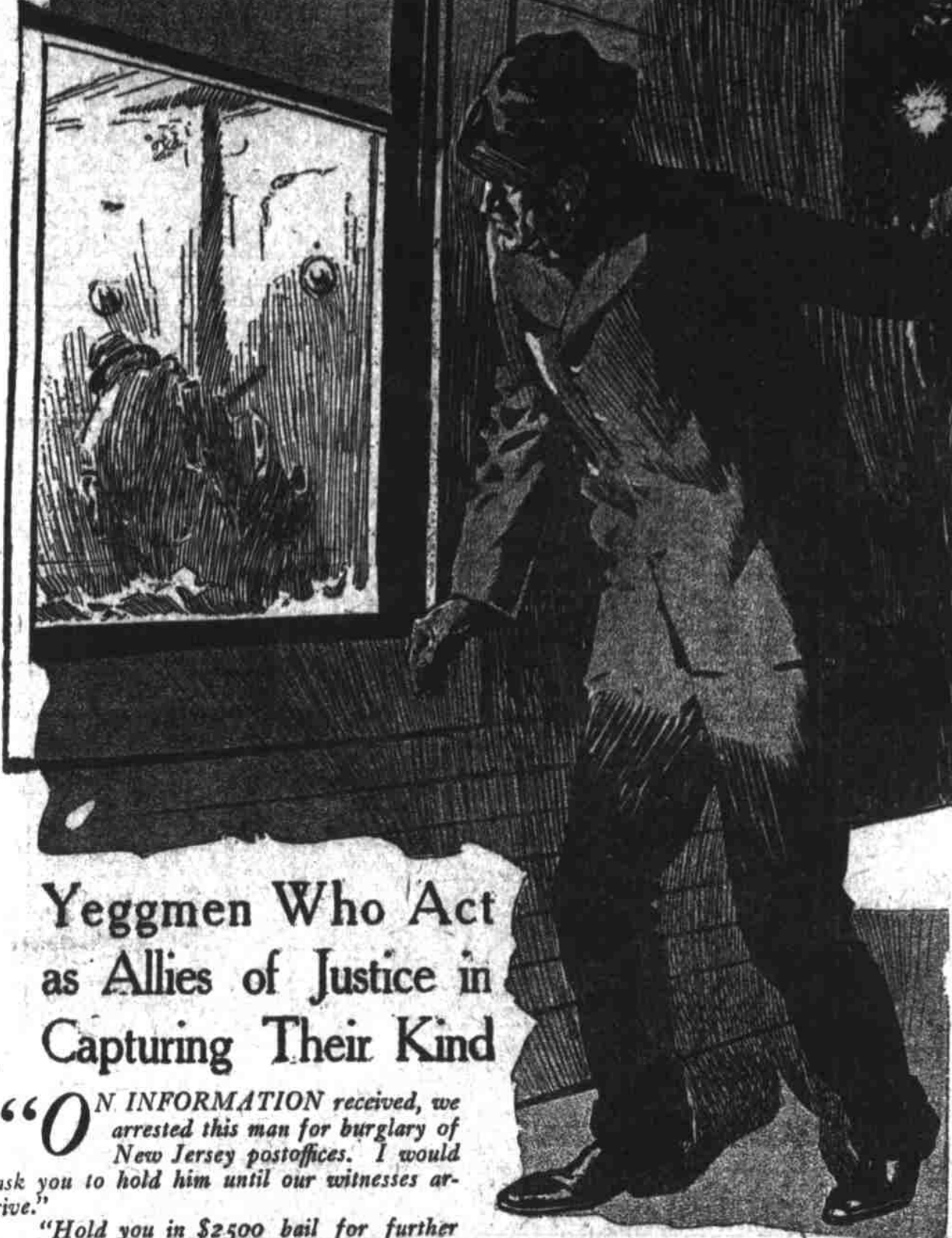


Getting a Thief to Catch



Yeggmen Who Act as Allies of Justice in Capturing Their Kind

"ON INFORMATION received, we arrested this man for burglary of New Jersey postoffices. I would ask you to hold him until our witnesses arrive."

"Hold you in \$2500 bail for further hearing Wednesday next, 10 o'clock. Prisoner committed. That's all."

If new to the pen, the prisoner rages and invokes all the natural and constitutional rights of man; if an old hand, he turns sullenly to the bench from which he has risen to receive the decision. The detective tries to vanish discreetly, his discretion assailed by a half dozen pursuing reporters. The committing magistrate argues with the clerk the probability of the primaries in the Eighteenth Ward.

That's all. "On information received" does the simple, ominous, legally illegal trick; and a man against whom there is not a scintilla of proof, beyond some detective's bare word alleging an unauthenticated report of his guilt, goes to prison in default of bail for a whole week.

"On information received"—what secret lies behind the necromantic, hypnotic power of those mysterious words?

It is the secret of the alliance of justice with crime, the secret which has at last made vulnerable the Achilles heel of the redoubtable yeggman, the secret of setting a thief to catch a thief, which France learned so long ago in the days of the great Vidocq, which the United States is unwillingly learning now in the times of postal inspectors and "plain clothes" men.

IF THE United States were more law abiding it would have a far more interesting and far more popular literature of crime. The statement is as true as it appears paradoxical.

In England, even with a newspaper press that is expert in the suppression of the sensational, a bold robbery or a flagrant murder will set the whole empire by the ears; in England's literature the creator of Sherlock Holmes can become a popular idol as Scotland Yard can become a popular bogey.

In France, with no newspaper press whatever—for journalism there is practically limited to essay, wit and romance—a few "strong arm" boys and men can set Paris quivering before the atrocities of its tribe of "Apaches," while a Du Boisgobey's memory remains forever enshrined in the pantheon of the popular affections.

In the United States, in every large city, in every newspaper, every day, a regular department is served up where the burglaries, highway robberies and murderous assaults are disposed of with less and less attention to their thrilling details, purely because the public doesn't care a continental about them.

Let the imagination lie fallow and it will jump like a frightened horse at the faintest flick of the whip; lash it with "sensational" day in and day out, and it will plod under the blacksnake.

So murders that would set England aflame, robberies that would have France in a ferment, leave the United States logging along, indifferent. And it's why for the Breakdown Gang (Chas-cal) way for the Breakdown Gang!

been able to grow up in the past decade until it comprises one of the most powerful, most amazing organizations of criminals ever grouped together by common interests and similar methods in the history of a modern civilization. And that, too, is why only at this late day do the authorities, chest to chest in their conflict with crime, realize the enormous difficulties that bar their way to its subjugation.

Ten years ago the heel of the law, ardently and generally applied, could have stamped out summarily the nascent profession of the yegg. Today all the machinery of the law, applied with all the energy and shrewdness inherent in a really high state of efficiency, proves to be inadequate. The law's champions find themselves, perforce, compelled to seek allies in the numberless camps of the enemy.

There is no need to portray the yegg as a type of criminal. He is too well known. Yet one fact should be emphasized—the causes that gave him birth, for in them is to be found the guide to his extinction.

In the opinion of expert criminologists the laws against burglary, as burglary has evolved recently, are too lenient to meet the incentives and temptations that now inhere to the crime. Industrial conditions have made great numbers of men, whose intelligence, like their morals, is of low grade, familiar with the working of iron and steel and the use of explosives.

A vast amount of knowledge has been put at the command of vast numbers of workmen, the large majority of them honest enough, but the exceptions, very numerous in the aggregate, unfitted by training or environment to refrain from criminal use of their knowledge when opportunity offers and need presses.

Result, the yeggs—hundreds of them, some so expert that they can blow a safe and not disturb a single stamp—many belonging to the thick-headed type of workmen who are as likely to blow the whole building and themselves to smithereens as they were to bungle the job from which they had to be discharged.

AN ANOMALOUS MEDLEY

A queer, anomalous medley amid the seething crime of the underworld—real mechanics, really out of employment; real tramps, really fitted by acquired skill and equally unfitted by native rascality and laziness to hold the easiest job ever offered; real burglars, shining lights amid the dark obliquity of their calling, who are natively dressed gamblers today, hoboes camped on some creek bank tomorrow, shadowy, expert, coolly murderous safe blowers in the neighboring postoffices to-morrow night.

The penalty for the crime in the government courts is five years' imprisonment and \$1000 fine; that is, five years and one month extra, since the criminal has the advantage of the insolvent debtor's law.

But already several western states have established a penalty of not more than forty and not less than twenty years for burglaries committed in buildings where explosives are used and the building is occupied by people. The new criminal code of the national government, so long in its revision and now before Congress, carries a

penalty of fifteen years for any robbery of a government postoffice.

Here lies the hope of the future that is held by the government's guardians of the law. With penalties so severe, any gang of yeggmen apprehended for a robbery is likely to include at least one weaker brother who quails before the long term that stares him in the face.

If, hopeful of leniency—and leniency, somehow, usually is extended to the man who turns state's evidence or gives such aid to the prosecution as insures conviction—his reticence breaks down, the way is cleared for removing the whole gang permanently from the scenes of their pernicious activity.

That will be the law's iron heel, reinforced ten years later than it should have been. For the present the law, instead of compelling the thief to immure the thieves, can do no more than bribe him.

That is the explanation of the request for \$5000 embodied in an item of the Postoffice Appropriation bill which Chief Postal Inspector McMillin was forced to make to a House committee recently.

Postal authorities have denied emphatically since then that they hire professional yeggs to join in burglaries for the purpose of securing evidence; but, even with the denial accepted at its face value, the fact remains the appropriation is urgently needed for the main general purpose of bribing the bribable yegg.

There is a reward fund, distributed at the discretion of the postmaster general, of \$10,000 a year for information and aid that bring about the arrest and conviction of postoffice burglars; and the payments are commonly made upon an appraisal of \$250 a criminal. But that is available only long after the arrest, and a yeggman, when he is willing to betray, turns Judas only under the pressure of immediate necessity.

So the bribe he gets comes directly from the pocket of the local postal inspector who is working on the case and the inspector's sole source of replenishment for the pocket is his government salary.

In one eastern city last year a chief inspector, whose pride in the record of his district would not let him lose

a little of helpful information, spent \$500 out of his own salary to defray the various incidental yegg "crafts" that had to be completed with.

A whole underground system prevails. Some "plain clothes" man on the city police force has a yegg "stool pigeon," reformed thief or treacherous tramp who knows the identity and hiding place of the members of the gang that robbed a country postoffice.

He tells the postal inspector, with the intimation that about \$15 will satisfy the yegg. The inspector must pass along the \$15, wherever it comes from. He may capture and convict the burglars, but he never gets back his \$15, for government officers are expressly debarred from participation in the reward fund.

Or, say, a gang of yeggs, having worked successfully through the South, conclude the time has arrived for flitting. They are suddenly transmogrified from hoboes to traveling salesmen, and, in good clothes and good style, they journey to New York. They hasten to any one of half a dozen "dumps" located on the Bowery, conducted by some old-time burglar, and known to the police as well-to-do criminals. There they receive the information of the underworld and of the police domain, for the criminal classes spy on the authorities quite as industriously as the law spies on the criminal; it is "pull devil, pull baker," all along the line.

Satisfied they are "in" right, the prosperous yeggs betake themselves to some apartment house recommended by the keeper of the dump, with whom they may leave a change of clothing and the tools of trade. He never betrays them—the consequences of a loss of revenue from the drinks they so lavishly buy and of a knife in the back if they should discover his treachery are too imminent to make him less than an absolutely faithful ally.

ALWAYS READY TO "PEACH"

But some needy hanger-on, his memory filled with the goods of the place, knows them for the gang who cleaned up \$500 in cash and \$300 in stamps near Richmond, Va.; and he knows, too, that they are going to twist the tiger's tail at McAndrew's that night. He may earn \$5, he may earn \$25, by the betrayal, according to the value of his information.

Sometimes they find him out, and then the city authorities have a mysterious murder to unravel, for every great city has its yeggs who live in daily apprehension of the hour when some betrayed burglar shall be released from jail, with his term lowered by "good behavior"—the professional criminal is the best behaved in all prisons—and shall hunt him down as relentlessly as a bound hound a fox.

The secret history of the postal inspectors' offices throughout the country is filled with stories of the yegg amateur detective, whose aid alone has made the law operative.

Two years ago the police of Paterson, N. J., arrested on suspicion, because he was carrying a kit of burglar tools, a man who gave his name as Edward Kearney and protested that he was an honest mechanic.

There was practically nothing against him, for the crime he was out for had not even begun. But in Philadelphia a yegg "tipped off" a postal inspector to the idea that he might be Ed Carney, a famous burglar, using another spelling for his name.

The inspector sent to Paterson a Rogues' Gallery likeness of the original Ed Carney—and Edward Kearney, virtuous mechanic, is now doing a five-year term in Jersey for the trivial offense of carrying a kit of tools which might have served the turn of burglary.

Justice these days has a habit of turning the yeggman which varies what injustice in the old days used to say of the Indian: "The only good yeggman is a judged man."

About the time of Carney's incarceration, Tom Dowd, known as "Denver Harry," was picked up in Bridgeport, Conn., on suspicion of having robbed the postoffice at Fairfield, but not a glint of evidence could be produced for his conviction.

Before his release, however, a treacherous yegg told the postal inspectors that he had some time previously murdered a man while robbing a Texas postoffice. He would neither rob nor murder in the future. The state of Texas has him, hard and fast, in its penitentiary for life.

In April last Frank Wagner, George Daly and Harry Williams, arrested and convicted of postoffice robberies at Falls Creek and Soldier, in Pennsylvania, had the scrupulous consent of their identity, as the most skilful railroad burglar in the country, to the Philadelphia "information received" from a yegg in Philadelphia who needed money.

The whole history of their other unpunished crimes is now in the hands of the authorities. It is with the many prosecutions that are awaiting them upon the expiration of their current terms, they live to be old enough to resume robbery, they will be miraculous witnesses to the bygone days of lawlessness.

Plot and counterplot—it is the whole story of the now handicapped campaign that justice is waging against crime, and every faintest scrap of information seized upon and treasured by the shrewd, watchful for.

This article, in the cool, calm opinion of the most conscientious thief-taker employed by the United States government, is the only possible explanation of such universal, ostentatious innumeration of the acts of prosecution in the blind and of negligence.

Nothing else could account for it, with such safety appliances as are in actual use demonstrated to be so futile 4279 times within the brief period of ninety-two days, with \$3,605,596 wasted for the most damaging advertisements railroads ever invested in and with 22,038 casualties.

The commission has been accorded attention to new inventions that profess to be automatically surety safe, and among those it has investigated is one by Frederick V. Thompson, an assistant electrical engineer near the Philadelphia and Reading Railway. The commission, apparently, is the only body interested in railroads in the United States that cares a hang whether Frederick V. Thompson, assistant electrical engineer, has invented an automatic safety appliance or an automatically explosive crowbar.

Mr. Thompson's device is an automatic emergency apparatus operating on the engine in connection, it that be desirable with the Hall electric signal system. By the automatic opening of an auxiliary throttle and valve electrically equipped, it keeps every train continuing in its separate "block" or section of track, after guarding against front and rear collisions against nearly all classes of obstructions and against open switches, open draws, open sidings and open cross-overs.

The mechanism operates by electric connection with the rails. An electro-magnet deposits a charge, which sends compressed air from a reservoir in the engine to a cylinder, which closes the steam throttle valve and opens the valve on the air brakes.

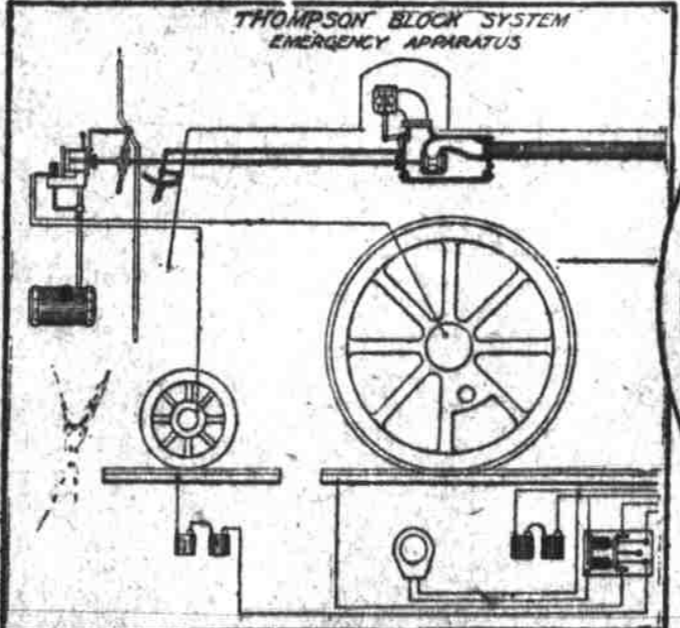
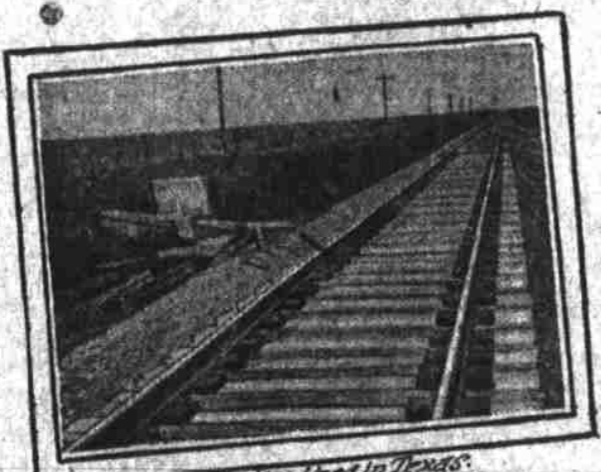
The roadway is divided into blocks, and along with the two rails ordinarily in service, a third rail is installed, which can very well be made of the old rails that roads are constantly throwing out for the third rail carries the battery current, but a current as low in power as to offer no danger, even to the life of a bird.

Block of track there is a relay, which consists simply of a pair of magnets and an armature, with contact points at either end of the armature and two contact points in the relay. Each set of contact points protects a block, one at either end of the section block.

The two magnets of the relay are connected to the two main rails with the battery in series. The magnets do not operate unless the two main rails are electrically bridged, completing the circuit. Again, electrically, whether by a train, by an open switch, or by an approaching train in the next block, automatically, even though the engineer has been dead at his post.

The inventor is now working on a plan to do away with the third rail, and so save materially on the cost of installation.

Invention's Ambition - Safety on the Rail.



VARIOUS United States district attorneys, acting under recent instructions from Attorney General Bonaparte, are engaged in the preliminaries or the actualities of suits against railroad companies for violations of the country's safety appliance laws. The number of prosecutions instigated was 101.

Meanwhile the Interstate Commerce Commission, under act of Congress, is spending \$50,000 which Congress gave it for the study of block signal systems and appliances for the automatic control of trains.

THE Interstate Commerce Commission has worked industriously enough during the scant two years which have elapsed since it got its \$50,000. Every few months, anxious to catch up with the slaughters that have been coming at lightning express speed, it has issued bulletins from Washington telling how many.

A few weeks after the first of the year the commission found itself only 20,000 or so behind. It had to let the casualties for the concluding months of 1907 await collection, as bearers do with those who fell in yesterday's battle, because they can collect only the remnants and remains of those who went down the day before.

That is why the bulletin of the commission covered only the months of July, August and September in 1907. But, during those three months, the casualties numbered 29,036, of whom 1289 were killed and 21,724

were injured, an increase of 157 in the number of killed and of 956 in the number of injured beyond the totals of the corresponding quarter for 1905.

The number of collisions and derailments increased by 697, thus affording the interesting three months total of 4719, with 224 collisions and 2924 derailments to prove that the companies favored no special form of accident, being perfectly fair and just.

There would appear to be some slight discrimination against smashing and upsetting passenger trains, for there were only 320 collisions and 232 derailments in that class of traffic; it may have been that the relatives of killed passengers are unpleasantly addicted to damage suits, or it may have been merely an oversight.

Direct damage to cars, engines and roadway, due to the collisions and derailments of those three months, amounted to \$3,605,596. The history of railroad accident funds leaves it certain that the various companies are still trying to settle or to fight the claims for further millions in damages which jurists

Oh, the Empire State must learn to wait. And the Connecticut to hang! When the westbound's ditched and the toolcar's hitched, And it's way for the Breakdown Gang (Chas-cal) way for the Breakdown Gang!