

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1899.

## FEWER ROBBERIES NOW.

DEATH PENALTY IN THE WEST THE CAUSE OF THE DECADE.

The Robbers Were Becoming Expert in the Use of Dynamite to the Dismay of Safe-makers and Car Builders—Noted Cases of This Kind of Crime.

It is held by railway men and express agents whose lines traverse this territory that the efficacy of a law affixing the death penalty to a crime against property has been proved by the utter decadence of the once thriving industry of train-robbery. There was a time when it was a common mode of making a living. Within a year of the passage of the law defining it as a capital offence it had dwindled in Arizona by more than fifty per cent. In two years cases of train hold-ups were rare. Since then there have been merely sporadic cases. The men of the road have gone back to robbing stage coaches, or take their chances in looting detached express offices in small towns. Ninety per cent of them think too much of their necks to run them into almost certain nooses.

There has been, however, one curious result of the law. While it has enormously decreased the number of train robbers, it has increased the percentage of fatalities attendant upon them. This is due to the fact that with capital punishment hanging over them, only the most desperate kind of criminals have been willing to engage in looting trains at all, and once in it they were prepared to stop at nothing. In these days the slightest show of resistance is met with instant death. The robbers say that as they are going to be hanged anyhow if caught, they might as well be hanged for something worth while.

Eight years ago in Arizona there was a train robbery a month, and this is a large number when the comparatively few railroads in this territory and the few trains are taken into consideration. Into such a condition of decadence has the pursuit descended, that it now has been more than a year since anything like a 'decent hold up' has been accomplished. That which is true of Arizona is true also of California, in which state the law covers train-wrecking as well as train robbery. It is also true of nearly all the states in which train robbery once flourished. Not all these states have prescribed the death penalty for the crime, but the robbers seem to think they have. The inactivity of their brethren in the far south-western states has discouraged them. In Texas, for instance, there has been no coup of this kind worthy of the name for more than a year, yet in Texas, less than ten years ago, there were five distinct bands of robbers operating simultaneously. It is a tribute to the officers of that state that very few of these men are now alive. Most of them were killed before there was a chance to send to the penitentiary.

The almost utter stoppage of these enterprises merely through the fear of public execution is a singular thing, and it becomes more singular still when it is recalled that the men engaged in it just previous to its decline had succeeded in perfecting a means of entrance to express cars and safes against which all the science and ingenuity of builders were powerless. That means was dynamite, applied in large quantities where it would do the most good. Cars lined with steels, which were good enough against rifles or shotguns, were no bars to it, nor could any express messenger, however brave and trusted, be expected to remain at his post when once the threat was made that he would be blown up unless he opened the doors and betrayed the combination. High explosives of this kind were unknown to the early practitioners of the craft, and if they had known how to use giant powder their hauls would have been even larger than they were. When dynamite was first used by robbers they were unskillful. They had no idea of the proper quantity and they blew up themselves as often as they blew up the cars. They learned rapidly however, and when suddenly and permanently discouraged by the hangman's rope were fast becoming experts in explosive forces. There is no record of any express car standing against the use of explosives when they were properly applied, and the managers of the companies were in despair when the legislatures came to their relief. The express chiefs had gone even to the length of sending a powerful lobby to Washington to work for a national law prescribing death penalty. It becomes speedily apparent, however, that the

national jurisdiction in this matter extended only to the territories. It couldn't be stretched to cover the States although United States mail was carried upon every train that was dynamited. Even Congressmen with every disposition to oblige were forced to admit that it would be hardly the proper thing to provide hanging as a punishment for delaying the mails, so the thing fell through. State legislatures are almost wholly responsible for the wide-spread reform of the railway freebooter.

The rise and fall of this industry, if completely and sensibly written, would make a book more thrilling than the work known as the 'Vigilantes of Montana,' a paper-covered volume compiled by a preacher, which once had the distinguished honor of commendation at the hands of Charles Dickens. So far as records extend, and they are believed to be reasonably complete, the various railways and express companies having kept a careful account of their losses in this way; as well as of their numerous encounters, the first train robbery in the United States occurred in Indiana. The year was 1806. One night in September an express on the Ohio and Mississippi road slowed up at Brownstown. This place is ninety miles west of Cincinnati. Two men climbed on the locomotive, covered the engineer and fireman with revolvers and conversed pleasantly. They were heavily masked. As they talked, their companions uncoupled the express car and the engineer was forced to haul it five miles down the road.

Here the car was entered, the messenger obliged to unlock the safe and \$12,000 was taken. The affair caused a fever of excitement all through the country and the railway people saw at once that a new and terrible war had begun against them. For this crime the members of a family named Reno were held to be responsible, but there was no evidence of their guilt and they were not molested.

A few months later two boys inspired by the fire of imitation, held up a train on the same road and near the same point. They were taken in hand by their parents, who delivered them to the authorities along with the \$3,000 they had stolen. No particular punishment was given them. This was the second train robbery. A year later three Reno brothers, Frank, Jesse, and Sim, along with a relation named Anderson, captured a train on the Indianapolis, Madison and Jeffersonville road at Seymour, which was their home. They threw the express messenger out of the car, broke open the safe and got \$135,000, with which they fled to Canada. In that country, after a long chase, they were overtaken and forced to surrender. Long extradition proceedings followed.

While these were in progress six young fellows of Seymour organized a band for the purpose of robbing trains. They proposed to go into the business the old way and on a large scale. Their plans were perfected to the extent of selecting their hiding places and means of escape, when they were betrayed by an outside confederate, who was to share in the plunder though he had not been asked to do any of the work. They stopped a train and found themselves face to face with a resolute force of armed deputies. They were captured without trouble and locked up. At daybreak next morning a hundred citizens of Seymour took them from their cells and hanged them to a tree a mile west of the town. Soon after this lynching the three Renos and Anderson were brought back from Canada. They were lodged in the jail at New Albany, Ind., for safe keeping, the temper of the Seymour folk making it unhealthy for trainrobbers in their neighborhood. The event showed that the precaution was useless. The trouble with New Albany was that it was not far enough away. A lynching party which had been formed at Seymour for the reception of the Renos went to New Albany a thousand strong, battered down the jail door and made their way to the cells occupied by the men. Here followed a long and desperate fight. The cells were so small that not many of the mob could get at the prisoners and they did not want to shoot them. The unarmed but undaunted ruffians fought with all their strength and it was half an hour before, battered from head to heels and covered with blood, they were dragged out and hanged.

There was another Reno brother named Jack, who had been concerned in their last robbery. He was not captured at the time the four ran away to Canada, but was taken afterward and sentenced to a term in the

penitentiary. One day, years after the lynching, he walked into the Chicago office of the Adams Express company, asked for the manager, and announced that he was Jack Reno, the last of the gang, saying also that he had just been pardoned. He asked the company's representative what he intended to do against him, as there were other charges pending. He produced a 'marble Bible,' which he had made when a convict, and laid it on the desk as an evidence of his good intentions. The express manager told him to go home. Jack remarked that the business did not pay enough to equalize the punishment it entailed, went back to Seymour and settled down to work. He is there now, a respected, tax-paying citizen.

The lynching of these ten men in Indiana appears to have discouraged prospective robbers for a little while. They broke out again, however, in 1870. On July 21 of that year eight men tore up the track of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific road near Council Bluffs, Iowa. The train was derailed, the engineer was killed and more than a dozen passengers were badly injured. As the crash came the outlaws rushed from hiding places near the roadbed robbed their wounded and terrified victims and took \$6,000 from the express car. This was known as the 'Council Bluffs outrage,' and the daily papers of the time were tremendously wrought up over it. Thirty thousand dollars was offered as a reward for the capture, dead or alive, of the perpetrators, but they got clear with their booty. The Council Bluffs affair was reasonably successful from the criminal point of view, yet, strangely enough, it was followed by a long stagnation in the business. It was 1875 before the country was startled by an attempt to rob a Vandalia line express car at Long Point, Ill. The bandits shot and killed the engineer, Milo Esmees, uncoupled the express car from the remainder of the train and ran it two miles down the track. The express messenger refused to open up the safe and fought like a tiger. They were still battling with him and apparently as far from success as ever, when they were frightened away by the approach of the train conductor, who headed a party of armed passengers. These robbers were not the genuine article and had little nerve. They threw away not only their weapons in the flight, but at various places on their headlong stampede they threw away body suits of mail which they had worn under their clothing. An offered reward of \$40,000 failed to land any of them in jail.

In this year the James boys, who were genuine all through, came to the front as train robbers. They had been previously merely raiders of banks and stage coaches. They forced the station agent at Gadsbills, Mo., on the Iron Mountain road, to flag a passenger train, which they held up with little trouble. Their booty was \$12,000, taken from passengers and express messengers alike. A year later, at Ottumville, Kan., they robbed a Missouri Pacific train of \$15,000. On Oct. 7, 1877, the James and Younger boys took \$35,000 from a Chicago & Alton train at Glendale, Mo. Their biggest haul was made at Muncie, Kan., in Dec., 1878, when they held up a Kansas Pacific train, obtained \$55,000, and fled into the Indian Territory. They reappeared as train robbers in 1881. At Winston, Mo., they boarded a Rock Island train. Conductor Westfall, who made some show of resistance, was shot dead by Jesse James. A passenger named McMillan, was killed by a random bullet. They got only \$5,000 on this raid. Two months later they went through a Chicago & Alton train at Glendale and rode away with \$20,000 in money and jewels. This was the last train robbery exploit of the James boys. Jesse was shot by the Ford brothers next year and Frank fled into Tennessee, subsequently standing trial, getting an acquittal, and settling down to a quiet life. He is now the door-keeper of a fish theatre in St. Louis.

In the latter part of the seventies train-robbery was in a flourishing condition in many parts of the South and West. It was in 1877 that one of the most successful jobs of this kind ever planned was put into execution. Out at Big Springs, Neb., a party of six Texas cowmen, headed by Hank McDonald, boarded an overland train on the Union Pacific without attracting special attention, got into the express car and helped themselves to \$110,000. A long pursuit followed, three of the robbers were killed and \$40,000 of the money recovered. The rest of it and the men who had it, with one exception, were never heard of again. The afterward famous Sam Bass was a member of this gang. He

(CONTINUED ON PAGE TWELVE.)

## NEARER THE KLONDYKE.

THAT WILL BE THE SCHEDULE OF THE WHITE PASS.

Remarkable Speed in Railroad Construction in Alaska—Bringing the Klondyke Gold Region Close to New York—Difficulty of the Work Goes on.

On May 27, 1898, the silence of the approaches to the White Pass of the Chilkat Mountains was broken by the explosion of tons of giant powder, and one thousand laborers, armed with bar and barrow, drill and dynamite, pushed out from the head waters of Lynn Canal, leaving two shining lines of steel in their wake. Other railroads have conquered greater heights, and spanned wider chasms, but for rapidity of construction in the dead of an Arctic winter, over an almost insurmountable mountain range, the White Pass & Yukon Railway must ever stand in conspicuous preeminence.

At first the wisecracks smilingly nodded their heads and whispered 'Scheme; Skagway has seen her best days, and there are town lots for sale.' As the grade neared the granite wall a mile high, and the snows filled every cut and canyon even the hardy 'packers' said that the construction gang must surely tie up until spring, but the indomitable officers and engineers were not built on that plan. From ten to forty feet of snow was removed, the roadbed hewn from the granite cliffs, and a train pulled to the summit, twenty and four tenths miles from, and 2,800 feet above the starting point, in less than nine months from the day when the first line peg was driven.

In the spring of last year President S. H. Graves arrived in New York. He carried the sole possessions of this Arctic thoroughfare, the charters from the English government granting right of way over British territory from a point near Lake Bennett to Dawson, and from the United States government over the strip of American territory lying between the sea and the international boundary line. Armed with these documents Mr. Graves started for Alaska, arriving in April. It seems incredible that in so short a space of time immense quantities of railroad material could have been purchased and shipped three fourths of the way from New York to the North Pole, and that the same weeks should witness the organization of as splendid a corps of civil engineers as ever sighted a sextant or made war upon nature—yet such is the fact.

The general name covering the whole system is the 'White Pass & Yukon route,' but this is merely a caption, and covers three distinct charters. From Skagway to the international boundary line, twenty-eight miles, the road will be officially known as the 'Pacific & Arctic Railway and Navigation Company.' The majority of this stock is held by Americans, or at least in the name of Americans. The next division, which is now under rapid construction, crosses British Columbia Yukon Railway Company. The last division will traverse the Northwest Territory, and is to be known under the title of the 'British Yukon Mining, Trading and Transportation Company.' The stock covering the British divisions is mostly held in London and Montreal.

The road has been carrying freight and passengers as far as Glacier station, about five miles from the summit, for several months. During February the receipts of the freight department alone were \$3,700 a day, and those of the passenger department \$600. Indeed, since the first of January, the receipts from the fifteen miles of completed road have equalled the payroll expenditure, including a construction gang of between one and two thousand men. Now that freight and passengers can be landed at the top of the dreaded pass, Mr. Gray anticipates that the receipts will be doubled.

Yet this fine showing is not obtained by reason of exorbitant rates. Before the railroad was projected the 'packers' were charging sixty cents a hundred pounds to the summit, with no guarantee for safe delivery. The railway charges two cents a hundred pounds and insures against loss and damage. While this seems a ridiculously low rate, Mr. Gray laughingly pointed out that their charge for fifteen miles was the trans-continental rate for a haul of 2,396 miles between New York and San Francisco. 'We have,' said he, 'hundreds of tons of freight waiting transportation to the interior. With present facilities we cannot handle all that is presented, but just as soon as our new locomotives arrive, which have been specially constructed for mountain work, we shall land freight on the head waters of the Yukon twelve hours after its arrival in Skagway.' He pointed out of the window as he spoke, to a long line of freight cars, containing an indescribable jumble of timbers and machinery.

'No,' said this keen young traffic manager, in answer to a query, 'that is not the wreck of Barnum's circus, but four great river steamers in transit, "knocked down." They are the equals in every respect to the best on the Mississippi. Long before navigation opens we shall have our road completed to Lake Bennett, where these steamers will be launched, to operate in close connection with our trains, upon the lakes and Upper Yukon.'

'When this is done, what will be the time between New York and Dawson?' And the astonishing reply was fourteen days. That Mr. Gray's schedule is correct is beyond dispute. A journey that one year ago could not be made in less than two months, and then only under circumstances great fatigue and peril, can now be made with comfort in as many weeks. Here is the table:

New York to Seattle, 44 days.  
Seattle to Skagway, 5 days.  
Skagway to Lake Bennett via White Pass & Yukon Railway, 3 hours.  
Lake Bennett to White Horse Rapids, by steamer 2 days.  
Around rapids by horse cars, 3 hours.  
White Horse Rapids to Dawson, 2 days.  
Total, 13 days, 18 hours.

Like the Panama Railway, this one of thirty miles saves an ocean voyage of thousands of miles, or a journey on foot both dangerous and exhausting.

For the first five miles the road follows the Skagway River, traversing a flat valley, possibly a mile wide, floored with water washed boulders scattered through a thin growth of cottonwood trees, and shut in by grey walls of great height. For a fourth of this distance the log cabin and board shanties of the town of Skagway spread out like a fan. Then comes the climb of Porcupine Hill, a sharp promontory jutting out into the valley from the north. Winding in and out of its irregular face on a three and nine-tenths grade an hour's climbing brings the train to the top and outer edge of this ridge, 1,000 feet above its base.

Here with the forked head of Lynn Canal lying like a chain of Alpine lakes in the offing, begins a series of landscapes which must certainly attract tourists by the thousands as soon as their levelness and grandeur become known. California and Colorado must look well to their laurels, for with the glorious scenery of the White Pass unlocked to the luxury-loving traveller, Biedecker will do well to give Alaska a special and early edition of his guide-book.

Five miles farther and the train draws up to Glacier Station attached like a Swiss chalet to the rugged side of a mountain. Here the first snow obstruction is encountered. The heavy coach is uncoupled, and the Klondykers shouldering their packs, take to the trail. Here F. B. Flood, the brilliant young engineer in charge of the 'toughest five miles' of railroad construction in the country, invited the writer into the locomotive cab to accompany him over his division, on a tour of inspection.

A large force of men had been strung along the line to keep the track clear, but do their best, the snow in some places drifted in faster than they could remove it. Nearing the summit, we bucked into a great white bank which had slid down from the heights above. Retreating, we tried it again. With sand box open, and escape valve blowing, the engineer threw her 'wide open,' and away went the locomotive, like a mad bull with its head down. A dull thud, a deluge of snow, and the engine stops midway through the drift, with wheels a-whirl. Another 'run for it,' and we are through with a rush, and out upon a creaking, trembling trestle. Here the science and skill of the constructing engineer is put to its severest test. One month ago this gorge was level full of snow. Shovels had first cleared the way and tossed the white blocks down the mountain side; then came the rock men to prepare the foundation with drill and dynamite, during weather so bitter cold that the hospital tents were filled with frost-bitten men. Then the slender timbers were lifted to the level of the grade and the rails laid across.

The cost of the road so far has been about \$25,000 per mile. It is narrow gauge, fifty-six pound rails being used. There are more curves than straight lines. Accidents are inevitable; but there have been few fatalities considering the danger of the work and the severity of the weather. Two men lie beneath an immense block of granite, too large to be moved. Others have died of pneumonia and freezing. Speaking of these things, one of the engineers said that he believed nothing short of divine interposition had saved him and his men from an awful death last November. A charge of giant powder had been tamped home, and the warning signal given. He and his assistants stepped behind an 18-inch tree, supposing that the blast would be of the usual force, where 100 pounds of explosives is used. For some reason the spark machine failed to ignite the fuse—a most unusual occurrence. After waiting a sufficient period the engineer examined the batteries and found that, instead of 100 pounds the workmen had put in 1,800 pounds. Retiring to a greater distance the spark machine was again operated—this time successfully. The impact was terrific. Twenty-five hundred yards of rock was dislodged and thrown into the air. One piece measuring twenty feet by thirty struck the tree behind which the party had first stood, shattering it like a pipe stem.