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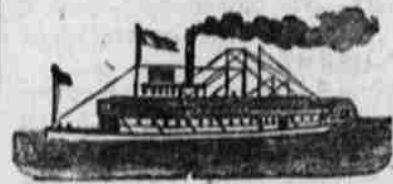
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GEORGE B. TUTTLE, Exchange Officer.

7-16-08

... The ... Cashier's Grip

By ALANSON CROSBY.

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WELL!" The low, gruff exclamation of chagrin fell from the lips of William Kane, alias Banker Bill, as he pressed his nose to the big plate glass window and desecrated by the solitary light above the cashier's desk of the Merchants' National bank that that official was engaged upon his books.

The exclamation was echoed by Bill's companion, a thin, slight, consumptive fellow of thirty-five, who contrasted strangely with the other man's hulking form, but in whom the pallor and emaciation of incurable disease affected not the restless, cunning gleam in his pale blue eyes.

"Dis cooks our goose fur tonight, Jake," muttered the first and larger of the two men. "We can't do nothin' wid dat bloke in dere."

"We might pop him," suggested the smaller man, touching his hip pocket mechanically and almost unconsciously as he spoke.

"Nix," said Bill authoritatively. "Youse entirely too free wid yer gun, Jersey. It's all right when it's necessary an' not too risky, but it ain't golt ter do here. We'd be plucked before we could make tracks, and den de chair fur both of us. It might be all right fur youse, who ain't got long ter live now, but my bellows is in good workin' order, an' I wants ter keep 'em pumpin' a few years yet."

For ten minutes the scratching of the cashier's pen and the turning of the leaves of the huge book before him continued. Then, with a sigh that partook of the qualms of a groan, he closed the volume and raised a bag-gard, care marked free so that it was seen for the first time by the watching pair.

"Gee, dat mug's a dead give-away!" whispered Bill. "De bloke's been blowin' de bank's seads an' now he's afixin' de books."

The cashier returned the book to its proper place. Then, he disappeared through the door of an adjoining room, returning to view almost immediately with a small traveling grip in his hand. He glanced about him nervously, as though fearing he might be watched. The two pairs of eyes that were eagerly taking in his every action and the forms of their owners were undistinguishable, however, in the gloom of the street.

"Dis is gettin' interestin'," whispered Bill, and his companion grunted an assent.

The cashier laid the grip down upon his desk and lowered the gaslight above it to a faint flicker. Then he entered the vault, the door of which was open. Speedily he returned, bearing in his arms several small oblong packages wrapped in paper. By straining their eyes Bill and Jake could still take in his every action. Quickly he opened the grip and deposited the packages within it.

"De guy's doin' de job for us!" chuckled Bill. "Oh, dis is dead easy!"

The crackmen could see the cashier's hand tremble as he drew his watch from his vest pocket and, holding it closer to the light to see the time, shook his head negatively, as if in disappointment. Then he picked up the satchel, disappeared with it in his hands into the black depths of the vault and returned empty handed.

"What does this mean?" growled Jersey Jake.

"It's all right," replied his companion. "Jest cultivate a little patience, Jersey."

The cashier closed the vault door and set the locks. Then he turned against his desk in meditation. His face fell into his hands, and his frame shook with emotion. In a few minutes the three ceased, and he straightened up. Again he looked at his watch. Then he put on his hat and overcoat and rubbers.

"He's got ter put in his time till de next train leaves fur Canady," whispered Bill, "an' he's goin' out. It's up ter us ter foller him."

"Why not crack de vault an' get de grip while he's gone?" asked Jersey Jake.

"What's de use?" demanded Bill. "We'd be takin' chances of bein' caught, while if we bide our time all we has ter do is ter relieve dis gentleman, who is kindly doin' our work fur us, of de grip. Den he gets de credit fur de job, an' we gets de cash. Oh,

youse may be wise for some lines of biz, Jersey, but youse gotta take off yer lid ter me in dis game. Duck inter dis stairway now. De bloke's comin' out."

The cashier stepped into a saloon and ordered whisky. His hand shook as he poured it out, and the glass overflowed before he could put the bottle down. He apologized abjectly to the bartender, threw the drink down his throat and called for another. This dispatched, he strode with uneasy steps out of the barroom and walked rapidly for several blocks.

He looked at his watch again and cursed as he noted the time. Then he entered a restaurant and gave the waiter an order. He called for a newspaper and tried to read. The paper quivered so in his hands that he could not see the letters, and, with an exclamation of disgust, he called for his check, paid for the supper that had not yet been served him, tipped the astonished waiter a dollar and went out.

He looked furtively into the faces he passed in the streets and cast his head over his shoulder from time to time with nervous jerks. But he did not see the figures that followed him constantly a block back.

After an hour of this aimless wandering he returned to the bank. Opening again the vault door, he once more disappeared from view in the darkness and again reappeared with the satchel in his hands. Then, hastily, as though he feared interruption, he closed and locked the vault door and hastened to the street, grip in hand.

A cab happened to be passing the bank as he stepped out. He called the driver, gave him a direction and jumped into the conveyance.

Jersey Jake uttered an oath. "He's goin' ter get away from us!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, hush!" muttered Banker Bill, with some disgust. "Youse is always goin' off half cocked. He tole de cabby ter take him ter de Northern station. Dat means Canady fur him, as we know'd already, an' de foist train don't leave for half an hour yet. We got lots o' time. Don't get excited, ole man."

Banker Bill summoned another cab, and the two worthies entered it.

The Canadian limited bore only five passengers in the smoking car. Two of them occupied a seat near the front of the car, with their feet resting on the turned seat next to them. The tilted forward position of their hands and the small portion of their heads showing above the back of their seat indicated that they were enjoying a nap.

The third passenger, a nervous, middle aged, white haired gentleman, sat toward the rear of the car, with a small satchel upon the seat beside him, from which he never withdrew his hand. The two remaining passengers, who, it is needless to say, were Banker Bill and Jersey Jake, occupied the last seat in the aisle.

"Youse understands de game?" whispered Bill to his companion. "De next station is de last one on de American side. As soon as de train has pulled a few miles out of it I gets up an' yanks de bell rope, which brings de train ter a stop. As I does so youse blackjack de gent. I grabs de grip, an' we hikes ter de platform. As de train slows down we jumps. Oh, it's a puddin'!"

"It's a bad night," growled Jersey, who was prone to look upon the dark side. "I never seen such a storm in my life. We'll be drowned in the rain if we ain't struck by lightning!"

"Rats!" grunted Bill. "It's all de better fur us. I hopes yer ain't afraid of der heavenly fireworks? We couldn't ask fur a better night fur dis little game. De storm'll make any bloke cave on persuin' us if der should be any unforeseen obstacles to de smoot'ness of de programme."

In a few minutes the train halted at a little way station. Some one got off from one of the rear cars, but no passengers were taken on. A deluge of rain was falling, as though all the reservoirs of the heavens had burst, and the black sky was rent asunder with great forks of dazzling light. The nervous man, with his hand still on the grip, looked up at the ever recurring flashes with a convulsive shudder.

"Steady, now," whispered Bill as the train started slowly on. "Watt till I gives de signal."

Five minutes passed. Then Bill arose stealthily and motioned for Jake to do his work. The latter crawled out from his seat and advanced on tiptoes, his blackjack grasped in his hand. As Jake's arm was poised for the blow Bill pulled the bell cord which would

signal for the engineer to stop. Jake's blow was not struck. As his arm was about to descend the heavens seemed torn apart on all sides. There was a crash of broken glass, a flash as of a sword before Jake's eyes, and the bank cashier fell forward without a sound.

Jersey Jake's arm was still poised in the air, as though struck numb in that position, when Bill shook him. "Wake up!" he said hoarsely. "De elements did de deed fur us, an' de train's stoppin'. Come on."

As he spoke he caught up the satchel from the dead man's seat and fairly dragged Jake, who was still staring blankly at the fallen figure, after him.

As they reached the platform the train had slowed sufficiently for them to jump off.

"Go on!" yelled Bill. "Are youse struck senseless?"

"All right," returned Jake. "But I was fur a minute."

The two men leaped from the slowly moving train and under Bill's direction set out across a field. They continued to run in the drenching rain until by another flash of lightning they saw that the train had again resumed its flight.

"All safe!" panted Bill. "No use wearin' out what's left o' yer bellows by further sprintin' exercises. Now ter see what the haul amounts to."

"How are you goin' ter count the stuff in the dark?" protested Jake.

"De lightning's our candle," said Bill. "We won't try ter count it, but a look at it will be good fur our eyes."

Quickly the satchel was opened and the wrapper torn from one package.

"Thunder!" roared Bill as a flash of lightning revealed its contents to be waste paper cut in the form of bank notes.

With feverish haste the other packages were opened. Not a dollar was in any of them.

"Bunked, by —" fairly shrieked Bill as he savagely kicked the satchel from him.

"You said I was green in this line of business, an' I am," growled Jersey Jake, "but I've got de consolation of knowin' dat dere's others."

The papers next day told of the strange and sudden death by lightning on the Canadian limited train of Cashier Adams of the Merchants' National bank of B. Mr. Adams, the papers stated, was leaving on a much needed vacation trip when stricken. He was an estimable man, enjoying the full confidence of his business associates, and was survived by a charming family, who were plunged into deep grief by his untimely death.

"Poor Adams!" sighed the president of the Merchants' National bank as he read the papers. "Little did he suspect that we had discovered his peculations and refrained from exposing him only out of respect for his family. He must have opened his grip and discovered that we had substituted waste paper for the money he had arranged so carefully to take away with him. Then, I presume, he threw the grip away, as the papers make no mention of its having been found. Well, I am glad—for his family's sake."

The Old Apothecary Art. In the old days the Magi ordained that "the Pyrethrum parthenium (the feverfew) should be gathered with the left hand, that the fevered patient's name must be spoken forth and that the herbalist must not look behind him."

Later we hear that "gout was treated with henbane only when the moon was in Aquarius or Pisces—i. e., three times a year, before sunset. It must be dug up with the thumb and third finger of the left hand, when one must say: 'I declare, I declare, holy wort to thee! I invite thee tomorrow to the house of Pileas to stop the rheum of the feet of — and say, I invite thee, the great name, Jehovah, Sabbath the God, who steadied the earth and staid the sea, the filler of flowing rivers, who dried up Lot's wife and made her a pillar of salt, take the breath of thy Mother Earth and her power and dry the rheum of the feet and hands of —'"

Henry VIII, who studied medicine and took great interest in inventing new mixtures and remedies, devised many quaint "cramp" rings to be worn for the cure of rheumatism and curious liniments and cataplasms, for the full benefit of which a large amount of faith was necessary.—London Chronicle.

Thankful. "I hope your constituents are grateful to you for what you have done for them."

"I hope so," answered Senator Borghum, "but I must confess I am thankful for the arrangement which makes compensation for my services independent of the gratitude of my constituents."—Washington Star.

A Case For Harry. Cleverton (who has hired a taximeter cab to propose in)—Says "yes," darling Miss Calumet—Give me time to think. "Heavens! But not in here! Consider the expense!"—Life.

There is a good deal of cheer on life's journey if it be made with a contented heart.—Vandyck.

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