

Pinkerton Allan

Mississippi Outlaws and the Detectives



Allan Pinkerton

**Mississippi Outlaws
and the Detectives**

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Pinkerton A.

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Pinkerton Allan Mississippi Outlaws and the Detectives / Don Pedro and the Detectives; Poisoner and the Detectives

PREFACE

In presenting to the public another volume of my detective stories, I would call the attention of the reader to the fact, that these stories are literally written from facts and incidents which have come under my own observation, or been worked up by officers acting directly under my instructions.

The Mississippi River has for many years – more especially since the close of the war – been infested by a class of men who never would try to get an honest living, but would prey upon their neighbors or attack the property of southern railroads and express companies; these marauders could be seen any day prowling along the banks of the Mississippi, in fact, the shores and immediate neighborhood were peopled by just such a class, who cared not how they obtained a living; for the crimes they committed, they often suffered infinitely worse punishment, more so than any suffering which could have been entailed on them from leading a poor but honest life.

The story of the "Mississippi Outlaws and the Detectives" is written to illustrate incidents which took place in the southern section of the country at no very remote date.

"Don Pedro and the Detectives" is another story of detective experience, which came under my own observation and management; it is a truthful narrative, and shows that some men are worse than known criminals, and can squander the money they have obtained by false pretenses, in a very lavish manner.

"The Poisoner and the Detectives" is a well-known bit of detective experience, which, when read, will be recognized by any one who ever takes an interest in crime, and the bringing to justice its perpetrators.

The reader must remember that fictitious names are used in all of these stories, otherwise the facts are plainly and truthfully told as they occurred.

ALLAN PINKERTON.

April, 1879.

THE MISSISSIPPI OUTLAWS AND THE DETECTIVES

CHAPTER I

A daring Express Robbery. – Mr. Pinkerton appealed to. – Cane-brakes and cane-fed People. – Annoying Delays and Amateur Detectives.

The southern and border states, since the close of the war of the rebellion, have been the frequent scenes of extensive and audacious robberies. This has been largely owing to the sparsely-settled condition of certain districts, to the disorder and lawlessness generated by the war, and to the temptations offered by the carelessness of many persons having large sums intrusted to their care in transit through lonely and desolate localities.

The express companies have always been favorite objects of attack by thieves of every grade, from the embezzling cashier to the petty sneak-thief, and some of the operations connected with the detection of this class of criminals are among the most difficult and dangerous that have ever been intrusted to me. Probably a no more reckless and desperate body of men were ever banded together in a civilized community than those who were brought to my attention in 1871 by the Southern Express Company's officers in Memphis; and I consider the successful termination of my efforts in this case as of the greatest value to the people of the South and West. The whole affair was conducted with such a limited force, and under such adverse circumstances, that I take pride in here recording the history of the affair and my connection with it. Though I maintained a general supervision of the operation, my eldest son, William A. Pinkerton, was the person having immediate charge of the matter, and to his energy, perseverance, and sagacity is mainly attributable our success.

Some time in the latter part of July, 1871, an express messenger on the Mobile and Ohio Railroad was overpowered by three men at Moscow, Kentucky, and his safe was robbed of about sixteen hundred dollars. The manner of effecting the robbery was a very bold one, showing the presence of men of experience in crime. The loss was not heavy, but the company made every effort to discover the robbers, in the hope of bringing them to a severe punishment as a warning to other criminals. In spite, however, of the efforts of two of my men, who were immediately sent to the scene of the robbery, the guilty parties escaped into the almost impenetrable swamps along the Mississippi River, and the chase was reluctantly abandoned, as it was impossible to tell where they would come out or cross the river. The amount stolen was not sufficiently large to warrant the expenditure of much time or money in the pursuit of the thieves, and my men were soon wholly withdrawn from the operation. In order, however, to guard against a repetition of such a raid, an extra man was placed in each express car to act as guard to the regular messenger. It was considered that two men, well armed, ought to be surely able to protect the company against further loss, and everything ran smoothly until October 21, 1871. At this time, the money shipments by express were very heavy, as a rule, and orders were given that special care should be exercised by all the employés having money packages in charge.

The northern-bound train on the Mobile and Ohio Railroad was due at Union City, Tennessee, about half-past seven o'clock in the evening. At this point the northern and southern-bound trains usually passed each other, and stopped long enough for supper, the train arriving first being the one to take the side track ready to pull out. Saturday evening, October 21st, the northern-bound train arrived on time, stopped at the station long enough to let the passengers go to supper, and then took the side track to await the arrival of the train bound south. As soon as the side track was reached the conductor, engineer, fireman, brakeman, and express messenger went to supper, leaving the train deserted except by the express guard, named George Thompson, and a few passengers. The local express agent came up at this moment, gave his packages to Thompson, receiving his receipt therefor, and returned to the

station. This action was directly contrary to the rules of the company, which forbade the messenger to leave the car during his whole run, or to go to sleep; also, the guard was forbidden to transact any business, or to have possession of the safe key. Martin Crowley, the messenger, had given his key to Thompson, however, to enable him to attend to the business of the local agent while Crowley was away at supper. In accordance with Thompson's request, Crowley sent a negro porter to the express car with Thompson's supper on a tray, and the porter, after handing the tray to Thompson, turned to walk away. As he did so, he saw two men spring into the partly open door of the express car, and, almost immediately, the train began to back. The negro knew that something was wrong, and he hurried to the station to give the alarm. By the time he arrived there, however, the train was backing at a moderate speed, and was well beyond the reach of pursuit on foot.

Meantime, the guard, having received his supper from the negro porter, turned his back to the door to set the tray down. Before reaching the desk, he heard a noise at the door, and turning, he was confronted by two men, one of whom held a revolver at his head, while the other seized his throat. Thompson was a young man, and, not being accustomed to meet such hard characters, he was badly frightened. He immediately gave up the safe key and helped one of the men to unlock the safe. Having taken all the money out of the safe, one of the robbers took also the contents of Thompson's pocket-book; but here the other man interfered, insisting that the guard's money be returned to him, which was done. No conversation took place, but when the safe had been carefully examined and all the money it contained taken, one of the men stepped to the door and swung a lantern once or twice. The train, which had been backing at a moderate rate of speed, now stopped, and the two men jumped off, telling Thompson to stay where he was and keep quiet. When the conductor, engineer, and other persons, whom the porter had alarmed, reached the train, they found everything in order except the safe, into which poor Thompson was vainly peering in the hope of discovering that some portion of the funds might have been overlooked. The men had disappeared in the thick woods, and no trace of them was found except a small carpet-bag containing potatoes and bread. The amount missing from the safe was about six thousand dollars in currency.

Although the robbery was at once reported to Mr. M. J. O'Brien, the General Superintendent, by telegraph, no action seems to have been taken until the following Wednesday – four days later – when Mr. O'Brien sent me a brief telegram announcing the robbery, and requesting me to come to Union City in person, if possible, and if not, to send my eldest son, William A. Pinkerton. The telegraph was used freely for the next two days, and while my son was gathering clues and making his preparations, we learned most of the facts by letter. William arrived in Union City on Saturday, just one week after the robbery had been committed, and he instantly began to gather information from every available source. Except the statements of the negro porter and Thompson, the guard, as condensed in the account heretofore given, little information could be obtained, as so few persons were about the train when it began to move off. While two or three had seen the men who had entered the car, no one had seen who had run the locomotive, and there was, therefore, no certainty as to the number of persons engaged in the job. One passenger had seen two men walking toward the engine in a suspicious manner, and, as his description of these two was entirely different from that given of the men who had entered the car, it was fair to presume that they had been a part of the gang. Still, no one had seen them get on the engine, and it was not certain that they had had anything to do with the affair. At the end of three days, however, William had collected sufficient information to satisfy himself that either four or five men had been at work together; and, by collating the various descriptions he received, he obtained a pretty fair idea of the party.

The first thing which struck him was the similarity of this robbery to the one which had occurred exactly three months before at Moscow, Kentucky. The appearance of the men and their actions had been precisely like those of the Moscow party, and it was evident that they had been emboldened to a second venture by the ease with which they had carried through their former scheme. One thing was imperative: the capture of the whole gang would be necessary to insure the safety of

the express company's property in the future. Indeed, it was a mere piece of good fortune that the loss in this instance was not irreparable, for the amount of money carried on the southern-bound train was eighty thousand dollars, and the robbers would have obtained this large amount if the southern-bound train had chanced to arrive first. The robbery was clearly one which no common tramp or sneak-thief would have dared to attempt, and William saw immediately the difficulties of his work. Before proceeding with the incidents of the operation, I must give some idea of the country and the people living there, since no-one would otherwise comprehend one-half of the obstacles and dangers which were involved in a search for the criminals in that vicinity.

The southwestern part of Kentucky and the northwestern part of Tennessee are about as desolate portions of the world as are inhabited by a civilized people. There seems to have been some convulsion of the earth at this point, which is sunk so far below the general level of the whole country as to make it a perpetual swamp. The annual overflow of the Ohio and Mississippi lays the country under water for a distance of many miles, while even in the dryest season, the morasses, sunken lakes, and dense cane-brakes, render it almost impassable, except for people who have been thoroughly acquainted with the locality for years.

The sunken lakes are natural curiosities in themselves, and, although they have attracted considerable attention from scientific men, no satisfactory explanation of their causes and phenomena has been found. The country is full of game and the water is alive with fish, so that the necessities of life are easily obtainable. The cane-brakes are wonderful growths of bamboo cane, and they sometimes cover strips of country as much as seventy miles long. In the spring-time, the water rises to such a height that a skiff can navigate freely above and through the tops of the cane; but in dry weather, the stalks grow so closely together that the brake becomes impenetrable to man or beast, except by winding tortuously around the clumps through the comparatively thin portions of the undergrowth. To search for any one wishing to remain concealed therein is like the proverbial attempt to look for a needle in a hay-stack, since a man can pass within ten yards of another without seeing him or being aware of his presence. The only roads which traverse these places are mere cattle paths, which begin at no place and run nowhere; and, unless a man be thoroughly acquainted with the country, he can never tell where any given path will lead him.

The people around the towns, such as Hickman, Union City, Dyersburg, and Moscow, are a highly respectable and well-educated class; but in the low, swampy country, in the cane brake and along the river, they are not, as a rule, a very agreeable class to live among. Of course, here, as in all other places, there are many intelligent, reliable, honorable men, but the great mass of the cane-brake population are ignorant and brutal. The term which they apply to their stock is also eminently appropriate to designate the people: they are "cane-fed." It is the custom to turn the cattle into the cane to feed when it is young and tender, and, as the amount of nutriment thus obtained is not very large, the "cane-fed" animals bear about the same relation to grain-fed stock that the people in that vicinity bear to the residents of healthy, prosperous, and educated communities. The larger portion of the population may be classed as "poor whites," and they constitute a peculiar variety of the human species. The men are tall, loose-jointed, and dyspeptic; they bear a marked resemblance to the vegetable productions of the vicinity, being rapid of growth, prolific, and generally worthless. Their education consists mainly of woodcraft and rifle-shooting; their proficiency in both of these branches is sometimes astonishing, and it is frequently said of their most expert hunters that they seem to have been born shot-gun or rifle in hand. Accomplishments they have none, except the rare instances where a few tunes upon the banjo have been learned from the negroes. Their tastes are few and simple, – whisky, snuff, hog, and hominy being the necessities and luxuries of life; that is, whisky and snuff are the necessities, all other things being secondary considerations. In their sober moods, they are frank, rough, and courageous; yet, even then, there is little about them to excite other feelings than those of pity and aversion. When full of bad whisky, however, they are apt to become quarrelsome and brutal, so that no man can feel sure of his safety in their company. An affront, real

or imaginary, will then be apt to cause bloodshed, even if the insulted party has to bushwhack his enemy from a secure covert on the roadside as he is returning to his home. Every man goes armed, and, though fair fights in broad daylight are rare, cold-blooded murders are not infrequent. The law is seldom invoked to settle private differences, and, in fact, the functions of the legal officials are practically very limited in their influence. If a coroner ever sits upon a corpse, it is understood that he has done his whole duty by recording a verdict that "the deceased came to his death at the hands of some person or persons unknown."

The women, like the men, are tall, thin, and round-shouldered. Up to the age of sixteen they sometimes are quite pretty, though sallow and lifeless always; after that period, they become gaunt, emaciated, and yellow. Whisky hath charms for them, also, but their favorite dissipation is snuff-dipping. They marry very early and bear children nearly every year, so that the size of many of these West Tennessee families is often enormous. The father exercises patriarchal control over his whole household until the daughters are married and the sons old enough and strong enough to defy the parental authority as enforced by a hickory rod. The wife never escapes the application of this potent instrument of marital discipline; and, indeed, should a husband fail to make frequent use of it for the correction of his better half, he would probably soon learn that his dutiful spouse could find a use for it on his own person.

Throughout this whole district, the people suffer from fever and ague for nine months of the year, and dyspepsia seems hereditary. Their physicians, however, usually require no further education than is requisite to attend fractured limbs and gun-shot wounds, the whole school of medicine being limited to three specifics: quinine, calomel, and whisky.

As before stated, it should be understood that the foregoing description applies to the majority of the inhabitants of the low swamp lands only, and not to the residents in and about the towns; even in the cane country itself are to be found occasionally men of education, ability, and good character, and to several of them William was largely indebted for assistance and information.

There was one redeeming feature also to the character of the "cane-fed" population; in the main they were honest, and they would do all in their power to break up a thieving gang, even if they had to hang a few of its members as a warning to the rest. I was thus able to trust them to a certain extent, though the fear which they had of this band of desperadoes rather kept their naturally honest impulses in check for a time.

William was thoroughly acquainted with the character of the people, and he knew what a difficult task had been set before him, especially as he was allowed no other detectives of my force to assist him, the express company being desirous of conducting the operation as economically as possible. Among the large number of men employed directly by the company were two or three good men, but the majority were even worse than useless, and the expense of the affair was finally much greater than as if only my own men had been employed. Besides the fact that William was thus continually working with strange men, he was harassed by large numbers of amateur detectives, to whose stories the company's officers too often lent a ready ear. Indeed, every express agent in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri seemed impressed with the idea that he was a naturally gifted detective, and many were the annoying delays which resulted from their interference.

CHAPTER II

Difficulties. – Blind Trails and False Scents. – A Series of Illustrations showing the Number of Officious People and Confidence Men that often seek Notoriety and Profit through important Detective Operations.

The art of detecting crime cannot be learned in a day, nor can the man of business understand, without previous experience in the habits of criminals, the expedients which the boldest class of law-breakers adopt; hence none but skilled detectives can hope to cope with them. Yet often my clients insist on some certain method of procedure wholly contrary to my judgment and experience, until the total failure of their plan convinces them that there can be but one thoroughly successful mode of detection, namely, to submit the case to a skilled detective of character and standing, and allow him to act according to his judgment.

The range of investigation in such a case as this robbery will often extend from New York to San Francisco, and unless one mind gathers up the clues, classifies the information, and determines the general plan, there will be continual error and delay. Such a state of affairs frequently occurred during this operation, and much time and money were spent upon matters too trifling even for consideration.

The principal of a detective agency, from his long experience with criminals, learns the earmarks of different classes of men, and he is often able to determine the name of the guilty party in any given robbery by the manner in which the job was done. He can readily see whether a novice in crime was engaged, and also whether any collusion existed between the parties robbed and the criminals; and so, when he sees the traces of a bold, skillful, and experienced man, he knows that it is useless to track down some insignificant sneak-thief, simply because the latter happens to have been in the vicinity. Yet, neither will he slight the smallest clue if there is a bare chance that any valuable fact may be obtained from it. But the *sine qua non* is that he, and he alone, shall direct the whole affair. A divided responsibility simply doubles the criminal's opportunities for escape.

Among the many difficulties of the detective's work, none are more embarrassing than the early development of false clues. In the stories heretofore published, the direct steps leading to the detection and arrest of the criminals have been related, without referring to the innumerable other investigations, which were progressing simultaneously, and which, though involving the expenditure of much thought, time, and money, proved after all to be of no value whatever in developing any evidence in the case. In this operation, such instances were of frequent occurrence, and I propose to mention a few of them to show how wide is the range of the detective's inquiries, and also the annoying delays to which he is often subjected by the inconsiderate zeal and interference of outside parties. These latter may be – indeed, they generally are – well meaning people, anxious to serve the cause of justice; though, on the other hand, they are sometimes spiteful meddlers, striving to fix suspicion upon some personal enemy.

The plan of detection which alone can insure success, must be one which neither forgets nor neglects anything. In investigating any alleged crime, the first questions to be considered are: 1. Has any crime been perpetrated, and, if so, what? 2. What was the object sought thereby?

The matter of time, place, and means employed must then be carefully noted, and finally we come to consider: 1. Who are the criminals? 2. Where are they now? 3. How can they be taken?

The fact that a crime has been committed is generally apparent, though there have been cases in which the determination of that point requires as much skill as the whole remainder of the operation. Such was the case in the detection of Mrs. Pattmore's murder, related in my story of "The Murderer and the Fortune Teller." The object of a crime is also sometimes obscure, and, where such are the circumstances, the detection of the criminal is apt to be one of the most difficult of all operations. Having once solved these two difficulties satisfactorily, however, and having observed the relative

bearings of time, place, and means to the crime itself, the question of individuals is the important one to be determined. It often happens that there is no concealment of identity, the problem to be solved being simply the way to catch the guilty parties; but, on the other hand, the greatest skill, experience, patience, and perseverance are sometimes required to discover, first of all, the persons engaged in the crime. Indeed, an operation is often divisible into two distinct methods of action, the first being to find out the identity of the criminals, the second to follow up and capture them.

In the course of a blind trail, such as we were obliged to travel in the case of this express robbery, it was impossible to know whence the men had come or whither they had gone; hence, I was forced to take up every trifling clue and follow it to the end. Even after I was satisfied in my own mind of the identity of the criminals, the agents and officers of the express company were continually finding mares' nests which they wished investigated, and the operation was sometimes greatly hindered on this account. As an example of the number of discouragements which the detective must always expect to encounter, I propose to mention some of the false scents which we were forced to follow during this operation.

Three or four days after William's arrival in Union City, he was informed by the superintendent of the express company having charge of the operation, that there was a young man in Moscow who could give important information relative to the first robbery at that place. This young man, Thomas Carr by name, was a lawyer who had once had fine prospects, but he had become very dissipated, and he finally had been taken seriously ill, so that he had lost his practice. On recovering his health he had reformed his habits, but he had found great difficulty in winning back clients, and his income was hardly enough to support him. On learning that this impecunious lawyer had valuable information, William strongly suspected that it would amount to little more than a good lie, invented to obtain money from the express company; nevertheless, he sent for the young man and heard his story.

According to Carr, a man named John Witherspoon had visited him about six weeks before, and had asked him whether he would like to get a large sum of money. Carr replied affirmatively, of course, and wished to know how it could be obtained. Witherspoon had said that the express company could be robbed very easily by boarding a train at any water-tank, overpowering the messenger, and making him open the safe. Witherspoon also had said that he and several others had robbed a train at Moscow some weeks before, and that they had got only sixteen hundred dollars, but that they should do better next time. He had asked Carr to go to Cairo and find out when there would be a large shipment of money to the South; then Carr was to take the same train and give a signal to the rest of the party on arriving at the designated spot.

On hearing Carr's story, William sent him back to Moscow with instructions to renew his intimacy with Witherspoon, and to report any news he might learn at once; in case it should prove to be of any value, the company would pay him well for his services. It is hardly necessary to add that Mr. Carr, having failed to get, as he had hoped, a roving commission as detective at the company's expense, was not heard from again, his bonanza of news having run out very quickly on discovering that no money was to be paid in advance.

The next case was a more plausible one, and William began its investigation with the feeling that something might be developed therefrom. It was learned that a former express messenger named Robert Trunnion, who had been discharged several months before, had been hanging around Columbus, Kentucky, ever since. While in conversation with the clerk of a second-class hotel, Trunnion had spoken of the ease with which a few determined men could board an express car, throw a blanket over the messenger's head, and then rob the safe. The clerk said that Trunnion had made the suggestion to him twice, and the second time he had given Trunnion a piece of his mind for making such a proposition. Trunnion had then said he was only fooling, and that he did not mean anything by it. William learned that Trunnion was then engaged in selling trees for a nursery at Clinton, Kentucky, and that he was regarded as a half-cracked, boasting fool, who might be anything bad, if he were influenced by bold, unscrupulous men. William therefore paid a visit to Mr. Trunnion, whom he

found to be a very high-toned youth, too fiery-tempered and sensitive to submit to any questioning as to his words or actions. In a very brief space of time, however, his lordly tone came down to a very humble acknowledgment that he had used the language attributed to him; but he protested that he had meant nothing; in short, his confession was not only complete, but exceedingly candid; he admitted that he was a gas-bag and a fool, without discretion enough to keep his tongue from getting him into trouble continually; and, having clearly shown that he was nowhere in the vicinity of either robbery, he asked humbly not to be held responsible for being a born idiot. William was satisfied that the fellow had told the truth, and, after scaring him out of all his high-toned pride, he let him go, with a severe lecture on the danger of talking too much.

On the nineteenth of November, when the identity of the robbers had been fully established, William was called away to Iuka, Mississippi, on information received from Mr. O'Brien, the general superintendent of the express company, that a man named Santon had seen the leader of the party in that place, just a week before. Santon represented that he knew the man well, having been acquainted with him for years in Cairo, and that he could not be mistaken, as he had spoken with him on the day mentioned. William found that the man Santon was a natural liar, who could not tell the truth even when it was for his interest to do so. The descriptions of the various robbers had been scattered broadcast everywhere, and none of them were represented as over thirty-five years of age; yet Santon said that his man was over fifty years old, and that he had been a pilot on the Mississippi for years. This was a case – not an infrequent one, either – where people talk and lie about a crime for the sole purpose of getting a little temporary notoriety. Owing to various accidents and railway detentions, William lost three days in going to hunt up this lying fellow's testimony.

Perhaps the most impudent of all the stories brought to the express company's officers was that of a man named Swing, living at Columbus, Kentucky. He sent a friend to Union City to tell them that he could give them a valuable clue to the identity of the robbers, and William accompanied this friend back to Columbus. On the way, William drew out all that Swing's friend knew about the matter, and satisfied himself that Swing's sole object in sending word to the officers of the company was to get them to do a piece of detective work for him. It appeared that his nephew had stolen one of his horses just after the robbery, and he intended to tell the company's officers that this nephew had been engaged in the robbery; then if the company captured the nephew, Swing hoped to get back his horse. A truly brilliant scheme it was, but, unfortunately for his expectations, William could not be misled by his plausible story; and, if he ever recovered his horse, he did so without the assistance of the express company. Nevertheless, he took William away from his work for nearly a whole day, at a time when his presence was almost indispensable.

Another peculiar phase of a detective's experience is, that while following up one set of criminals, he may accidentally unearth the evidences of some other crime; occasionally it happens that he is able to arrest the criminals thus unexpectedly discovered, but too often they take the alarm and escape before the interested parties can be put in possession of the facts. About two weeks after the Union City robbery, in the course of my extended inquiries by telegraph, I came across a pair of suspicious characters in Kansas City, Missouri. I learned that two fine-looking women had arrived in that city with about eight thousand dollars in five, ten, and twenty dollar bills, which they were trying to exchange for bills of a larger denomination. The women were well dressed, but they were evidently of loose character, and the possession of so much money by two females of that class excited suspicion instantly in the minds of the bankers to whom they applied, and they could not make the desired exchange. One of the women was a blonde and the other was a brunette. They were about of the same height, and they dressed in such marked contrast as to set each other off to the best advantage; indeed, their dresses seemed to have attracted so much attention that I could gain very little acquaintance with their personal appearance. I could not connect them in any way with the robbery at Union City, nor with any other recent crime, though I had little doubt that the money they had with them was the proceeds of some criminal transaction; still, having my hands full at that time,

it would have been impossible for me to look after them, even had I thought best to do so. As it is my practice to undertake investigations only when engaged for the purpose by some responsible person, I did not waste any time in endeavoring to discover the source whence these women obtained their money; though, of course, had I learned enough about them to suspect them of complicity in any specific crime, I should have reported my suspicions to the parties interested, to enable them to take such action as they might have seen fit.

The most important of all the false clues brought out in this investigation was presented by a noted confidence man and horse-thief named Charles Lavallo, *alias* Hildebrand. I call it the most important, not because I considered it of any value at the time, but because it illustrates one of the most profitable forms of confidence operation, and because the express company, by refusing to accept my advice in the matter, were put to a large expense with no possibility of a return.

Very shortly after the Union City robbery, a letter was received from a man in Kansas City, calling himself Charles Lavallo. The writer claimed that he had been with the gang who had robbed the train, but that they had refused to divide with him, and so, out of revenge, he was anxious to bring them to punishment. He claimed further that he was then in the confidence of another party, who were soon going to make another raid upon the express company somewhere between New Orleans and Mobile.

The plausibility of his story was such that he obtained quite a large sum from the express company to enable him to follow up and remain with the gang of thieves with whom he professed to be associated. No news was received from him, however, and at length I was requested to put a "shadow" upon his track. My operative followed him to St. Joseph, Missouri, and thence to Quincy, Illinois, but, during two weeks of close investigation, no trace of the villains in Lavallo's company could be found, and he was never seen in the society of any known burglars or thieves. It was soon evident that he was playing upon the express company a well-worn confidence game, which has been attempted probably every time a large robbery has occurred in the last fifteen years. He became very importunate for more money while in Quincy, as he stated that the gang to which he belonged were ready to start for New Orleans; but, finding that his appeals were useless, and that no more money would be advanced until some of his party were actually discovered and trapped through his agency, he soon ceased writing.

The foregoing are only a few of the instances in which our attention was diverted from the real criminals; and, although the efforts of my operatives were rarely misdirected in any one affair for any length of time, still these false alarms were always a source of great annoyance and embarrassment.

CHAPTER III

"Old Hicks," a drunken Planter, is entertained by a Hunting-party. – Lester's Landing. – Its Grocery-store and Mysterious Merchants. – A dangerous Situation and a desperate Encounter. – The unfortunate Escape of Two of the Robbers.

One of the most direct sources of information relative to the party was found in the person of an old planter, named Hicks, who lived some distance down the track of the railroad. He was in the habit of visiting Union City very frequently, and he usually rounded off his day's pleasure by becoming jovially drunk, in which condition he would start for his home, walking down the railroad track. He had been in Union City all of Friday before the robbery, and about ten o'clock in the evening he was in a state of happy inebriety, ready to "hail fellow, well met," with any person he might encounter.

On his way home, about three-quarters of a mile west of Union City, he saw a camp-fire burning a short distance from the track, and around it were gathered five men. They hailed him, and asked him to take a drink; and as this was an invitation which Hicks could not refuse, even from the devil himself, he joined them, drank with them, and danced a hornpipe for their edification. Hicks acknowledged in his account of meeting them, that by the time they had made him dance for them, he was heartily frightened at their looks and talk. He heard one of them say that they wanted ten thousand at least, but he could not tell what the remark referred to. He asked them why they were camping out, and one, who seemed to be the leader of the party, said they were out hunting.

"Yes," continued another one, "I am out hunting for somebody's girl, and when I find her we are going to run away together."

At this, they all laughed, as if there was some hidden meaning in his words.

Hicks described all of the men, three of them quite minutely; but the fourth was evidently the same as the second, and the fifth was lying down asleep all the time, so that Hicks could not tell much about him. They were armed with large navy revolvers, which they wore in belts, and their clothing was quite good. The tall man, who seemed to be the leader, related an account of a deer-hunt in which he had participated, in Fayette county, Illinois, on the Kaskaskia river, and when he mentioned the place, the others scowled and winked at him, as if to stop him. Hicks said that they seemed to be familiar with Cincinnati, Louisville, Evansville, and other northern cities, and that they talked somewhat like Yankees. He remained with them until about midnight, when a negro came down the track. Hicks and the negro then went on together to Hicks's house, leaving the five men still camped in the woods.

Other persons reported having seen the same party in the same vicinity several times before the night of the robbery, though some had seen only two, others three and four; but no one, except Hicks, had seen five. The accounts given by the persons near the train when the robbery occurred did not show the presence of more than three persons, though possibly there might have been a fourth. The descriptions of the suspected parties were quite varied in some respects; yet the general tenor of them was to the same effect, and, as no one knew who these persons were, it was quite certain that this quartette of strangers had committed the robbery.

In the case of the Moscow robbery, we had strongly suspected two notorious thieves, named Jack Nelson and Miles Ogle, so that my first action, on learning of this second affair in the same vicinity, was to telegraph to my correspondents and agents throughout the country, to learn whether either of these men had been seen lately. I could gain no news whatever, except from St. Louis, whence an answer was returned to the effect that Nelson was said to be stopping somewhere in the country back of Hickman, Kentucky. Ogle's wife was in St. Louis, and she had been seen by a detective walking and talking earnestly with a strange man a short time previous. The information about Nelson was important, since, if true, it showed that he was in the immediate neighborhood of the points

where the robberies had occurred. The man seen with Mrs. Ogle might have been one of the party, sent by her husband to appoint a future rendezvous. The description of the tall, dark man, mentioned by Hicks and others, tallied very closely with Ogle's appearance. My son, William, was well advised of these facts, and, as soon as he had obtained the statements of every one acquainted with any of the occurrences at the time of the robbery, he was ready for action.

His first inquiries were directed toward discovering where Nelson was staying near Hickman, and he learned in a very short time that this rumor had no truth in it. While making search for Nelson, however, he heard of a low grocery-store at Lester's Landing, about twelve miles below Hickman on the Mississippi River. The store was situated four miles from any other house in a sparsely settled country, where the amount of legitimate trade would hardly amount to twelve hundred dollars per year. It was said to be the resort of a very low class of men, and the proprietors passed for river gamblers.

On William's return to Union City from Hickman, he decided to make a visit to this grocery-store to learn something about the men who frequented it. Having none of his own men with him, he chose one of the express company's detectives, named Patrick Connell, to accompany him, and, on the last day of October, they started on horseback, with an old resident named Bledsoe for a guide. On arriving at the house of a well-to-do planter, named Wilson Merrick, they obtained considerable information about the men who kept the store and the people who visited it.

Mr. Merrick said that a man named John Wesley Lester kept a wood-yard on the Mississippi, and the spot was called Lester's Landing. About three or four months before, three men arrived there and obtained leave from Lester to put up a store, which they stocked with groceries and whisky. The men gave their names as J. H. Clark, Ed. J. Russell, and William Barton, and they seemed to have some means, as the store did only a limited business, except in whisky. They were all men of ability and determination, and, as they were always well armed, the people of the cane-brake country were rather afraid of them. Nothing positive was known against them, but it was suspected from their looks and actions that they were Northern desperadoes lying quiet for a time. They seemed to be well acquainted in Cincinnati, Louisville, St. Louis, Memphis, Vicksburg, and New Orleans, but they were careful never to give any hint of their previous place of residence in the hearing of strangers. Mr. Merrick had, however, heard Russell say that he had once run a stationary engine in Missouri, and from occasional expressions by Barton it would appear that the latter had once worked on a railroad in some capacity. They dressed quite well, and treated strangers politely, though not cordially. Although they were all three rather hard drinkers, they never became intoxicated, and they seemed to understand each other well enough not to quarrel among themselves. Clark was the oldest of the party, but Russell seemed to be the leader, Barton being apparently quite a young man. They stated that they intended to exchange groceries for fish and game, and ship the latter articles to St. Louis and Memphis.

From the description of the men, William began to suspect that they formed a portion of the party of robbers, and he determined to push on at once. He induced a young man named Gordon to go with him as guide and to assist in making the arrest of these men, if he should deem it advisable. By hard riding they succeeded in reaching Lester's Landing before nightfall, but the twilight was fast fading as they came out of the dense underbrush and cane-brake into the clearing around Lester's log-cabin.

The spot was dreary and forlorn in the extreme. The river was then nearly at low water, and its muddy current skirted one side of the clearing at a distance of about thirty yards from the house. The wood-yard and landing at the water's level were some ten or fifteen feet below the rising ground upon which the house stood. The store was a shanty of rough pine boards with one door and one window, and it stood at the head of the diagonal path leading from the landing to the high ground. A short distance back was a rail fence surrounding Lester's house and cornfield, and back of this clearing, about one hundred yards from the house, was a dense cane-brake. The corn-stalks had never been

cut, and, as they grew very high and thick within twenty feet of the house, they offered a good cover to any one approaching or retreating through them. A rough log barn stood a short distance inside the rail fence, and, like the house, it was raised several feet above the ground, on account of the annual overflow of the whole tract. The house was a rather large building built of logs, the chinks being partly filled with mud, but it was in a dilapidated condition, the roof being leaky and the sides partly open, where the mud had fallen out from between the timbers.

On entering the clearing, William's party rode up to the store and tried to enter, but, finding the door locked, they approached the house. At the rail fence, William and Connell dismounted, leaving Gordon and Bledsoe to hold their horses. Up to this time, they had seen no signs of life about the place, and they began to think that the birds had flown. The quiet and the absence of men about the clearing did not prevent William from exercising his usual caution in approaching the house; but he did consider it unnecessary to take any stronger force into an apparently unoccupied log-cabin, where at most he had only vague suspicions of finding the objects of his search; hence, he left Gordon and Bledsoe behind. Knowing the general construction of this class of houses to be the same, he sent Connell to the rear, while he entered the front door. A wide hall divided the house through the center, and the occupants of the house were in the room on the right. William's door leading into the room opened from this hall, while Connell's was a direct entrance from the back porch, and there were no other doors to the room.

As the two strangers entered simultaneously, five men, a woman, and a girl started to their feet and demanded what they wanted. The situation was evidently one of great danger to the detectives; one glance at the men, coupled with the fierce tones of their inquiries, showed William that he had entered a den of snakes without adequate force; but it was too late to retreat, and he replied that they were strangers who, having lost their way, desired information.

The scene was a striking one, and it remains as vividly in William's mind to-day, as if it had occurred but yesterday. In the center of the room, opposite him, was a broad fireplace, in which the smouldering logs feebly burned and gave forth the only light in the room. In one corner stood several shot-guns, and in another, four or five heavy axes. Grouped about near the fire, in different attitudes of surprise, defiance, and alarm, were the occupants of the cabin, while to the left, in the half-open door stood Connell. The flickering flame of the rotten wood gave a most unsatisfactory light, in which they all seemed nearly as dark as negroes, so that William asked the woman to light a candle. She replied that they had none, and at the same moment a young fellow tried to slip by Connell, but he was promptly stopped. Another large, powerful man, whose name afterward proved to be Burtine, again demanded, with several oaths, what their business was.

"I've told you once that I want some information," replied William, "and now I intend to have you stop here until I can take a look at your faces."

While William was making them stand up in line against the wall, one of the largest drew a navy revolver quickly and fired straight at William's stomach, the ball just cutting the flesh on his left side. At the same instant, the young fellow previously mentioned, darted out the door, Connell having sprang to William's side, thinking him seriously wounded. Connell's approach prevented William from returning the fire of the tall man, who had jumped for the door also the moment he had fired. William fired two shots at him through the doorway, and Connell followed him instantly, on seeing that William was unhurt. Once outside, the tall fellow sprang behind a large cottonwood tree and fired back at Connell and William, who were in full view on the porch. The second shot struck Connell in the pit of the stomach, and he fell backward. At this moment, the powerful ruffian, Burtine, seized William from behind and tried to drag him down, at the same time calling for a shot-gun "to finish the Yankee – ." Turning suddenly upon his assailant, William raised his revolver, a heavy Tranter, and brought it down twice, with all his force, upon Burtine's head. The man staggered at the first blow and fell at the second, so that, by leveling his revolver at the other two, William was able to cow

them into submission. The affray had passed so quickly that it was wholly over before Gordon and Bledsoe could reach the house, though they had sprung from their horses on hearing the first shot.

The two men had escaped by this time into the dense cane-brake back of the house, and it was necessary to attend to those who had been secured, and to examine the injuries of Connell and Burtine. The latter's head was in a pretty bad condition, though no serious results were likely to follow, while Connell had escaped a mortal wound by the merest hair's breadth. He was dressed in a heavy suit of Kentucky jeans, with large iron buttons down the front of the coat. The ball had struck one of these buttons, and, instead of passing straight through his vitals, it had glanced around his side, cutting a deep flesh furrow nearly to the small of his back, where it had gone out. The shock of the blow had stunned him somewhat, the button having been forced edgewise some distance into the flesh, but his wound was very trifling, and he was able to go on with the search with very little inconvenience. Having captured three out of the five inmates of the cabin, William felt as though he had done as much as could have been expected of two men under such circumstances, and he then began a search of the premises to see whether any evidence of their connection with the robbery could be found. Absolutely no clue whatever was obtained in the cabin and barn, nor did the store afford any better results so far as the robbery was concerned, but on this point William was already satisfied, and he was anxious to get all information possible about these so-called storekeepers. In the store, he found bills and invoices showing that the stock of goods had been purchased in Evansville, but there was no other writing of any character except some scribbling, apparently done in an idle moment, upon some fragments of paper in a drawer. On one was written: "Mrs. Kate Graham, Farmington, Ill."; and on another, amid many repetitions of the name, "Kate Graham," were the words, "My dear cousin."

Having found very little of value, the party returned to the three prisoners and closely examined them. To William's intense chagrin, he found that these men were, undoubtedly, mere wood-choppers living with Lester and having no connection with the proprietors of the store. Although desperate, brutal, and reckless, ready for a fight at all times, as shown in this affray, they were clearly not the train robbers, while it was equally evident that the two who had escaped were the guilty parties.

William learned that the young man who had first slipped out was Barton, and the man who had done the shooting was Russell. Clark, they said, had taken the steamer for Cape Girardeau, Missouri, two days before, accompanied by a married woman, named Slaughter. The description of the train robbers tallied so well with the appearance of Barton and Russell, that, taking their actions into consideration, there could no longer be any doubt of their complicity in the affair, and it was highly provoking that these two should have escaped. Still, it was an accident which could hardly have been avoided. The fact that the express company would not consent to the employment of a larger force of detectives was the principal cause of this misfortune, for it could have been prevented easily, had William been accompanied by two more good men of my force.

As it was, two detectives, dropping unexpectedly upon a nest of five villainous-looking men in the dark, could have hardly hoped to do better than to secure three of them. It could not have been supposed that they would know which were the important ones to capture, especially as they could not distinguish one from another in the uncertain light. Indeed, as afterward appeared, they were fortunate in having escaped alive, for the close approach to fatal wounds, which they both received, showed how deadly had been the intentions of the man Russell, while Burtine had evidently intended that they should never leave the house alive.

It may be supposed that the shooting on both sides was none of the best, but it must be remembered that it began without warning, and was over in two minutes. It cannot be expected that snap-shooting, even at close quarters, should be very accurate; yet it was afterward learned that Russell's escape had been about as narrow as William's, two balls having passed through his clothes and grazed his flesh.

CHAPTER IV

The Captured Ruffians are desired for Guides, but dare not join in the Search for the Outlaws. – One of the Robbers is Taken, but subsequently Escapes from the Amateur Detectives. – Another Clue suddenly Fails.

Having searched the whole place, and satisfied himself that the men captured had had no connection with the robbery or the robbers, William offered them one hundred dollars to act as guides through the cane-brake to arrest Barton and Russell. They said they could not if they would, since no man could find his way there in broad daylight, much less at night. They further admitted that they dare not attempt it, as Russell would kill them if they learned of their action. It was now pitch dark, and after a vain attempt to beat through the cane in search of the fugitives, William decided to return to Mr. Merrick's until next day.

The next morning at daybreak he started back for Lester's, accompanied by a number of the cane-brake population, all of whom were anxious to secure the one hundred dollars reward. They had long suspected the men at the store of being desperadoes, but they had had a wholesome fear of them on account of their fierce ways and their reckless habit of drawing their revolvers on slight provocation.

On arriving at Lester's, the party found that Lester had returned from Hickman during the night. He was a treacherous-looking scoundrel, and his reputation was bad, although he had never been caught in any crime in that vicinity. His name, John Wesley Lester, showed that he must have once belonged to a pious Methodist family, and, indeed, he claimed to have once been a Methodist preacher himself. He had sunken eyes, milky white, and his hair was lank and long; his complexion was dark, cheeks hollow, chin pointed, and forehead low. His manner was fawning and obsequious to those above him, and he looked and acted like a second "Uriah Heap." He pretended to know nothing of Russell, Clark, and Barton, except that they had come to his place in July, built the store there, and had been around the landing more or less ever since. He said that he knew nothing against them, except that they were gamblers, and that they often went off on gambling excursions, during one of which, according to their own statements, they had killed a man in a quarrel.

William learned from Lester's daughter that Barton had returned during the night to get a shawl, blanket, and two shot-guns. He had told her that Russell was hurt pretty badly, but that they intended to take the first packet down the river. From other parties William learned that the packet Julia had passed down during the night, and had stopped at a point about seven miles below, having been hailed from the bank. He did not place much faith in the theory that the men had taken passage by the Julia, for the reason that Lester's girl was too anxious to tell the story of the route Barton proposed taking. He discovered that Barton had been paying lover-like attentions to the girl, and he believed that Barton had instructed her to say that he intended taking the next packet, in order to give them a false scent. Having set the men of the neighborhood at work searching for Russell and Barton, William returned to Union City.

From Hickman Connell was sent to Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to capture Clark, who was said to have gone there three days before.

On the arrival of William in Union City, the superintendent telegraphed to me the result of William's visit to Lester's Landing, and authorized me to send an operative to Farmington, Illinois, to hunt up Mrs. Kate Graham, and learn what she could tell about Russell, Clark, and Barton. A man was sent there the next day, and he had no difficulty in finding Mrs. Graham, who proved to be the wife of a highly respectable business man. She was a member of the church, and was held in high esteem by every one acquainted with her. My agent, therefore, called upon her without any circumlocution or deception, and asked to see her on business. She was confined to her room by

illness, but she saw him for a few minutes, and answered his questions so frankly that there was no doubt she was telling the truth. She stated that she was not acquainted with any one living at Lester's Landing; that she did not know, nor ever had known, any persons of the names given (Russell, Clark, and Barton); and that she knew no one who would answer to their descriptions. This clue seemed to come to an end very quickly, yet it afterward proved to be the means by which we captured one of the gang, and it was a striking instance of the necessity for the most careful and minute inquiry upon every point of news obtained, especially upon those received directly from the criminals themselves.

On the 3d of November, Connell went with a constable to the house of Mrs. Gully, the mother of Clark's companion, Mrs. Slaughter, and there he found them both. Clark was surprised by the officers, but he made a bold fight, and was overpowered with difficulty. When finally handcuffed and searched, a navy revolver and fifty dollars in money were taken from him; he was then taken nine miles on horseback to Cape Girardeau, where Connell obtained a light wagon to drive sixteen miles to Allenville, on the railroad leading to Hickman. On this trip Connell made the mistake of trusting to handcuffs alone, instead of securely fastening his prisoner's feet with rope. The idea that one man in handcuffs could escape from two active, unimpeded men did not, however, occur to Connell, and so the constable drove the horse, while Clark and Connell occupied the back seat. In justice to Connell, it should be stated that he had been constantly in the saddle for several days in raw and rainy weather, and had had very little sleep for two nights previous.

About nine o'clock in the evening, when only a mile from Allenville, Clark suddenly made a leap out of the wagon. The horse was jogging along at a good trot, and, though Connell sprang after his prisoner instantly, it was a couple of minutes before the constable could follow. As he ran, Connell fired at the dim figure disappearing in the thick brush; but the next instant he pitched headlong into a deep mud-hole, and, by the time he got out, the cylinder of his revolver was choked with mud, and Clark was far in advance. The chase was kept up as long as the pursuers were able to distinguish the direction of his flight, but, in the darkness of the gloomy woods, it was impossible to follow an athletic fellow like Clark with any hope of success. Connell returned to Union City very much crestfallen, and reported his misfortune. My first feeling, on learning the news, was one of deep regret and anxiety at the loss of one of the leaders of the gang; my second thought was one of profound thankfulness that my men were in no way responsible for it. The situation was an illustration of the disappointments and difficulties which are so often met in a detective's experience; and, though I felt somewhat discouraged, I was more than ever determined that none of these men should eventually escape, even though it should be necessary to follow them for months.

The desire of the express company to employ as few as possible of my operatives embarrassed me exceedingly, for William was obliged to depend upon strangers, and he had little confidence in their ability or discretion. He was now satisfied of the identity of the parties he was in search of, and all that he needed was a small force of experienced and reliable men.

Had I been limited and interfered with in the Maroney case, described in "The Expressman and the Detective," as I was in this, there is no doubt that I might have failed to capture the criminal; but the cordial coöperation and support of the Adams Express Company gave me a fair opportunity to work to good advantage, and victory was the result.

CHAPTER V

A Rich Lead Struck at Last.

William was quite sure, from the reputation and actions of Russell, Clark, and Barton, that they had been the leaders in the robbery, and he believed that Lester could give important information about them; he therefore caused Lester to be brought to Union City, and, on November 5, he succeeded in getting a statement of the doings of these men since Lester had known them. The important points developed were as follows:

They came to Lester's Landing in the middle of July, and built their store. They were rarely there together, as they would go off for two or three weeks at a time, leaving Barton or Clark in charge, and sometimes putting Lester in as storekeeper during the absence of all three. On one occasion, Russell showed him a pocket-book containing nearly one thousand dollars, which he thought he had lost, but which he found under a rail fence where he had hidden it; the other men, also, seemed to have plenty of money. About the middle of October, the three storekeepers went away, and were gone until October 24, three days after the robbery, on which day Lester met Clark and Barton walking toward his house, on the way from Hickman. They seemed quite excited, and said that they had been engaged in a difficulty, but they did not state what it was. They asked him whether he had seen Russell recently, and also whether there was a skiff at his landing; both questions were answered negatively, and they passed on toward the store, while Lester continued his walk to Hickman. On his return at night, he found that Clark and Barton had been across the river all day, scouting the Missouri shore for Russell, and that shortly after their return, Russell had come across the river in a skiff. Russell said that he had been shot, but that he was not much hurt, and he did not seem to act as if he had been hurt at all. Sunday morning, October 29, Clark took passage in a steamer for Cape Girardeau, having Mrs. Slaughter in company, and it was understood that he was going with Mrs. Slaughter to the house of her mother, nine miles from the Cape. Tuesday evening, William and Connell arrived at Lester's, the fight took place, and Barton and Russell escaped. After the detectives had gone back to Campbell's, Barton returned to the house and obtained a shawl, blanket, and two shot-guns; he said that they would never be taken alive, but that Russell had been badly wounded by one of the detectives. William had left two men at the landing the next day to capture the men if they returned, but they were afraid to attempt it, although they had a good opportunity that night. Russell came into the house alone, showing no signs of having been wounded, and said that he and Barton had joined four friends, who were outside waiting for him; that they were all well mounted and armed, and that they intended to kill any one who should betray them or attempt their capture. He added that they intended to make their way on horseback to Alabama, and that they were strong enough to fight their way through, if necessary. Of course, Russell's object was to frighten the detectives and others who were searching for him, as he had no one with him except Barton.

Among other points of value in Lester's statement, was some incidental information relative to the men, which he had learned during the time they boarded with him. He had heard Clark say that his mother lived sixty miles back of Nashville, and Russell had once run a stationary engine in Missouri. Lester was shown the satchel found on the engine after the robbery, and he recognized it as having been left at his house once by a wood-chopper named Bill Taylor, who lived in the cane-brake, some distance below him. He said that the three men each carried a navy revolver and a derringer, while Russell had also a new, large-sized Smith & Wesson revolver.

Meantime, the telegraph had been used constantly to learn something about the three men, Russell, Clark, and Barton, from whatever source information could be obtained. Barton was well known in Nashville, New Madrid, and Union City. He was quite young, but he had been involved in a stabbing affray in Nashville, and was regarded as a desperate character. He had been respectably

brought up by Major Landis, General Agent of the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad, and had been given a place in the employ of that road, with good prospects for promotion. Having become dissipated and hardened, he had been discharged from his position, and Major Landis had cast him off; thenceforward, his career had been rapid in the downward direction.

With regard to the other two men, little could be learned, until a rich lead was struck on the seventh of November. The corrected descriptions of the different parties having been sent to all the agents of the express company, Mr. Charles Pink, agent at Cairo, recognized Russell as a man who had sent eight hundred dollars in currency from Cairo to Mrs. M. Farrington, Gillem Station, Tennessee, on the eleventh of September, and who had then started, according to his own statement, for his home in Illinois. Mr. Pink also stated that the chief of police in Cairo claimed to know Russell, and to be able to find him – for a sufficient consideration. Not having any use for the services of this disinterested officer, his offer was politely declined.

The superintendent of the express company was strongly impressed with the belief that Russell and Barton were lurking around Lester's, and so, while William went to Nashville to see what could be learned about Barton and his companions, a number of men were hired to scour the country, hunt through the brake, and guard the Mississippi ferries, while Connell and Crowley, the express messenger, were placed on the Missouri bank, to scout that side of the river. I may say here, *en passant*, that, with the exception of the two named, these men were a source not only of great unnecessary expense to the company, but of vexation and hindrance to William. In most cases, their scouting consisted in riding the high-roads from one tavern to another, and in order to have something to show for their work, they would bring in every species of wild and foolish rumor that they could discover or invent. As the superintendent frequently desired that these reports should be investigated, much valuable time was thus wasted. These men were not only employed without my advice, but they were retained long after I had urgently requested the discharge of the whole party, and I had great difficulty in obtaining their discharge, even after I was positively sure that the robbers had crossed the Mississippi and escaped into Missouri.

William spent one day in Nashville, and then went to Gillem Station, where he learned that Mrs. Farrington, to whom Russell had sent eight hundred dollars from Cairo, lived on an old, worn-out farm, and passed for a rich widow. She had three sons – Hillary, Levi, and Peter, the latter being quite young. Hillary and Levi Farrington bore a very bad reputation, having been mixed up in all kinds of fights and quarrels for a number of years. They were suspected of horse-stealing and counterfeiting; but most people were afraid of them, and they had never been arrested in that vicinity. William here learned, also, that Barton had been a frequent visitor at the Farringtons', and that he was as bad as the others. While at Gillem Station, William met Pete Farrington, the youngest of the three brothers, and his resemblance to Russell, whose face William had seen by the dim firelight and the flash of his pistol in the cabin at Lester's Landing, caused a sudden possibility to flash across his mind. He reasoned out the connection of the different facts about as follows:

"Russell was, undoubtedly, one of the Moscow and Union City robbers, and he obtained a considerable share of the plunder; two months after the first robbery, I find that he sent eight hundred dollars to Mrs. Farrington; this establishes the connection of those two persons. Barton was one of the actors in both robberies, also, and I find that he was formerly intimate with Mrs. Farrington and her sons; another link. Pete Farrington bears a strong resemblance to Russell, their peculiar Roman noses, with a lump in the middle, being exactly alike, and this creates a strong presumption that they belong to the same family. Now, Russell and Clark were so similar in their general appearance, that many people who have seen them together believe them to have been brothers. Hillary and Levi Farrington, I am told, also closely resemble each other, and they have not been seen about here for some months, they being, according to their mother's account, in Texas. The chain of evidence is very complete; what if Russell and Clark should prove to be the Farrington brothers!"

CHAPTER VI

The Mother of the Farringtons, being arrested, boasts that her Sons "Will never be taken Alive." – Another Unfortunate Blunder by Amateur Detectives. – An interesting Fate intended for the Detectives. – William A. Pinkerton captures the Murderer of a Negro in Union City, proving "a very good Fellow – for a Yankee." – An Unfortunate Publication. – Nigger-Wool Swamp and its Outlaws.

The more William thought about it, the more convinced he became that his theory was correct, and he took steps to verify his suspicions by placing a watch upon Mrs. Farrington's movements. He also made arrangements to get possession of any letters that might come for her, and then, being hastily recalled by the superintendent of the express company, he hurried back to Union City.

He there learned that, during his absence, Clark had talked with both Lester and his wife. The latter had warned him of his danger, and he had then disappeared in the cane-brake. The men stationed at Lester's for the express purpose of arresting any of the robbers who might come there, had been either unaware of Clark's visit, or else they had been afraid to attempt his capture, and he had escaped again when almost within our grasp. William had, therefore, been called back by telegraph to take charge of the men engaged in beating through the cane-brake, as it had been clearly demonstrated that, without a determined leader, these men were no more useful than a flock of sheep. The hunt went on for several days with no results whatever, while at the same time scouts patrolled the highways, and other men kept watch upon the ferries and fords for many miles around.

While this was going on, the express agent at Gillem Station was keeping a close watch upon Mrs. Farrington, when suddenly she announced her intention of going to join her sons in Texas. Instead of sending word to William at once, the agent began operations on his own account, and when Mrs. Farrington arrived at Waverly, Tennessee, he caused her arrest. She had started with two new wagons and a complete outfit for an overland journey of some length, so that her progress could not have been very rapid, and nothing would have been lost by waiting for instructions; but the insane desire to play detective seemed to overpower all other considerations in the minds of the company's agents, and she was arrested by the sheriff and a *posse* of citizens. Her salutation to the officer who stopped her settled the question of identity at once, for, on being told that she would be obliged to let him search her wagons for certain men, she replied:

"Oh! yes; I know what you want. You would like to find my two sons and Barton for the express robbery; but you will never catch them, for they are not now in this country, and they will never be taken alive."

This piece of information led the express agent to take the only sensible step of his whole proceeding. Mrs. Farrington had two negro families with her, some of whom had belonged to her before the war; and, with the personal attachment noticeable in many of the colored people, they were now desirous of going West with her. It occurred to the agent that some of them, from their confidential relations to the family, might be able to give some information as to the whereabouts of the boys. The negroes were, therefore, taken separately and closely examined, until one of the men was urgently persuaded to reveal what he knew. He said that Levi, Hillary, and Barton had committed the robbery, and that they had since been at Mrs. Farrington's together. According to an agreement between the mother and her sons, she was to start for Texas, passing through Nigger-Wool Swamp, on the west side of the Mississippi, and the two eldest sons were to meet her in the swamp, when they would determine where to go.

The agent also learned that the men had arrived at their mother's house Friday evening, November 10, and that a man who had gone there to sell her a wagon had been met by Hillary Farrington with a shot-gun; on seeing that it was a neighbor, however, Hillary had lowered his gun

and allowed him to come in. It was also learned that the three desperadoes had been seen at the house of the Farringtons' uncle, named Douglas, on Hurricane Creek, about ten miles from Waverly; again, on Monday, they had been noticed at Hurricane Mills, making their way to Fowler's Landing, on the Tennessee River between Florence and Johnsonville, fourteen miles from the last-named place. It was evident that they intended to strike across the country below Reel's Foot Lake, and cross the Mississippi at some point between Columbus and Memphis. The men were all well mounted and armed, and they had changed their personal appearance somewhat by altering the arrangement of their hair, whiskers, and beards.

The arrest of Mrs. Farrington was a most unfortunate blunder, since it disclosed to the criminals how close had been their pursuit, while little really important information was obtained. It was a good illustration of the danger of taking any decided step in a criminal investigation before knowing to a certainty that some good result would be obtained. The parties thus learned that we were not only aware of their identity, but also that we were very close upon their track, and the danger, as well as the difficulty, of the case was largely increased. These men were desperadoes of the most reckless type, and they would not have hesitated a moment to lie in ambush and kill their pursuers, if they had found it possible to do so.

In order to intercept the fugitives before reaching the swampy country near the Mississippi, the number of scouts and patrolling parties was increased by the superintendent of the express company, and two men, named Ball and Bledsoe, were engaged to follow Mrs. Farrington on horseback until her sons should join her in Nigger-Wool Swamp. This would have been a sensible and necessary move if the right kind of men had been employed; but the selection of untrained men for the delicate and important work of "shadowing" such an experienced gang of villains was risky in the extreme. Had they ever met Barton and the Farringtons, the latter would have undoubtedly murdered both of them without scruple; but there was no danger of such a meeting, since the robbers, and Mrs. Farrington also, were perfectly aware of the presence of their pursuers from the start. Indeed, they afterward stated that it had been their intention to have led the detectives on as far as the wild, unsettled country of Western Missouri, and to have then hanged them in some unfrequented spot, placing the inscription "Horse-thief" upon each of the bodies. Subsequent events prevented them from carrying out this plan, but there was no doubt that they would have taken that or some other equally daring means of ridding themselves of pursuit. The manner in which Ball and Bledsoe exposed their intentions wherever they went showed the inexperience of both men in such work; for, along the whole route over which they passed, they were known as officers tracking a band of thieves; and we afterward learned that, while they were innocently and unsuspectingly following Mrs. Farrington, two of the men, Barton and Clark, were almost continually watching them. However, they had been started on their mission by the superintendent before William could make any other arrangements, as he was away at Lester's Landing when the chase began.

From William's reports to me, I saw the uselessness of maintaining such a body of men in the work of scouting, watching ferries, and beating the cane-brake, for the reason that no good could come of it. I knew that if the robbers could escape from Lester's Landing and make their way to Gillem Station once, they could do it again. Clark (or Hillary Farrington) had been at Lester's early Thursday morning, while guards were stationed all about; yet, on Saturday morning he was at his mother's farm, and no one had even seen him on the way. This convinced me that they had such a knowledge of the country as to make it impossible to stop them by any system of guards or patrols, and I therefore wrote several letters asking that the superintendent discharge this expensive force at once, and allow me to manage the whole operation by my own plans and with my own men. While William, therefore, was at work with indefatigable energy and perseverance, scouting and following up all the reports brought in by the vast army of volunteer detectives in the company's employ, we were both satisfied that the method adopted was useless, and that even the ferry guards would discover nothing. Knowing the character of the three desperadoes, I had no doubt of their sagacity in avoiding

observation and pursuit; they would never try to cross without knowing positively whether the ferry was guarded, and if there should be any real danger, they would undoubtedly steal a skiff and make their horses swim across the river, a feat of no great risk in the then low condition of the water.

About this time an incident occurred which added greatly to William's popularity in Union City, and gained for him the respect and kindly feeling of the community. On Sunday two ruffians, having drunk enough bad whisky to be absolutely fiendish, began to beat an old and inoffensive negro whom they happened to meet. A merchant, named Blakemore, who was passing at the time, stopped to remonstrate with the ruffians, when one of them turned and plunged a knife into his stomach, inflicting a wound which caused his death next day. The murderer was the terror of the town, and so great was the fear of him that he would have probably escaped had not William appeared on the street as he rushed away flourishing his bloody knife and threatening to kill any one who should stand in his way. The sight of William's heavy revolver leveled at his head, backed by the certainty which he saw in William's face that death or surrender was his only alternative, caused him to choose the latter, and he was lodged in jail to await his trial for murder. The people of the town were quite enthusiastic over the way in which William had brought the fellow to bay, and then compelled his surrender; and they even went so far as to say that he was "a good fellow, a very good fellow indeed – for a Yankee."

On the twentieth of November an unfortunate publicity was given to our operations by the publication in the *Union City Journal* of a long history of the Farringtons, showing their whole career of crime, and terminating with an account of their latest exploit, as developed by our investigations in and about Union City. It is unnecessary to state the source whence this information was derived, further than to say that it was not obtained from any member of my force. It was a very dangerous piece of news to be published, since it might have wholly overthrown all our plans, besides involving the death of two or three men engaged in the operation; fortunately, the robbers were undoubtedly across the Mississippi by that time, and beyond the reach of newspapers for some weeks at least.

On the same day that this matter was published, Mrs. Farrington crossed the Mississippi River at Bird's Point, opposite Cairo, and the fact was reported to William and to me by telegraph. We had previously learned that Mrs. Farrington had relatives in Springfield, Missouri, and in Dade County, in the same State, and the probabilities were that, instead of going to Texas, she was going to visit in one of these places. Meanwhile, though my opinion was that her sons intended to rejoin her somewhere, either in Nigger-Wool Swamp or at her place of destination, I had no certainty that such was their intention; and, bearing in mind the warning they had received by her arrest at Waverly (and possibly by reading the newspaper article previously mentioned), I felt that every clue must be carefully traced, even though it might lead in an exactly opposite direction from that in which our previous suspicions had caused us to look. My correspondents and agents in Louisville, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and New Orleans were, therefore, kept on the alert to capture the men if they should venture into those cities, while I held three determined men ready to go at once in pursuit of Mrs. Farrington, in case she should take the route through Nigger-Wool Swamp.

It will be remembered that one of the negroes accompanying Mrs. Farrington had stated that her sons were to join her in that swamp; now, there were three possibilities about this statement: first, the negro might have lied; second, he might have been so informed by the old lady on purpose to give a false scent in case he should be questioned; and, third, while their intention might have been to meet there, subsequent events might have altered their plans. Still, thinking the subject over carefully, I decided that she would not take so difficult a course unless she really intended to meet her sons there. My reasons for so thinking were based upon the nature of the place, and, to comprehend my solicitude about Nigger-Wool Swamp, a description of it will be necessary.

The swamp is more than seventy miles long by about thirty-five miles wide, and, as a piece of bottomless ooze, its superior cannot be found in the United States. There are just two roads crossing it, one running from Hall's Ferry, at Point Pleasant, Missouri, and the other from Mitchell's Ferry, thirty-five miles below. These roads are mere bog-paths in themselves, being heavily overlaid with

underbrush and corduroy logs, yet they afford the only means of crossing this vast morass. The period of the annual overflow turns it into a turbid, sluggish lake, the roads being then deeply buried under water; but even in the dryest seasons the greater portion of the swamp is a bottomless slime of mud and putrefying vegetation. Large tracts of thickly-wooded land are contained within the limits of the swamp, and these constitute a semi-substantial basis for the two roads which run through them; but even these clumps are impassable at most seasons, except along the artificially-constructed roads. Sometimes, for miles and miles, nothing but the rankest of swamp-vegetation is seen, growing in wild profusion and covering the treacherous ooze with a close network of leaves and branches, until the surface looks firm enough to be taken for solid ground; but should any unfortunate traveler venture to cross such a spot, his limbs would be clogged by these clinging water-plants, his feet would find no secure resting-place, and, sinking rapidly deeper and deeper into the mire, his bones would find a sepulcher where nothing but a general natural convulsion would ever disturb them.

Still, there are occasional islands of firm ground through this section, and these have become the resort of lawless characters of every nationality and degree of crime. Over the entrance to Nigger-Wool Swamp might be placed, with perfect truthfulness, the motto: "Who enters here leaves hope behind." Each man is a law unto himself, and he must maintain his rights by the strong arm and the ready shot-gun. In one thing only are the dwellers of the swamp united, namely: a bitter and deadly resistance to the law. No officer of justice ventures therein to perform any of the duties of his office; unless backed by a powerful body of determined men, he would never return alive, and, if so accompanied, he would never succeed in catching a glimpse of any criminal whom he might be seeking.

About the middle of the swamp, the two roads cross each other at a spot called "The Gates," and every person traveling through either way must pass this place. Knowing this fact, I felt sure that Mrs. Farrington would await the arrival of her sons at "The Gates," in case she entered the swamp, and I determined that, in such an event, I should try to capture them there. I was fully aware of the danger of such an attempt, but I knew that to take the bull by the horns is sometimes the safest means of overpowering him. To send officers to that point with the avowed purpose of arresting any one, would be equivalent to sending them to their certain death, and I had no intention of doing anything of the kind; but I had men of my force who could visit Nigger-Wool Swamp for the professed purpose of hiding there from pursuit for alleged crimes, and, when the moment came for action, I did not doubt that they would bring out their men before the neighboring outlaws could discover their object.

Everything depended upon the course Mrs. Farrington should take on leaving the Mississippi River, since by striking north from the point where she crossed, she could skirt the edge of the swamp, while if she turned south toward Point Pleasant, I should know that she intended to carry out her original programme. This question was quickly settled, however, not only by the reports of the scouts, Ball and Bledsoe, who were following Mrs. Farrington, but also by an unexpected piece of intelligence from Gillem Station. Mrs. Farrington moved about twenty or twenty-five miles each day, and, from the fact that she went north to Fredericktown, there was no doubt that she had changed her plan of meeting her sons in Nigger-Wool Swamp.

CHAPTER VII

The Scene of Action transferred to Missouri. – The Chase becoming Hot.

On the twenty-second of November, William learned that a letter had arrived at Gillem Station, postmarked Verona, Missouri, November 13, and he immediately took measures to obtain this letter. Three days later he learned its contents, which were of such an important character as to give a new direction to our efforts. The letter read as follows:

"Verona, Mo., Nov. 13, 1871

"My dear Cousin:

"I seat myself to answer your kind letter, which came to hand last evening, and was glad to hear from you, and hear you was well and doing well. I have nothing new to write, only that we are all well at present, hoping that when these few lines come to hand they may find you well and doing well as ever, as you say you have been doing very well. It must be a good thing if it could stay so. Sometimes it was well and sometimes it wasn't, but I hope it will stay so, as you say it is a soft thing – as soft as things gets to be. I would like to see something like that, you bet. You talk like it can't be beat. That is the thing to take in. I think, and I know you think it, for I saw your name. I guess I did see you. You know Mr. Crapmel? He is a great fellow; you bet it is so. I have nothing more to write at present, as you said you are going to start out here. You said you was coming by here. Cousin, if you do come by, we don't live where we did when you were here; we live two miles nearer Verona. Come the same road. We live now half mile off the road on John Ellis' place. You can find out where we live anywhere. Come out the same road you did when you came before. John Timothy has just come out here; has been out here about three weeks. He is well satisfied here. So I will close for this time.

"From your cousin,

"J. M. Durham.

"M. F. sends her love to all of the family. Excuse my bad writing and bad spelling."

It was evident that Mrs. Farrington had previously written to her cousin informing him of her intention to visit him soon, and this letter was intended to direct her to the new location. The allusions in the letter to the "good thing" in which she was engaged showed that the writer had been made aware of the Farringtons' success as express robbers, and that he quite approved of their operations.

On reading this letter, William sent a copy to me immediately, and suggested that one or two good men be sent to Verona to get work near this man Durham, and to get into the confidence of the family, so that, when Mrs. Farrington should arrive, she would not be likely to suspect any one who had come before her. I fully approved of William's plan, and, on the last day of November, Detectives George W. Cottrell and Arthur C. Marriott started for Verona. I inferred that the people in that vicinity were rather lawless and desperate characters, from the fact that Durham spoke of "John Timothy" being well satisfied there. On the principle that "birds of a feather flock together," I judged the Farringtons, the Durhams, and this fellow Timothy to belong to the same type of people; hence, I concluded that, if Durham and Timothy were satisfied with the country, the people living there must be congenial spirits, especially since Mrs. Farrington was about to make a place of refuge in that vicinity.

My two men were detained a day in St. Louis, and they did not arrive in Verona until the second of December. The first thing they noticed about the town was the total absence of liquor saloons, and a few minutes' conversation with one or two of the citizens convinced them that no more orderly, honest, law-abiding community existed in Missouri than the population of Lawrence County. This discovery made a marked change in their plans necessary, as my instructions to them had been based upon the supposition that they would find a number of robbers, horse-thieves, and counterfeiters around Verona, and that they would be easily able to get Durham's confidence by appearing as reckless and desperate as any one. They had each prepared a choice autobiography for use among the residents, and, according to their own intended accounts of themselves, two greater scoundrels never went unhung.

All this was necessarily useless in the changed circumstances surrounding them. To attempt the *rôle* of criminal characters, hiding from justice, would quickly cause their banishment from the place, or possibly their arrest, and a new plan was essential. Their instructions had been that they should not put any confidence in any one, and they were obliged to invent a plausible reason for their presence there; also to have some business which would enable them to ride about the country, making inquiries and scouting for Mrs. Farrington and her sons.

Finding that the railroad company had a land agent in Verona, Cottrell decided to represent themselves as would-be purchasers of land. This would give them an excuse for going all over the county, examining different farms and unimproved tracts. They were introduced to Mr. Purdy, the land agent, by the hotel clerk, and from him they obtained a map of the county. It was then agreed that Mr. Purdy should go out with Cottrell and Marriott on Tuesday, December 5, to look at some pieces of property which the railroad company wished to sell. During Sunday and Monday both of the detectives were trying to learn where Durham lived, but no one seemed to know; neither could any one tell them anything about John Ellis, upon whose farm Durham had said he was living. The idea that Mrs. Farrington was rapidly pushing west, toward Durham's place, made Cottrell very anxious to begin operations as quickly as possible, since, if she should arrive before the detectives were established in the vicinity, there would be great difficulty in working into her confidence, as she would instantly suspect their true character; whereas, if she should find them already there, she would have no possible occasion to distrust them. They therefore thought best to confide the real object of their visit to Mr. Purdy, the land agent, and to ask his advice and assistance. Mr. Purdy had been an officer in the Union army during the war of the rebellion, and had settled in Verona at the close of the war. He was evidently an honorable man, who would always be found on the side of law and order, and as he was very popular in Verona, he would be able to give them a great deal of assistance in capturing the Farrington party. On communicating with me by telegraph on this point, they stated the facts briefly, and I authorized them to confer with Mr. Purdy on the subject, at the same time forwarding full instructions by letter.

On Tuesday, therefore, they told the whole story to Mr. Purdy, and showed him their credentials. He was quite astonished at their revelations, but he was very hearty and sincere in his expressions of good will toward them, and he promised to aid them in every possible way. He knew John Ellis quite well, having sold him the farm on which he was living, and he had heard of Durham, who hired a small portion of the Ellis farm. He said that if force should be necessary to capture the Farrington party, he could raise fifty determined men in ten minutes to help the officers. He said that after the war Verona had been a very bad place for a short time, but that, as Eastern men began to settle there, the respectable people had tried to drive out the hard cases; this had been slow work at first, but they eventually had been completely successful; they not only had driven out the dangerous characters, but they had closed all the liquor saloons also; and now, having once got rid of them, they would take care not to let any of that class of people back again.

Mr. Purdy was called away for a day or two on business, but he promised, on his return, to go with the detectives to Durham's place, and, meantime, he said he would speak of them as gentlemen

who intended buying land in that section, and who wished to ride over the country until they found a place which satisfied them. During the next three days, therefore, they learned nothing new, their time being occupied in scouting the road along which they expected Mrs. Farrington to come.

Thus the first week of December passed, and the operation was not progressing very favorably anywhere. Ball and Bledsoe had reported Mrs. Farrington's route up to the thirtieth of November, and she had moved quite rapidly up to that date, but nothing had been learned since, and I expected to hear of her arrival at Verona every day. She had gone from Cairo to Frederickstown, Missouri, and thence to Ironton; then, instead of following a direct road, she had struck up north to Potosi, in Washington County; again taking a westerly route, she had passed through Steelville, Crawford County, and on the thirtieth of November, she had camped at Waynesville, Pulaski County. Beyond this we knew nothing of her movements, although by the eighth of December she had had ample time to reach Verona.

William had spent this week in following up a clue received from Louisville, Kentucky. It will be remembered that about November 9, a pair of dashing women had been reported as having visited the banks in Kansas City, trying to get large bills for about eight thousand dollars in small bills. I had not believed the story at that time, and therefore had taken no steps to follow them. When William learned from Louisville, however, that a woman named Annie Martin, whom Levi Farrington had been in the habit of supporting on the proceeds of his robberies, had been staying there with another woman named Lillie Baker, who had sustained the same relations to Barton, it occurred to him that these might have been the women who were said to have been in Kansas City with so much money. He started at once for Louisville, at the same time telegraphing to me his suspicions in the matter, and I began inquiries again in Kansas City by telegraph. I could learn very little except from the teller of one bank, who described the women as well as he could remember their appearance; but the description was not accurate enough to determine whether these two women had or had not been Annie Martin and Lillie Baker. In Louisville, however, William learned that these women had been there recently, and they had appeared to be well supplied with money. They had not remained very long, but had gone to New Orleans, where they were then living in good style. As Mr. O'Brien, the general superintendent of the express company, was in New Orleans, the information was sent to him, and he agreed to have a sharp watch kept to discover Farrington and Barton, in case they should follow these women.

On the eighth of December, Cottrell, Marriott, and Mr. Purdy started on horseback to visit John Ellis's farm, where the Durhams lived. About a mile before arriving there, they met a farmer named Wisbey, who was a neighbor of Ellis and the Durhams. Without letting him into their confidence, they talked with him a long time, and gradually drew out a number of important facts. The Durham family consisted of two brothers and a young sister living with their mother, old Mrs. Durham, and they rented a small house on a part of the Ellis farm. Nothing positive had ever been discovered against the character of either James or Tilman Durham, but the neighbors had a poor opinion of them, and kept a pretty close watch upon their actions. During the previous fall a young man had visited them for some time, and his description was exactly that of Levi Farrington; but Wisbey could not tell his name, though he promised to learn it, and let Mr. Purdy know Mr. Wisbey was a downright honest, intelligent man, and Mr. Purdy asked him to learn everything possible about the Durhams and their visitors; in case any wagons should arrive, it was agreed that he should send word to Mr. Purdy instantly. There was no occasion for telling him the whole story, as he was quite willing to undertake the trust on the strength of Mr. Purdy's request, without asking further particulars; and, as he was a thoroughly discreet man, there was little danger that he would betray his mission by idle talking. The detectives and Mr. Purdy then returned to Verona, it being considered undesirable that they should visit the Durhams, lest they might possibly excite suspicion.

The day following their visit to Wisbey, he arrived in Verona and told Cottrell that he had sent his son-in-law, Mr. Stone, to see Jim Durham, and the latter had said that he was expecting the arrival

of some relatives very soon. He had learned further that the young man who had visited Durham in the latter part of the previous September had given his name as Levi Farrington, and had passed as the beau of the young Durham girl. In speaking of him, Jim Durham had told Mr. Stone that he did not wish his sister to marry Farrington, as the latter was a dangerous man, and had recently killed a man in a quarrel, while those who stood about were too much afraid of him to arrest him. Mr. Wisbey then returned home, with instructions to alternate with Mr. Stone in secretly watching Durham's place, so that every occurrence might be at once reported.

On the tenth of December I received a dispatch from Mr. O'Brien, saying that the express agent at Springfield, Missouri, had telegraphed to him on the eighth that the wagons of Mrs. Farrington's party had camped five miles from Springfield, and that the three men were known to be sixty miles south of Rolla. Mr. O'Brien therefore requested me to send a good detective to meet Connell in St. Louis, whence they would go together to capture the men at Rolla. I at once sent one of my best men, named Martin Galway, with instructions to join Connell, and, in case the Rolla report should prove to be a false alarm, they were to go on to Verona to assist Cottrell and Marriott. I had hardly completed my instructions to Galway, ere I received a telegram in cipher from Cottrell, as follows:

"Levi Farrington and a man calling himself George Cousins are at Durham's. They came on Thursday evening. Shall I arrest them? I can get all the help I need."

I immediately replied, also by a cipher dispatch, as follows:

"Are you sure it is Levi Farrington? His brother and Barton will probably be at Verona soon. We must get the whole. I think they will come from Douglas County. Probably Connell and Galway will be with you by Monday or Tuesday night; they can identify the men. Mrs. Farrington will be at Durham's by Sunday night or Monday morning. Keep a cool, clear head, and advise with Purdy. Have written by mail to-night. Keep me posted. William will arrive by Tuesday."

At the same time I wrote full instructions to Cottrell, ordering him to keep a close watch upon the men at Durham's, but to take no action until William should arrive, unless they attempted to go away. I did not alter Galway's instructions, but I telegraphed to William to start for Verona at once, to take charge of the operations there. The chase was now becoming hot, and a few days would decide the question of success or failure. I had reason to believe that the outlaws would not be taken without a desperate resistance, and I was anxious to have William present to direct the attack.

On Sunday, the tenth, Cottrell and Marriott rode out to see Wisbey, who met them just outside of Verona and informed them that Levi Farrington had arrived at Jim Durham's late Thursday night, accompanied by a young man named George Cousins. They did not receive my reply to their telegram announcing this fact until late that day, and so they could do nothing toward satisfying themselves as to Levi Farrington's identity until next morning, when they visited Wisbey at his own house. Mr. Stone, Wisbey's son-in-law, had met a man named Smothers, who worked for Jim Durham, and Smothers had told him all about the two men who had just arrived. According to their own account, they had left Mrs. Farrington at Ash Grove, in Greene County, where she was going to buy a farm, Levi having given her five thousand dollars for that purpose; Levi and Cousins were on their way to Kansas, where they intended to settle down to raise cattle; Levi's brother was said to be at Lester's Landing for the purpose of selling off a stock of groceries which they owned there. Both men were well armed, having three navy revolvers and a shot-gun.

When this news was transmitted to me by telegraph, I decided that this man Cousins must be Barton, and that Hillary Farrington might possibly be at Lester's Landing, as they said. I therefore telegraphed to William, who I knew would be in St. Louis that day, *en route* to Verona, that he had better take Connell and Galway back to Lester's to capture Hillary, while Cottrell and Marriott undertook the arrest of Levi and Barton at Durham's. I also sent a dispatch to Cottrell to take no steps for their arrest until after William should have captured Hillary.

William, having previously thoroughly examined the contents of the store at Lester's, knew that they were not worth over two hundred dollars, and he telegraphed me to that effect, suggesting that

it was improbable that Hillary should run so much risk for so small a sum. On learning this fact, I coincided with him, and ordered him to go on to Verona, as I had originally intended. I desired that he should keep the Durham place carefully watched until the arrival of the other Farrington, who, I believed, would soon join the rest of the party; then, in case he arrived, we should get all three together; but, if the other two should show any signs of moving off, they could be taken at any time.

Mr. O'Brien obtained requisitions from the Governor of Tennessee on the Governor of Missouri for the three men, and I felt that success was only delayed a day or two at most.

CHAPTER VIII

A determined Party of Horsemen. – The Outlaws surrounded and the Birds caged. – A Parley. – An affecting Scene. – The burning Cabin. – Its Occupants finally surrender.

While the telegrams were flying back and forth on Tuesday, the twelfth, Cottrell and Marriott were busily engaged. Early that morning Mr. Stone came to Verona, and told them that he had learned that Farrington and Cousins intended to leave Durham's for the Indian Territory the next day. The news was doubtless authentic, Stone having heard it from Smothers, who had said that Farrington had told him so himself. It was clearly impossible to wait for William's arrival, as, by that time, the men might be safely hidden in the wild country to the westward. Instant action was absolutely necessary, and Cottrell so informed Mr. Purdy, who soon gathered a force of eight men. Very little would have been needed to obtain even a larger number of recruits, for, had Mr. Purdy and the detectives publicly told the story of the men whom they wished to capture, there would have been plenty of eager volunteers, all anxious to aid in ridding the country of such a band of outlaws. It was not deemed advisable, however, to summon a large posse, lest the news might spread so fast as to reach the ears of the criminals before the detectives could surround them; on this account only a few reliable men were let into the secret, and they left town singly and in pairs to avoid observation, having a rendezvous outside.

Just before starting, Mr. Purdy received a dispatch from the general land agent, ordering him to Pearce City instantly, as several purchasers of land were awaiting him there; although he tried to have his visit postponed one day, he was unsuccessful, his orders being imperatively repeated by telegraph, and so he was unable to accompany the detectives and citizens on their expedition to Durham's. The party of eight met the detectives outside the town, and they were joined on their way by three others, who lived on the road. They were all substantial business men or farmers, but they were accustomed to a life in the saddle, and they had all borne arms during the war on one side or the other. In spite of their present peaceful occupations they were not a body who could be trifled with, and it was evident that any gang of desperadoes would find their match in these cool, determined, law-abiding men.

A few miles from Verona they met a young lady riding a large brown mule, but none of the men in the party knew her. Cottrell felt sure, however, that she was Durham's sister, and that she was riding Farrington's mule. The descriptions he had received of the girl from Stone and Wisbey coincided exactly with her appearance, while the mule could not be mistaken. He therefore sent a man back to watch her, lest she should have taken alarm at so large a cavalcade of armed men. She rode on to Verona, however, without showing any signs of uneasiness, and the scout soon overtook the party.

On arriving one mile from Wisbey's, Marriott went on to Stone's house with six men, while Cottrell went to Wisbey's with the other five. Stone and Wisbey soon gathered a number of the neighbors, among whom was John Ellis, who owned the house and land where the Durhams were living; he was a very highly respected citizen, and was not at all displeased at the idea of getting rid of his semi-disreputable tenants. The management of the affair was then unanimously voted to Cottrell, and the party rode rapidly toward the Durham house. It was situated at the edge of a clearing, with underbrush and woodland close to it on three sides, so that great caution was necessary, lest the villains should see them approaching, and escape into the woods. At a reasonable distance from the house, therefore, the party divided, a part, under Marriott's direction, dismounting and making their way to the rear of the house on foot. When sufficient time had elapsed to enable the latter party to surround the house, Cottrell, with the remainder, dashed up to the front of the house and spread out, so as to make sure that no one should escape. As they approached, a man, who proved to be

Jim Durham, appeared on the porch and asked what they wanted; to which Cottrell replied that he wanted the men in the house.

The words had hardly passed his lips ere Barton sprang into the open doorway with a navy revolver leveled at Cottrell; but, seeing that the latter, as well as several others, had him covered, he shut the door quickly and started for the back of the house. By this time, however, the cordon of guards had drawn close around, and, as he emerged at the rear, he found himself confronted by half a dozen determined men, who ordered him to surrender. He then hastily tried to close the back door also, and pointed his revolver through the crack; but the discharge of several shots, which struck close to him, caused him to withdraw his pistol and tightly close the door. It was evident that the birds were caged at last, and it was now only a question of time when they would be taken; as it was only one o'clock in the afternoon, there were still four hours of daylight to conduct the siege.

Jim Durham, when he saw the rifles and revolvers of so large a force pointed at him, was thoroughly frightened, and he begged piteously that they would not shoot him. Cottrell placed his men behind trees, fences, and other protections, so as to be safe from any attempt to pick them off by the men in the house, and yet to guard every means of exit from the place; he then called Jim Durham out and searched him, finding nothing but a single-barreled pistol. He then sent Jim to the door of the house to summon the men inside to surrender, telling them that he was determined to have them – alive if possible, but if not, dead.

They refused to surrender, saying that they would kill any man who should approach the house. When Durham brought back their answer, Cottrell sent word that he would give them five minutes in which to decide whether they would yield peaceably or be burned out and shot to death. Just then Mrs. Durham, the mother of the Durham boys, begged Cottrell to allow her to go speak to Farrington and Barton, as she believed she could induce them to surrender. Accordingly, she went to the front window and implored them not to have the house burned down, as all her household goods would be destroyed. They replied that they might as well die inside as to come out and be shot down. Cottrell sent back word that they should be treated like all other prisoners if they would pass out their arms and surrender quietly; but if they tried to fight or resist, they would surely be killed.

As they still refused, Jim Durham was sent to barricade the doors with fence rails, so that they should not be able to rush out unexpectedly. He whined and complained that the men inside would shoot him, but he was obliged to go, and though they did threaten him, he was able to crawl up and lay the rails without getting within range. The house was a solid log cabin, with only two doors and very few windows, so that it was possible to approach it in one or two directions without exposure to a fire from within. When the doors had been securely barricaded, Cottrell ordered him to get on the roof, which was a common shingle roof, and set fire to the house. Mrs. Durham was carrying on at a great rate, first begging Farrington to surrender, and then praying to Cottrell not to burn her property. John Ellis, to whom the house belonged, gave full permission to burn it, and a fire was built in the open air to make brands to set it afire.

Mrs. Durham was allowed to make one more appeal to the ruffians inside, but they would not listen to her entreaties. They asked her, however, what kind of a looking man Cottrell was, and what he wanted to arrest them for. Cottrell was standing near enough to hear the question, and after Mrs. Durham had described his appearance, he told them that he wanted them for an express robbery; that he would treat them kindly if they should yield peaceably; but if they should refuse this, his last offer, he should set fire to the house and shoot them down as they ran out. He said he had no wish to kill them, but that he was determined they should not escape; rather than allow them to get away, he would have them shot on sight; but they would be protected and brought to trial if they would surrender.

To this they replied that they intended killing some of their besiegers first, anyhow. Finding further parley useless, therefore, Cottrell gave the order to burn the building, and Durham was forced to carry the embers and brands to burn his own premises. Just at this time, the young girl, whom

they had met riding a mule toward Verona, rode up to the house and asked what was the matter. As Cottrell had surmised, this was Miss Durham, and she was very much frightened at what she saw.

The afternoon sun was buried in a deep bank of clouds, so that the twilight was rapidly drawing on, there being just enough light to show the barricaded doors, the deserted porch, and the determined men scattered around, with shot-guns and rifles pointed at the low log cabin, above which a frightened man stood out in bold relief against the sky, tearing off the shingles and piling them upon a glowing flame at his feet. Everything was now hushed in deathly silence, and it needed no explanation for any one to understand that a bloody tragedy was about to occur if that flame should be allowed to envelop the building. It was now the prison of its two occupants, but only a short time would elapse before it would be their tomb.

On seeing the situation, Miss Durham asked to be allowed to speak to the men, as she said she knew they would listen to her. On Cottrell's refusal to hold any more parley with them, she burst into tears, threw her arms around his neck, and implored him to let her speak to Barton just once, if only for five minutes. Finally, seeing that most of his party wished to give the girl a chance to speak to her sweetheart, Cottrell said that she could have three minutes to obtain their arms; if they surrendered immediately, the fire should be put out; but, if they should still refuse, their last chance of saving the house and their lives would be gone. Miss Durham then went to the window, and talked with the men in the most imploring manner, urging them not to sacrifice themselves, as they would surely do if they remained in the burning house. Her entreaties did not seem to affect them at first; and, as the flames were then beginning to gather strength, Cottrell ordered her to come away from the house, and leave them to their fate. She made one more appeal, and Barton handed her a navy revolver; then Farrington did the same, and she brought them to Cottrell, saying that they would surrender if they could be sure that their lives would be spared. Cottrell told her to go back and get the rest of their arms, and assure them that they should be taken to Tennessee for trial. She soon returned with another revolver and a shot-gun, and said that the men would come out. Cottrell therefore removed the rails, opened the front door, and called them out – Barton coming first, and then Farrington. The latter proved to be Hillary, not Levi, as he had called himself. It was not known why he had used his brother's name, but it was supposed that Hillary had taken his name to enable him to prove an *alibi* in case he should be arrested.

Cottrell's party first secured the prisoners with ropes, and then assisted Jim Durham to extinguish the fire on the roof; the latter was quite rotten, and it had burned so slowly that very little damage had been done. The prisoners were thoroughly searched, but nothing of any consequence was found upon them, the total of their funds being less than three dollars. A prolonged search through the house revealed nothing of importance, except the fact that it was quite an arsenal for arms, there being found six navy revolvers, two double-barreled shot-guns, and a Spencer repeating rifle. The siege had lasted nearly three hours, and, another hour having been spent in searching the house and saddling their animals, it was nearly dark by the time they started for Verona. Farrington and Barton were carefully tied upon the horse and mule respectively, and, after thanking the neighboring farmers for their assistance, Cottrell took the road back, accompanied by the eleven men who belonged in and about Verona. The greatest care was taken that the prisoners should have no opportunity for escape, and they were informed that any attempt to get away would be the signal for riddling them with bullets.

While riding along, Cottrell learned from Barton that the party had been very lucky in finding the two men in the house, since their usual custom had been to spend the days in the woods, coming in only at night to sleep. On this occasion, however, the weather was so cold that they were spending the day indoors.

When asked why they had not surrendered before, they both made the same reply, namely: that they believed the posse of citizens intended either to shoot them immediately, or to hang them after a trial by lynch law.

On arriving in Verona early in the evening, the prisoners were securely tied up with ropes, and Cottrell alternated during the night with Marriott in watching them. A blacksmith was also called up, and shortly after midnight he completed two pair of leg shackles, with which they were fastened together. My men were greatly fatigued, having ridden a large number of miles every day for a week, and the excitement of the affair added, of course, to their prostration, but they resolutely paced the floor in alternate four-hour watches, determined that no possible loophole for escape should again be afforded to such daring villains as these two.

The result of the expedition was, of course, transmitted to me in telegraphic cipher at once; but the arrest was kept secret for the time, in order to prevent a knowledge of it coming to Levi Farrington, who was still at large. According to Barton, Levi was concealed somewhere in Tennessee, but this statement was proof positive that he was not in Tennessee at all, since Barton's object in telling anything about him was evidently intended to mislead us; hence, no faith was put in his story, and other steps were taken to capture Levi.

William arrived in Verona on the morning after the fight, and he prepared to return with the prisoners to St. Louis by the noon train. It was supposed that Levi Farrington was also on his way to the rendezvous at Durham's farm, and that he would probably approach by the direct road through Douglas County. Cottrell and Marriott were left, therefore, to attend to Levi and the old lady, whose whereabouts were still uncertain. William saw most of the citizens engaged in the affair, and heartily thanked them for their aid; being questioned as to whether they should receive the reward of one thousand dollars offered by the express company for the capture of the two Farringtons and Barton, he informed them that he considered them entitled to it, and that he should recommend its payment, but that the matter would be decided by the officers of the company. I may here anticipate events somewhat to state that the company paid the citizens and farmers a liberal amount for their services in capturing the robbers, and a settlement was made which was satisfactory to all parties.

William left Verona about noon of the day he arrived, taking Hillary Farrington and Barton with him, under guard of Galway and Connell. On arriving in St. Louis, he separated the prisoners in order to induce Barton to confess; and, after a long conversation, in which he showed Barton how conclusive was the evidence against all three of the men, he obtained a very full confession, of which the greater part is here given exactly as it was taken down from Barton's lips.

CHAPTER IX

Barton's Confession. – The Express Robberies and the Outlaws' subsequent Experiences fully set forth therein. – A Clue that had been suddenly dropped taken up with so much Profit, that, after a desperate Struggle, another Desperado is Captured.

"I am twenty-two years of age," said Barton, "and my native place was Columbus, Mississippi. When quite young, I left home and took to following the army. About five or six years ago I moved to Normandy, Tennessee, and lived with the family of Major Landis, and two or three years later, I went to work on the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad as a brakeman, remaining as such over two years. About three years since I formed the acquaintance of Hillary and Levi Farrington, at Waverly, Tennessee. These are the men otherwise known as J. H. Clark and Edward J. Russell. Afterward I opened a saloon in Nashville, and Levi Farrington visited me there several times. Last April or May he was arrested on suspicion of counterfeiting, but as there was no case against him, he was discharged. After a short time, I went down to visit Levi at Mrs. Farrington's; she lived at the head of Tumbling Run Creek, twelve miles back of Gillem Station. Hillary was in jail at Memphis at that time, charged with murder and horse-stealing. When he got out of jail, Levi, Hillary, and myself all made a trip to Little Rock, Arkansas, gambling by throwing three-card monte, and we won about thirteen hundred dollars; we then returned to Gillem Station, where we remained until the twenty-first of July, this year. During this time, Levi, who frequently rode back and forth on the express trains, spoke of the feasibility of robbing them.

"On the morning of July 21, Levi, Hillary, and myself left Gillem Station for the purpose of robbing the express train at some of the stations either on that road or on the Mobile and Ohio Railroad. At Union City we changed cars, and arrived at Moscow just after dark. The plan was, that we all three should enter the car and overpower the messenger; but Levi and Hillary were the only ones who entered. I remained on the platform of the first passenger coach and kept watch. When the train was passing the water tank, they slacked up the speed, and we all jumped off and struck for the woods. The messenger had nothing whatever to do with this robbery, so far as I was ever informed.

"As I said before, we struck into the woods and reached the river just above Hickman, where we stole a fisherman's skiff, and all three of us started down the river. Finding that we were pursued, we left the skiff on the Tennessee shore, near Island Number Ten. We then took the river road and walked back as far as Lester's Landing, arriving there about dinner-time, July 23. Levi divided the money, giving me one-third of one thousand dollars, which was all, he said, in the safe, although I always believed there was more.

"So far as I know, neither of the Farringtons had ever met Lester before, and I am sure that I had never set eyes on him until we went to his place at this time. On account of the spot being so lonely and isolated, Hillary proposed that we put up a store there, as it would be a good cover for our actual business. We started the store, and applied to the postmaster to establish a post-office, to be known as Lester's Landing; our object in this move was, of course, to give an added color of respectability and *bona fide* business to our transactions. From this time until the middle of October, I remained at the store nearly all the time; Hillary was also there most of the time, but Levi very seldom. During one of the latter's western trips, he said he had been out to see his Aunt Durham.

"Along in October, Levi proposed that we again strike the express company when the train stopped for supper at Union City. Hillary had been in the habit of riding back and forth on the engine, and he understood how to run a train. Levi suggested that we take a man named Bill Taylor into the robbery with us; he was then employed chopping wood for Lester, and when Levi approached him on the subject he agreed to go. Levi left Lester's a few days before the robbery. Hillary and I did not

leave until the nineteenth, when we went up to Columbus by steamer, taking along a large quantity of fish. Having sold our fish, we took the train for Union City, where we arrived the same evening. On getting off the train, we met Levi and Bill Taylor on the platform, and the only conversation which took place was when Levi asked why we had not arrived sooner, to which we replied that we came as soon as we could. The next morning we met again, having slept in separate places so as not to attract attention, and went down the road some distance toward Hickman. While camped in the woods that evening, about ten o'clock, an old man named Hicks came along with a bottle of whisky and stopped at our camp-fire quite a time. There were present Hillary, Levi, myself, and Bill Taylor. We remained in the woods all that night. The next day we moved further into the woods toward Hickman, and at night, just at dark, we came back to Union City.

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