saving his wind, he sped before the pursuing red men and gained the corral of the ponies.

The Indians had not taken his knife from him, and hastily selecting his steed, the leather lariat was severed in a trice, and vaulting on his back, Swanson made a dash for life into the darkness. The thundering of hoofs told him that the red devils were close after him. Turning abruptly to one side he rode at right angles to his former course, and suddenly drawing up his horse he stood still. The sound of the chase neared him, and presently he heard them sweeping past, the darkness completely shrouding himself and his horse from their keen eyes.

Leaping to the ground, he placed his ear to the earth, and the faint throbbing of the horse hoofs beating the ground grew fainter as his pursuers rode further away.

Mounting his horse again, he commenced slowly and stealthily to circumnavigate the camp, and it wasn't until he had gained the opposite side, that he ventured to put his horse to a gallop.

He had never been in that section of the country before, but it did not matter so long as he could put a good distance between himself and his captors in which direction he rode.

The dawn of the next day found his horse loping along, Swanson keeping a sharp eye out for Indians.

He was satisfied that he had at last eluded pursuit, and turning into a clump of timber he tied his horse with the remnants of the lariat and threw himself on the ground near it.

All day long he slept, and as evening closed in he turned his horse from the timber and mounting a slight elevation near it, he gazed around for landmarks. To his surprise, he recognized the country as that near his own ranche, and feeling the pangs of hunger in a most distressing degree, he urged his horse in the direction of the ranche.

He had ridden several hours, and he knew that he must be somewhere near his place, when, rising before him, he discerned the house.

Almost simultaneous with his discovery a wide sheet of flame burst from the roof and, dismayed and astonished, Swanson checked his horse.

A multitude of yells rent the air, and Swanson, turning his horse again fled before the avenging Cherokees, but a hissing whistling sound was heard, a long, writhing lariat shot out, and the noose, falling over Swanson's shoulders, drew together with the run, and, lifted completely from the saddle, Swanson was thrown senseless to the ground. A bucketful of water was dashed over his face, and recovering he saw the demon faces of Eagle Claw and his band surrounding him.

"My brother was cold and we started a fire that he might get warm. He was lost and we made a light to guide him here. We love our brother Swanson. We would always have him with us," jeered the Indian.

To this Swanson was incapable of replying. His senses were benumbed and he hardly realized what was going on around him. Staggering to his feet he reeled to and fro like a drunken man.

As he walked toward the fire, he was suddenly grasped from behind, and again were his arms pinioned. There was no escape for him this time. Forced to his knees, he was placed facing half a dozen of the best marksmen of the tribe. His shirt was torn open, exposing his hairy breast. A signal was given, and the sharp reports of the rifles rang out in tune with the crackling timbers of the house, and falling to his face, Swanson gave a convulsive struggle and died as his own roof fell in; and a mass of blackened timbers marked the place where once stood Swanson's ranche.

THE END.

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