

THE 7:45 EXPRESS.

An Adventure of an English Compartment Car.

BY FRANCIS CHURCHILL WILLIAMS.

Two men were sitting in the smoking-room of a London club. One, a tall, athletic looking fellow with black hair and clean-cut features, was slowly blowing rings of smoke in the air as he lay back in the big arm-chair. The other man, slight and clean-shaven, with a singularly mobile face and twinkling gray eyes, was looking over a daily paper. Between them was a small table furnished with a couple of stands of club soda and a decanter of brandy which gave signs of having been well used.

"Glad," said the small man all at once, dropping the paper into his lap, "what do you think of train robbers?"

The tall man looked up in lazy surprise. "Topsy Russel," he drawled, "now, what in the name of all that's wonderful ever put such a question as that into your head?"

"The paper," explained the other; "and seriously I ask you, what do you think of train robbers?"

"And just as seriously I reply," returned the tall man, "that I think the fellows who strip you of your watch and valuables, and depart with your Gladstone or portmanteau, are clumsy rogues at the best. And the people they rob—well, they are a shade less admirable; for in every case I have heard of they appear to have acted like cowards or fools, and a rogue's always preferable to either of these, to my mind. And now that you have my candid and, doubtless, authoritative opinion on train robbers, please finish the B. and S. and try one of these cigars; they are worth trying, if I say it myself."

"Only one more question," said Russel, as he took the proffered weed. "You laugh at the way railway travelers act in these little affairs. Now, how would you act? Suppose a fellow were suddenly to put a pistol to your cheek and insinuate a desire for your watch! No one is near. You are alone in the carriage. What would you do?"

"I'd knock the pistol out of his hand, while pretending to comply with his demand, and throw him out the window after it." Caruthers said this quietly and determinedly, and Russel knew him too well to suspect braggadocio, so he only laughed lightly at his companion's emphatic reply and proceeded to envelop himself in clouds of smoke.

"Well," said the tall man, looking at his watch, and starting up; "I must be going. The express starts at seven-forty-five, and I've to stop at a couple of places before making the station." And he rang for his bag and overcoat.

"Now, Gerald Caruthers," said his companion, as Gerald was being helped into his coat, "remember what you have told me. If I hear of any attempt at train robbery on the seven-forty-five express I shall not write to you, but shall at once have the track examined, and the body of the robber discovered and interred. I suppose you will be willing to do that much for your victim, won't you?"

"Oh, certainly," laughed Caruthers, and the next moment he had wrung Russel's hand and had gone.

At the station he secured a first-class ticket, and then set about to find an empty compartment if possible. As luck would have it, the second coach he looked into was unoccupied, and he quickly stowed his portmanteau away and, settling himself luxuriously in the corner, uttered a silent prayer that no one would come in to interrupt, with the usual traveler's commonplaces and platitudes, the nap he had in prospect. He looked at his watch; only one minute remaining till train time, and already he heard the doors being banged to as the guard went his rounds.

And then—then, just as he was putting his watch back into his pocket with a breath of relief, the door of the compartment suddenly jerked open and, framed in the narrow opening, appeared the figure of a man of slight stature, with gray hair and bent shoulders. He peered curiously into the coach, and his eyes traveled quickly and with apparent indifference over the big frame of Caruthers. Then he stepped in and, with a slight nod to Caruthers, dropped a small handbag on the cushioned seat, pulled his soft hat over his eyes, sunk down in one corner of the compartment, and thrust his hands deep into his trouser pockets.

Caruthers witnessed these movements with some satisfaction, and, after a glance or two at his companion, and an instant's look outside at the yellow lights which were flying by as the express gather speed, he spread out his legs, pulled his coat up about his ears, and proceeded to make himself comfortable for the hundred and twenty mile ride before him. Five minutes later he was sound asleep and making that fact unmistakable by the most tremendous snores.

But if Caruthers snored loudly, his brain was fully as active as were his lungs, and, for a time, he passed through a series of adventures in dreamland which were anything but unpleasant. Then, suddenly, he was trans-

ported from a delightful fantasy into what seemed to him to be an immense haberdasher's shop, where he found himself unceremoniously set down before a little old man, who insisted upon fitting around his neck a most prodigiously high and stiff collar.

Now, if there was anything against which Caruthers was for all time and most vehemently opposed, it was high collars, therefore he struggled hard to push away his tormentor and remove the objectionable neckpiece. But all to no purpose. To his surprise he found his arms weighted down as with lead. His persecutor coolly continued to fit on the collar, and finally, having done this to his satisfaction, pushed over his head until the top edge of the collar cut into his neck and was choking him.

Caruthers used every endeavor to raise his arms, but in vain. Great drops of sweat seemed to drain down his face as he tugged at his invisible bonds, and all the time he felt the little old man passing his hands, which were plump and smooth, over his body, thrusting them now into his pockets, now inside his vest, and again pulling at his fingers.

All at once, however, even the desire for resistance left the dreamer, his sensations became dull, and he fell again into unbroken sleep.

His next sensation was when his eyes began to feel the light, and he slowly became aware of a dull, dead feeling in his arms, a fullness of the head, and a dry constriction of the throat. After a while he was sensible of the motion of his resting-place, and at last his eyes took in enough of what was about him to show him that this was no haberdasher's shop, but the inside of a railway carriage traveling at high speed, that there was no high collar about his neck, and that no little old man stood opposite him. But it was some time, nevertheless, before his brain became clear enough to appreciate that all he seemed to have gone through with lately was only a dream, and that he now was in the seven-forty-five express from London, and probably—how many hours on his journey?

He slipped his fingers into his waistcoat pocket for his watch. Then, with an exclamation of surprise, he raised himself quickly to his feet and somewhat weakly stood there, feeling for the handsome hunting case which he could find nowhere. It took him but a minute to realize this, and also that the gold cuff-buttons he had worn and his diamond scarf-pin were gone, and that a curious stone-studded ring had disappeared from the little finger of his left hand.

They all had gone; but where? A sudden recollection of the old, bent man who had been his traveling companion made him peer closely into the corner in which that figure had been curled when he last saw him. But the corner was empty now.

As Caruthers' glance moved quickly over the opposite seat, however, one object caught his eyes. He picked it up. It was a handkerchief, innocent of any markings, but smelling strongly, as he instantly noticed, of chloroform. The pungent odor told Caruthers all he needed. It was a complete confirmation of the theory which had flashed upon him at the first. He had been robbed, and in all likelihood by the little old man who had been his companion.

Caruthers pressed his face against the window. He was familiar with the country through which the train was passing, and he soon saw where he was. The express was fifty miles out of the metropolis, and by schedule must have made a stop at R—, about ten miles back. It was there, he decided that the thief had got out. The next stop would be made some twenty-five miles farther on, and he would have to wait until then to communicate the knowledge of his loss. So he arranged himself as comfortably as possible and began to consider how he could most quickly recover the articles which had been taken by the robber he had not thrown out of the window, and whether he could prevent the news of the robbery from spreading so that he should not receive the taunts of Topsy Russel, by telegraph or otherwise, upon this doubly trying experience.

As soon as the guard had opened the door of his carriage at the next station, half an hour later, Caruthers jumped down, and dashing into the telegraph office, quickly despatched a statement of the facts to the chief of police at R—. His message offered a generous reward for the apprehension of the rascal and the recovery of the stolen articles, with the least possible publicity.

Two hours later, arrived at his destination, he left the train, took a hansom to police headquarters, and notified them that a despatch addressed in his name might be received there from R—. If such a despatch did come it was to be sent to the B— hotel, he ordered. Then he was driven to the hotel, and, having engaged a room, turned in and quickly fell asleep.

It was seven o'clock in the morning when he was awakened by a knock on the door of his room, and a telegram was handed him. It was from the police at R—, and ran as follows:

"Have got thief, and recovered all articles. Thief disguised. Young man. Think he is old hand at business. Communicate at once."

Caruthers sent the servant double quick for a morning paper, and, having satisfied

himself that the news of the robbery and of the capture of the thief had at least not gained circulation outside of R—, he dressed himself leisurely. Then he ate a comfortable breakfast, lit a cigar with the utmost satisfaction, and strolled down to police headquarters.

To his surprise he found another despatch from R— awaiting him there. He read:

"Come and get me out of this. I was the old man who traveled with you and stole your things. I wanted to see you throw me out of the window. I acknowledge the corn. Come quickly. This confounded place is damp, and they won't believe my story."

"TOPPY."

In amazement, which rapidly gave way to laughter he could not restrain, Caruthers read the message a second time, and then he telegraphed to the chief of police at R—:

"Hold thief. Dangerous man. Pay no attention to his story. Be with you tomorrow."

"G. CARUTHERS."

It was a woebegone and irate specimen which Caruthers saw when the "dangerous man" was led forth from a cell at the police station at R— next day. But Caruthers smothered his laughter at the sight, smoothed Russel's wrath as far as possible by apologies, and, having paid the costs and fines which the police demanded that someone should pay, after his explanations, walked out of the station with his friend.

To this day, however, Topsy Russel has serious doubts as to Caruthers' statement that he "believed Russel's telegram a forgery," and he awaits a chance to turn the tables on the man he "robbed."

He Knew the Pike Family.

Other people may shoot a stray deer or hook a passing fish, but an Indian's success in hunting and fishing is seldom by chance. He knows where his quarry is to be found, for he has learned its habits at all seasons. Nor is there any reason why civilization should lessen his hold on nature's secrets, as the Maine Sportsman shows by an anecdote of Charles A. Eastman—a full-blooded Sioux who is both author and physician.

A famous general, fishing in a Minnesota lake, broiling in the sun with plenty of perspiration and no bites, was once accosted by Doctor Eastman from the bank. The impatient general declared there were no fish there, or he would have caught some during his morning's labor with the line.

"Oh, yes, there are," said Eastman. The general doubted it, so Eastman joined him in the boat. After a few moments' rowing about, Eastman found a spot that pleased him, dropped his line, and in a very few moments had a whopping big pike banging his tail against the ribs of the boat.

"How was that?" asked the general.

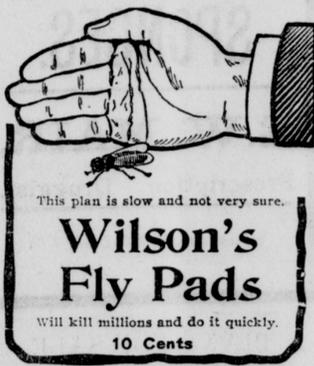
"Oh," returned Doctor Eastman, "the little stream that enters the lake just here has made a plateau of sand at the bottom. The sun is over there, and makes a shadow under the side of the plateau where Mrs. Pike and the young Pikes can wait in comfort while Mr. Pike goes off to get food. They were hungry for my bait, as this is about the time they feed."

When the general and Doctor Eastman returned home they carried on a string the whole Pike family, Mr. Pike included.

Darwinian.

First Monkey—It seems to be a toss-up whether man is descended from us.
Second Monkey—Yes, it's heads, they win; tails, we win.—"Smart Set."

"Ef dey's milk in Paradise, dey mus' have cows dar," said Brother Williams; "en ef dey got honey dar, dey sho' mus' have bees, en whar bees is dey's blossoms, and whar blossoms is dey's always watermillions in season—bless de Lawd!"—Atlanta Constitution.



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<p>Slow. Mr. Perkins—That's a pretty lively lookin' boy you have there, Sam. Mr. Dobbs—He's good enough if he wasn't so all-fired slow; why, if that boy had a' had the job buildin' the ark we wouldn't a' had the flood yit.</p>	<p>Reggie's Conclusion. "Oh, mamma!" shouted little Reggie, as he ran to his mother in great glee, "what do you think? I was just over there where they're putting up the circus, and they're filling the ring all full of breakfast food."—"Smart Set."</p>
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