

# DETECTIVE LIBRARY

JESSE JAMES      FRANK JAMES

THE ONLY LIBRARY CONTAINING TRUE STORIES OF THE JAMES BOYS.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1886, by FRANK TOWNSEY, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C. Entered at the Post Office, at New York, N. Y., as Second Class Matter. The subscription price of Detective Library by the year is \$5.00; \$2.50 per six months, post-paid.

No. 713. {COMPLETE.} FRANK TOWNSEY, PUBLISHER, 31 & 33 NORTH MOULD STREET, N. Y. PRICE: {10 CENTS.} Vol. I.  
New York, July 24, 1895. ISSUED EVERY FRIDAY.

## The James Boys' Dash for Life or Death; OR THE DETECTIVE'S SECRET SNARE. By D. W. STEVENS.



A shout burst from the wild riders. "Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" "See the beauties go!" yelled Jack Keene, in derision. "We have the first round," shouted Frank James. "Yes, and we'll have more." The scene had now been changed. The lines had been broken, and it would be a chase with a little hope for the bandits.

# ≡ NEW EDITIONS ≡

Of the Great

## JACK HARKAWAY STORIES

Have Just Been Published in

THE FIVE CENT

# WIDE AWAKE LIBRARY

The Following Have Already Been Issued, and Others Will Follow in Rapid Succession.

No.

- 1225 Jack Harkaway's Schooldays
- 1226 Jack Harkaway Afloat
- 1227 Jack Harkaway Among the Savages
- 1228 Jack Harkaway's Escape
- 1229 Jack Harkaway at Oxford
- 1230 Jack Harkaway and the Black Band
- 1231 Jack Harkaway and the Brigands
- 1232 Jack Harkaway and the Spy
- 1233 Jack Harkaway Trapped
- 1234 Jack Harkaway and the Italians; or, The Brigand's Doom
- 1235 Jack Harkaway and His Son's Adventures Round the World
- 1236 Jack Harkaway and His Son Homeward Bound
- 1237 Young Harkaway and the Pirates

No.

- 1238 Jack Harkaway's Triumph
- 1239 Jack Harkaway on Magic Island
- 1240 Jack Harkaway's Peril
- 1241 Jack Harkaway to the Rescue
- 1242 Jack Harkaway the Magician
- 1243 Jack Harkaway, the Avenger
- 1244 Jack Harkaway in Australia
- 1245 Jack Harkaway and the Convicts
- 1246 Jack Harkaway and the Bushrangers
- 1247 Young Jack Harkaway and His Boy Tinker
- 1248 Tinker's Man, Bogie
- 1249 Young Jack Harkaway in Spain
- 1250 Young Jack Harkaway in Turkey
- 1251 Mole Among the Mussulmans

If you have never had the opportunity to read these popular stories you should do so at once.

They are for sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address on receipt of price by

**FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher,**

P. O. Box 2730.

34 and 36 North Moore Street, New York.

The subscription price of DETECTIVE LIBRARY by the year is \$5.00; \$2.50 per six months, post paid. Address FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher, 34 and 36 North Moore Street, New York, Box 2734.

# The James Boys' Dash for Life or Death;

## OR,

# THE DETECTIVE'S SECRET SNARE.

By D. W. STEVENS.

Author of "The James Boys' Dead-Shot Legion," "The James Boys' Fight for Millions," "The James Boys in a Trap," etc.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE BANDITS BETRAYED.

Twenty horsemen were riding through a wooded valley in Missouri. A warlike party it was, for the athletic men who composed it were stern and armed for aggressive work. Finely mounted, they appeared able to fight or run, though one would say their preference would be for fighting.

"Jesse, where do we camp?" asked one.

"In any secluded place we can find, Frank," was the reply. "We are too near the crisis to let any thought of luxury, or even comfort, influence us."

"What will the night bring to us?"

"It will bring the treasure that is in the bank, or death."

"Oh! I reckon we shall succeed."

"That is what we are here for, but we must not be forgetful of the fact that we have invaded a section where we can hope for no help from the people, and must necessarily meet with determined opposition from hostile forces."

"The James Boys usually do what they undertake."

"We will try not to spoil our record, but we have all admitted that this is a reckless attempt. Still, Thomas Berry has assured us that there is much of carelessness in the management of the bank, and that the break will be easy and quick. It is all a question of whether we can get safely away with our plunder."

"I reckon we can trust to our horses' heels."

"Yes, Frank, but think of the force of law that will be after us."

"True, but we must succeed. Yes, we will succeed, and then the country will again ring with the exploits of the James Boys!"

The conversation was enough to reveal the identity of the riders, who were the noted band which was so long led by Jesse and Frank James. It was the time when they were at the height of their power, and when Missouri had cause to tremble at sound of their names.

Besides the two leaders the band, on this occasion, was composed of Cole, Bob, Jim and John Younger, Jim Cummins, Jack Keene, Ed McMillan, Bill Chadwell, Clell Miller, Dick Little, Wood Hite, Hobbs Kerry, Oil and George Sheppard—all of whom were old stand-bys—and Mart Bray, Alf Rose, Reese Wright and Barl Morrow, the last four being desperate fellows who had been taken in for the time being to enlarge the fighting force.

It was the present mission of the band to rob a bank which they were to reach on this night. Suddenly Jim Cummins broke in rather anxiously:

"Yankee boy seems to be in haste."

All looked and saw a young fellow of about twenty years scurrying along the road in the rear and fast overtaking them. Their wild life had made them suspicious of every one, and all things they could not understand and there was general dissatisfaction as they surveyed the other rider.

"Jesse, I don't like that," said Frank James.

"What do you think?"

"He does not go like one who rides for pleasure, nor yet like one in search of a doctor, yet he seems to have important business on hand."

The feeling of all was that they ought not to let this person pass unheeded, as he came from the nearest railroad station, and where there was a telegraph office.

"Frank, come with me and we will see what he is," said Jesse James.

The road ran parallel to the valley they were following, and when they came to a favorable point, the James Boys made their way up the bank and entered the road. They were just ahead of the youth, but he did not seem to reciprocate their interest and would have passed at a gallop.

Jesse barred his way and stopped him.

"Where are you going?" he asked. The boy looked annoyed, but not frightened.

"To the next town," he replied.

"Why?"

"What is that to you?"

"Nothing, only I am curious."

"Well, if it will do you any good I will say that I have a telegram in my carrying."

"To whom?"

"See here, do you think this is an information-bureau?" demanded the boy, with sarcasm.

"Yes."

"Well, it ain't."

He essayed to pass, but his way was again blocked.

"Get away from me!" he exclaimed, angrily, with a sign that telegraph.

"Let you see it! Well, I will not. What do you take me for?" and the boy swelled with fresh indignation.

"Easy, my young man," requested Jesse. "If it will do you no good to make a kick about this, for we shall not heed it. I say we want to see that paper, and we will! Hand it over!"

"I won't!"

Jesse drew a revolver and covered the messenger.

"Then I will shoot you!"

The revolver and the ferocious look the bandit put on suddenly aroused the boy to the situation. Before he had had but a thought of violence or danger, and now that these things were presented to him he changed form quickly. He was not of a bold nature, and he grew pale.

"For mercy's sake, don't fire!" he cried.

"You can see the telegram. I don't know that it will do you any harm."

"Not a bit."

Jesse felt like smiling, but he repressed the impulse, and received the telegram with outward gravity. Breaking it open, he read as follows:

TO J. D. ELY, CONSTABLE:

"DEAR SIR,—You will please call out all of the machinery of law that you can raise to assist me in catching the James Boys. They are moving toward this point, and will pass your town shortly. They will doubtless take due precautions to ride secretly, so look sharply. Their object is to rob the bank in this town. Of this fact we have received information from Mr. Thomas Berry, who has made them believe he is in sympathy with them. I suspect he was at the start, but he has weakened and given me due information, so it is now much like a deacony game. We have cut off all of the county force of law, and will starve for more to the point, a force of militia, with which we expect to strike the outlaws and seize or kill the whole lot. We expect the encounter to be about Monday night, and the James Boys are as good as in our power. Help us all you can, and oblige

"CARL GREENE."

Frank James saw Jesse's face undergo great changes as he read.

Dismay, surprise and rage were in turn depicted there.

"What is it?" asked Frank.

"Reading," said Jesse, and Frank soon perceived all there was in it. Then it was his turn to feel the emotions that Jesse had shown.

"Thunder! what a blow!" he exclaimed.

"What are you going to do?"

The bandit king had been trying to get control of himself. He now made a gesture to enjoin silence, and then turned to the boy.

"You will go with me," he announced.

"Go with you?" replied the boy, paling.

"Why should I?"

"Because I tell you to."

"But I do not wish—"

"Silence!"

Jesse James gave the countryman a glance which frightened him into stillness. He did not know who these men were nor what the matter was, but he did realize that his life, perhaps, depended upon his keeping himself out of more danger than he was already in.

"Tie his hands," directed Jesse, with a motion to Frank.

The boy was secured, and then all went to where the rest of the band waited. The prisoner was kept somewhat apart in charge of Frank, while Jesse explained the situation to the other bandits. There was a storm at once.

"Betrayed!" cried Jack Keene. "By the devil! some one will have to die for that!"

"It seems likely to be us," replied Jesse.

"What do you lose courage?" demanded Oil Sheppard.

"Did you ever know me to do that?"

"No."

"Then don't worry about my doing it now." "We are to have Carl Greene after us once more," said Cole Younger. "Will the detective never let up? We have made trails and cross-trails over Missouri in our attempts to keep away from him, but he keeps up the hunt res cheerfully as ever."

"What about the scoundrel who has sold us out to Carl?" demanded Jack Keene.

"Never mind Tom Berry now," directed Jesse James. "We can see to him later on, but there is one thing which can't be postponed. Of course you all see how we are placed. Berry's treachery has put us in vital peril, for Carl not only has his detective force to launch at us, but, according to this dispatch, the county machinery of law, and more or less militia. Boys, you all know this region, and, knowing how the people are sure to be all against us, you must see that we must give up our attempt to rob the bank."

"Yes," Jim Cummins agreed.

"We shall do well to save our own bacon," added Cole Younger.

"Are we all agreed in this?" asked Jesse.

"I am," replied Ed McMillan.

"And I."

It was a chorus of voices, and it told of the peril of the hour with eloquence. They were men who usually, if confronted with danger when seeking to accomplish any great work, would unanimously insist upon going on to the bitter end.

Their opposite course, now, was proof that they saw too much to be risked if they persisted.

"That is settled," remarked the leader.



"Now, we have nothing to do but to look to our own safety. Who has a plan?"

All were silent.

"Speak out," urged Jesse.

"We must back out," answered Cole Younger, "but how it's to be done I won't attempt to say."

"Plan it yourself, Jesse," advised Jim Cummins, "if you can see the way clear, and we are with you."

"It seems to me that our best way is to retreat, but by the course we have come, but by means of a right-angle dash toward the west."

"That is wise," said Cole.

"Does the telegram contain which way the militia are coming from?" inquired Jack Keene.

"No."

"Then they have no clue whatever?"

"None."

"Your way may be best."

The bandit king was much gratified to find them all with him so unhesitatingly, and he wanted to say no more. Calling Frank, he directed him to keep the boys prisoner along with them for the time, and all swung into the saddle.

As he did so, Jack Keene chanced to glance down the valley in the direction whence they had come, and a cry escaped him.

"Look!"

"Where?"

"Dead south."

"What is that glimmer among the trees?"

"By my life!" exclaimed Jesse, "it is the light falling on bayonets!"

"The militia is coming!"

"They are marching this way!"

"Coolly, men," cautioned Jesse, "we are in for it, but the end is not yet. We have seen soldiers before. Keep calm and ride after me."

He gazed anxiously towards the quarter of danger. Visible the glimmer still was, but the men who wore the bayonets were not yet to be seen. Despite this, Jesse did not dare to lead his men up the west side of the valley. It would make them very conspicuous, and discovery was liable to follow at once from such a move.

"We must hold our old line of march for a short distance," he decided. "When around the bend, we can get out of this depression to higher ground."

The band moved on.

The falling in spirits brought about by this discovery was as complete as the disappointment, and they were no longer the dauntless riders they had been. They were not frightened, but it was hard to lose the treasure they had coveted.

Several minutes passed, and then Cole, who was riding by Jesse's side, suddenly grasped the leader's arm.

"Look!" he exclaimed.

No explanation was needed.

His face was turned toward the western bank, and as all looked up there they saw another line of glittering bayonets. More, they saw the men who carried them.

The latter were marching along the bank with soldierly precision, and the uniforms they wore told the rest.

"More soldiers!" gasped Hobbs Kerry.

"Thunder! they seem to be on all sides of us!"

"That party is big enough, so they ought to wipe us out at one mouthful, horses and all."

"I don't like the way the markets they carry."

"We are not seen yet."

These words ran along the line, but Jesse James' voice broke in decisively.

"Down the valley!" he cried. "If they see us the dickens will be pay. Ride hard!"

"See, on the east bank!"

"More men! I'll bet my life those are Carl Greene's detectives!"

"Only one way open now, and that takes us in the direction we don't want to go. By my life this may prove the hottest ride we ever had. Don't yield an inch, boys, but trust to our old luck!"

Luck was with them thus far, surely, for while they had seen each party of their foes, none had noticed them in return. Well would it be for them if they were not discovered. As freely as they had gone here and there over Missouri soil there was a limit to their hopes, and they knew they were on dangerous ground. Discovery might mean death to all.

It was a creepy feeling of nerves even to the hardiest adventurers as they ran went on in plain sight of the foe, owing their freedom from discovery merely to the chance which had kept the searchers from discovering them as soon as they were seen by the banditti.

Finally the nature of the ground changed a

little as they went on, and there was a general sigh of relief as the high bank hid the marching line from view.

"Frank," said Jesse, "where do you think we may safely ascend to the upper ground?"

"It will be no pass and reconnoiter!"

"That will be wise. Stay here, all of you, and I will myself go up. It may do much good."

Leaping from the back of his horse he went as planned.

Reaching the top of the bank he made use of the shelter of a thicket and looked out on the level land.

"Thunder!" he muttered.

In an exclamation of dismay, and there was good cause for it. Look where he might he saw men, soldiers and others, moving as if with a definite object. The whole town seemed filled with them.

"Surrounded, and by a hundred times our own numbers!" Jesse cried.

## CHAPTER II.

### A GAME OF BULLETS.

It was no wonder that the bandit king was alarmed. If the men whom he saw were ignorant of his own presence there was every ground to believe that systematic courses that they were moving with a clear object in view, and he well knew what that object was.

They had the bandit raiders hemmed in, and they were narrowing their lines so as to bring them into the smallest of traps.

"Hard work ahead of us," muttered Jesse James. "It will be a running fight, if we can once break through their lines, which is not certain, and the odds will be all against us. Where can we go?"

Eagerly he surveyed the hostile force.

"The weakest point is to the north," he said, "and that is where, according to this telegram, they are fully informed of our movements as yet. Clearly, our way must be there, and there we will go."

He hastened down the bank and re-joined his men. A few words uttered to make all plain.

"Now," he added, "we must lose no time. Let our course be headlong, and when the pinch comes let us fight our way. Are you with me, boys?"

"My very man!" declared Jack Keene, and there was a murmur of assent from the rest.

"Hurrah for the James Boys!" cried Cole Younger.

The cheer could not be given in its full sense, but there was a fire in their eyes which told a plain story.

Jesse's own eyes glittered with satisfaction.

"Boys, you please me," he returned, and you will be sure we will give a good account of ourselves. Let us cut our way to safety, and lose no time. Forward!"

Again they moved on, but they were fast approaching the time of discovery. The valley had narrowed until it was little more than a ravine.

Crooked of course, it did not permit them to see far in advance, and each moment brought new scenes to their gaze.

Thus, it was only in keeping with the general rule that they passed a slight curve and saw an unwelcome sight on one bank.

On a rock stood a man, rifle in hand. He was engaged in surveying the country around, and as he turned they passed a different sight to be seen. This he did, and as they looked up he gazed down and the discovery was simultaneous.

"Jupiter!" exclaimed Frank, in dismay.

"It is Carl Greene," added Jesse, shutting his jaws with anger.

Carl Greene it was; and man of all men among detectives who had given the most trouble; the shrewdest and most persevering member of his profession in Missouri.

If surprise must have been greater than theirs, yet he soon recovered and found power of speech.

"Ho, Jesse James!" he cried, "your ride is over. Surrender!"

"What old farmer are you?" retorted the bandit, disdainfully.

"I am your master."

"You have not proved it in the past."

"This day will tell a different story."

"Are you fool enough to think you can take us?"

"I should be foolish to doubt it."

"Wait and see."

It will not be a long wait. I have my own force, and the full legal powers of three counties, and a large command of militia. Can you defy them all?"

"We can, and do."

"Why not save the lives of your misguided fellows?"

"Let us look out for our own lives!" retorted Jim Cummins. "Don't worry about us, Carl Greene."

"Jesse, we waste time here," said Frank, in a low voice.

"True. Ride on, men."

They started, and then Carl turned his head and blew a shrill blast on a whistle.

"Retreat on the prisoner!" ordered Jesse.

"Yes, but it was to be expected, Oh!" Scarcely one hundred yards had been gone over, when other men appeared at the top of the banks on either side.

"Retreat on the prisoner!" ordered Jesse.

The boy was dropped, and when he saw them receding he was about the happiest person in the State. He had fully expected to meet his death at the hands of the outlaws.

The new danger was no trifling matter. The men ranged themselves for effective work at once, and rifles were thrown up to shoulders with a purpose not to be misunderstood, but the riders bristled their time.

Their own weapons were ready for work, and it did not need any order for them to prepare for the worst.

"Fair!" The command came from the top of the bank, but it passed unheeded. Eying the foe closely, the bandits bent low and waited grimly.

"Stop, or we fire!"

Still no reply, and as the band were receding every moment the time thus gained meant much to them. But this was seen by others, and the lull was broken.

"Fire!" yelled the last speaker, in a resounding voice.

Crack!

Crack!

Like hail the bullets whistled around the bandits, and some of them had the narrowest of escapes, but no one was hit.

Crack!

Crack!

Again came the volley, and Jesse's eyes glittered through his rifle.

"Give them a lesson!" he cried. "Fire!"

The wild riders turned in their saddles and their rifles leaped to their shoulders. Firm fingers pressed the triggers, and they sent the re-entrant command with accurate aim.

A great commotion ensued on the top of the bluff. Some men fell, others staggered away with plain evidence of having been hit, and many of the living, appalled at the show of marksmanship, turned and fled to save their own lives.

Like wed the opposition faded away, but a motion from Jesse prevented the shadow of a cheer. It would not do to call more than necessary attention, and there were foes awaiting them who would not run at the first fire.

But a few rods further had the fugitives none when the banks of the ravine suddenly fell away and they emerged to level land.

Each bandit looked eagerly to see what they had to expect.

Their first view was of a force of troops, uniformed and in regular march, but they were not near enough to be dangerous as yet. Nearer by far, and all over the plain now spread before them, were plainly-clad men who seemed to be a human wall not to be defied.

"Thunder! we are in for it!" cried Jim Cummins.

"Jesse, can we cut through?" asked Frank, uneasily.

"We must. Who here wishes to back out?"

"Nobody" came the shout.

"Then you will give the dash for liberty, and remember what we get if we fail to pass."

"I'll be a noose!" laughed Jack Keene, recklessly.

For a moment they had hesitated, but now they swept forward like Indian racers. All were well mounted, Jesse and Eric having the favorite horses, Siroc and Jim Malone, respectively, and the others being about as well provided for.

Their sudden appearance caused a commotion, Carl Greene's whistle had prepared the foe for something important, and they now knew what it was. All set themselves to the task of capturing the wild riders.

On, on.

The James Boys had selected the point where they would pass, and their horses seemed almost to fly as they swept along.

It will not be a long wait. I have my own force, and the full legal powers of three counties, and a large command of militia. Can you defy them all?"

"We can, and do."

"They must give way!" he cried. "Up with your rifles, and give them our compliments." Crack! Crack!

It was no child's play when those trained marksmen tried to lead. Down toward the foe waited the lead, and men fell from their horses here and there. At this same fed, while others stood their ground and tried to keep their courage up to the desired point.

"Drive them off!" ordered the brave James. "We must not risk losing any of our command by a fight at close quarters. Again, men, again!"

It was a thrilling scene. The forces of law were standing firm thus far, and the outcome was doubtful, while toward them sailed the bandits. Every horse was at its utmost, and the play of their legs was wonderful. Each rider was a veritable Centaur in skill, and they went like a part of their horses, indeed.

Could they go through it? All depended on that chance. If the foe realized their power it would go hard with the bandits.

Nearer, nearer yet, and still no wavering. The ground shook under the tread of the heavy hoofs, and seemed to roll in billows away from the contact. And while they went the bandits sent shot after shot to clear the way.

It was a dust now. Shot answered shot, and the foe stood up bravely. A little more of that courage and it would be their fight. But what courage could stand the hail from such deadly rifles? Steadily but the number of the marksmen decreased, and the limit had been reached. Courage gave place to dismay and terror, and they turned as one man and fled madly to save their lives.

A shout burst from the wild riders. "See the beauties go!" yelled Jack Keene, in derision.

"We have the first round," shouted Frank James.

"Yes, and we'll have more."

The scene had now been changed. The lines had been broken, and it would be a chase with a little hope for the bandits. True, escape seemed out of the question, but they had learned that no fight was lost until somebody else had won it.

On they rode without any let up in their speed.

"They all pursue us," cried Frank.

"Yes, but we are not yet taken."

"The soldiers hasten this way, too."

"They are not in it at present."

"Lucky they are not mounted."

"They will be with us later on, but it's the horsemen we have to fear now."

"The hills seem full of them."

"Carl Greene made no vain boast, as far as his numbers go."

It was a sight calculated to try the nerves of the bandits. From all quarters the foe were hastening forward, and the chase became warm. It was not this which worried the fugitives just then, but the difficulty of holding the pace they must assume. It would be a long pull as well as a hard one.

There were some of the zealous foe opposed to them who had an idea they could settle the matter right away, and these men kept up as constant a fire as could be made. Thus, the fugitives went among bullets at all times.

"Splendidly the goods of death rattle past their ears, but they had good luck for a time in escaping them."

"Jesse," spoke Frank, presently.

"What?"

"About our course. What is your plan?"

"Is not the so-called west road the best way?"

"I think so, but there's no danger of our being headed off there?"

"There is, surely, but what else can we do?"

"It had occurred to me that we had no choice."

"The only trouble is that if we are by any chance blocked from taking the west road we shall have to cross the river, and that would throw us into a region where speed would be out of the question, and we should be penned up in the hills. There they might possibly be able to starve us out."

"I was thinking of that."

"Since we have no choice, however, all we can do is to go on and trust to luck."

"Carl Greene has rarely made a more desperate effort to take us. Has he all Missouri at his back?"

"He hasn't enough to succeed," stubbornly replied Jesse.

The bandits were no longer doing any firing. As it would do no special good they preferred to hold their ammunition and make sure of hav-

ing enough for the whole campaign. The pursuers, however, kept up the fusillade, and there was no moment when the fugitives were sure of life.

Crack! Crack! Crack! "It was warm work, and almost any force but that now in the saddle would have faltered at the prospect, while the confident air of the pursuers told that they did not have a doubt."

As the bandits went on the chief interest became centered in the question of whether they would be able to make the west road as they desired, and their hopes received a rude shock as they pressed on. The present course took them around the side of a hill, and as they went to the opposite side a cry broke from Frank James' lips.

"Cut off!"

"More soldiers!" exclaimed Jim Cummins.

Jesse scowled deeply. A force of uniformed men were marching along the very way that had inspired to go, and it became certain at a glance that their plans must be amended.

"We can't meet that party."

"No."

"Then we must cross the river?"

Jesse swept an anxious glance around.

"It seems to be the one hope," he confessed.

"Wheel, then!"

"Yes—away to the river!"

Sharply they turned to the right and rode away on the new track. Whether they had been seen by the bandits was not clear, nor was it important, for the pursuers, seeing the soldiers themselves, raised a cry which could not fail to attract their attention, and from that time they were to the left of the opposing force, and the new departure put all foes in the rear for awhile, as far as was to be seen, but even in a direct race there was great menace.

"On to the bridge!" became the cry, and they spared not their horses in the endeavor to get there ahead of peril.

"Frank, there is smoke in advance," said Jesse, anon.

"Yes."

"It must be a signal fire?"

"It seems hardly possible."

"It does not look to be enough for a burning house."

"No. Possibly it is somebody burning brush."

The pillar of smoke preceded them, but after these comments no further heed was given to it for the time. On they went, gaining a little as they rode, and winding along a hilly road, but as they neared the bridge they suddenly came out on a bill top.

Below was a valley, the river and the bridge. All this they saw, but they saw more. One glance explained the meaning of the pillar of smoke, and the explanation was startling.

"Thunder! The bridge is on fire!" Jesse cried.

"Yes, and our retreat is cut off!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE FLIGHT IN THE MOUNTAIN.

It was little wonder that the bandits paused in dismay. The smoke and flames were alike rising from the bridge, and passage seemed impossible, especially for the horses.

"It is a fiery furnace!" exclaimed Cole Younger.

"No going over there," added Bill Chadwell.

"No, but we can go under!" declared Jesse James.

"But the flames will seize upon us."

"And the bridge must be so weakened that it will not bear our weight," asserted Ed McMillan.

"Why not swim the river?" asked Jim Cummins.

"Look at the banks," requested Jesse. "They are high and steep, and the stream runs like a flood. No horse could keep to his work in that river, that is sure."

"Jesse, we are losing valuable time," Frank urged.

"Yes; the foe are gaining rapidly while we sit here."

"Men!" Jesse cried, "shall we let that thing alarm us? Who are we? Have we not often taken our lives in our own hands before? Do we weaken now?"

"I don't know," shouted Jack Keene, and the spirit of the leaders flashed into the breasts of all.

"We follow where you lead, Jesse!" was the general cry.

"Forward—on!"

No more need to be said, and as Jesse gave the order to Siroc and dashed to the venture, the whole band came thundering along close after him.

"We follow where you lead, Jesse!" was the general cry.

"Forward—on!"

No more need to be said, and as Jesse gave the order to Siroc and dashed to the venture, the whole band came thundering along close after him.

"We follow where you lead, Jesse!" was the general cry.

"Forward—on!"

No more need to be said, and as Jesse gave the order to Siroc and dashed to the venture, the whole band came thundering along close after him.

"We follow where you lead, Jesse!" was the general cry.

They were committed to the venture, and as they could see nothing promising of which to talk, it was as well to remain silent. Now, too, they could see the bed of the stream. It was filled in some places with water which rushed furiously along in little in others it was broken by rocks which reared their heads above the surface with jagged points. A fall there would doubtless be fatal.

The bridge was in his hand.

Into the cloud of smoke rush the fugitives. Jesse leads, and the feet of his horse pound upon the planks.

Will the fire-weakened support stand?

How this will be the bandits cannot tell. As his companions come speeding on the structure shakes ominously, far more than the bridge ought to do under like circumstances, and it is clear it is in Frank James'—by the flames. More than that Jesse cannot tell. Smoke wraps him as in a garment, and he can see nothing but red lines in the robe of gray. He dreads lest the fire seize upon Siroc so as to injure him, but the horse does not hesitate.

Boom!

Boom!

Under the beat of the many hoofs the bridge sends out its echo, but to the alarm of the riders it does more. It shakes so perceptibly that one of the bandits sends up his voice amidst the smoke:

"It is going down!"

There is an ominous creaking, and Jesse himself is filled with fear. A plank breaks short under Siroc's feet, but the animal does not stumble.

A few yards more and the bandit leader clears the bridge entirely. Gasping to get the pure air he turns and looks back. Will the others be as successful as he?

Over they come, one by one—Jack Keene, Bob Younger, Carl Greene—and now they come so fast he cannot recognize them. All are over but Ed McMillan. At the very edge a plank breaks under the forest of his horse and the head of the animal goes down. It looks like a clear fall and unbounded disaster, but the horse makes a great effort and springs clear of all.

A moment more and he is beside his companions in peril.

What cheer goes up from the band then!

"The horse is not even lamed."

"And we are all over in safety. By thunder! this is something like it."

"Will the enemy follow?"

"They are not!"

"The bridge is now well high impassable."

"Let's stay and watch them."

"Yes, and exit over their defeat."

Such were the suggestions from the band, but Jesse James was not disposed to follow the line of conduct marked out. They had achieved a temporary triumph, but until they were many miles away they could not safely defy the foe, and to wait and give them time to concoct new plans and cross the river, which they could do a little lower down, would be suicidal.

"Move on!" was his order.

"Do we take the road yonder?" asked Frank.

"Yes."

"It's a good deal up hill and down."

"What of it?"

"Progress will be slow."

"We don't care to take to the open country."

"Exactly my theory. I wanted to hear from you on the subject."

"On by the bill road, men."

The bandits were reluctant to go. They had seen the forest of the pursuers pull up near the bridge with every sign of rage at the gain of their coveted prey, and as they looked at the mounting flames dimly it was natural to wish to mock them. But now they turned down the river as if with a clear idea, and the bandits saw

how wise it was to accept Jesse's plan and move on.

They went accordingly. Jesse's practical reminders had checked the disposition to exult too much, and they remained well aware of the fact that their situation was still desperate.

Half a mile they had gone when there was fresh alarm.

"Jesse, look yonder!"

Frank pointed directly ahead as he spoke, and the bandit king did not need to ask what was meant. Something in the road they wished to travel was full explanation.

"Hal! More men!"

"It must be a part of the force against us."

"Yes."

"We are cut off."

"Can we meet them?"

"They seem to be many for us."

"They are, and we must take to the trackless hills."

Jesse spoke the last words with decision, and his judgment was good. Half a mile beyond the road was full of horsemen, all pressing on to meet them, and it was clear their only safe course was to deviate from their line of travel.

"They see us," cried Cole Younger.

"Yes; hear them yell."

"And they ride at the faster this way."

"To the hills, men!"

Jesse led the way as he spoke, and the bandits left the traveled way with their horses urged to the limit of their speed. For a few rods this was met up, but as the outer hills only safe course was to deviate from their line of travel.

The lead they had made them safe for a few minutes, and they could not afford to wind their horses.

It was not to their liking that they entered this area. Not one of them knew what was there. It was a range covering many acres, and its appearance indicated that it was rough and tangled all through, and it might prove a veritable trap.

Looking back presently, they saw the latest pursuers leave the road and start in direct chase, and the lead was not by any means one upon which they could count. Jesse gazed at the towering walls of rock in various places with doubt expressed on his face.

"Frank, suppose we run into a blind pass here?" he asked.

"Don't mention it."

"It will do no good, I confess, but if it comes we shall have to grapple with it."

"Would that night would fall."

"It won't hurry for us, and there is considerable time yet before we can have that help."

"Press on wife we can."

They did press on, but always with judgment, never asking more of the horses than was prudent. They could be kept in good condition, at all hazards.

For half an hour there was no change. They went on along their course, and the pursuers were to be seen winding in and out among the knolls and little valleys, but it was not a close contact. To a certain degree the situation was encouraging, but what Jesse had feared was really to occur.

They had entered a sort of canyon, where each bank was too high to be scaled, and the bandit's eyes were ever at rest. There was nothing he could regret in the way of judgment, as it seemed he had done for the best, but the result was discouraging.

Suddenly he pulled up.

"We are in a trap!" he cried.

"Thunder!"

The bandit gazed in dismay. The canyon ended in another wall of rock quite as high and unscalable as that on the sides.

"We can't go on."

"Cliffs on three sides, and each a hundred feet high!" exclaimed Jim Commins. "Whew!"

By Jopter, this was a death-trap! They gazed at the high rocks with momentary alarm, for they knew the pursuers were coming on steadily. Most of them tried to grasp at a means of reprieve, but Jesse wasted no time. Clearly he saw the way, but one way, and that one of hope of profiting by what was to move immediately.

"Back!" he cried. "If we can reach the opening to this hole ahead of them there may yet be hope. Ride for it!"

He tried to act when called upon by the wild riders turned and dashed along the back-track. It was a gradual descent now, and smooth enough to make swift riding safe. Swift riding was used to the extreme, too, and they dashed along at full speed.

They neared the beginning of the cul-de-sac.

When it reached ahead of the foremost.

"I do not see them yet, Frank!" cried Jesse.

"We may pass in safety, after all."

"The next minute decides it."

On foot. With a grand rush they met the gap, and, as the leader bore around to the right, it was seen that they had, indeed, gained the point before the foe, but that was not saying much. Looking down the "slope a trifle they saw the enemy following up, and only a short distance away.

A loud hail came to their ears. -

"Halt!"

Not a man answered; not a horse was checked.

The last of the fugitives passed the danger blue and the flight was resumed anew.

"Halt, or we fire!"

It was the last warning. It passed unheeded, and then the ball was opened. Rifles cracked, and lead whistled up the slope. One or two wounds was the result, but no one was seriously injured.

The marksmen were not content until they had tried it further, but they lost ground while they fired, and it was abandoned.

Half an hour passed in the same old way. Among the rocks and ravines the fugitives went their course, and as they did so they saw the mountain shadows grow deeper as they drew nearer to night.

They were riding along another canyon-like pass much like the one which had nearly been the ruin of them before. They had entered it reluctantly, though with the belief that they would get through all right, but it was not to be. Between the cliffs was an open space of nearly thirty rods, with trees growing irregularly along the course and a stream of some size wandering through the center.

The roar of water had been audible for some time, but they were not prepared for what was finally presented abruptly to their sight.

As one man they drew up their horses, and dismay returned. Like the other canyon this one ended in a high wall of rock, the conditions being precisely similar except that in this case the water fell over the cliff with a fall of eighty feet.

"Dixies!" muttered Frank.

"Trapped again!"

"We must turn back."

"We can never pass here."

"Only a bird could go up those rocks."

Jesse James allowed his men to do the talking. He was looking anxiously toward the rear. They had come so far along the canyon that he feared it would be impossible to return in season so get out in safety. The same idea occurred to Frank.

"The enemy must be at the mouth of the pass," he murmured to Jesse.

"I fear so."

"Then we must fight here."

"Gads! it will be the death-place of us all," declared Hobbs Kerry.

"Has any one an idea?" demanded Jesse.

There was no reply, and for once Jesse was himself at fault. As they could not retreat it did seem they were in a death-trap.

"Have we got to make a desperate stand here?" asked Cole Younger.

"Why need you?"

"I am asking you one side asked the question, and all turned abruptly. They saw standing there a man who was a stranger to them all. He was a tall, lank person, dressed in homely garments, and armed with a long rifle of obsolete pattern.

"Hallo! who are you?" Jesse inquired.

"Joe Bliss."

"What are you doing here?"

"Asking for a job."

"I'm afraid we can't help you."

"Maybe I can help you, though."

"How?"

"By getting you out o' this."

"Can you do it?"

"Certainly."

"In what way?"

Joe Bliss laughed.

"You don't see any way, eh?"

"No."

"It is just ahead o' you."

He pointed to the falls, but Jesse was not yet persuaded.

"Is this a mere joke?"

"Come under the water and I will show you," Joe replied, calmly.

## CHAPTER IV.

### DANGER AHEAD.

SOME of the bandits were growing impatient at the easy, careless manner of the man who called himself Joe Bliss, but Jesse spoke quickly. If there was a ray of hope to be gained from this man they could not afford to miss it.

"Stranger, do you know how we are situated?" he demanded.

"Judging by the way them fellers are chasin' after you I should say you was in a mighty bad way," replied Joe, serenely.

"What do you know of them?"

"Nobbin' except that I see them chasin' ye."

"Are you ever sympathic with them?" nobody, but this I do say—ef ye want ter get out say so an' on' ye go."

"By what line did you say?"

"Under the falls."

"How can we go there?"

"Mister, you talk too much. Do you take me at my word or not?"

Joe began to get impatient, and Jesse leaned to the ground.

"Be so good as to show me what you mean, and then I shall know what to do. Lead on, stranger; I'll look at this on foot first."

"Come."

Joe marched to the edge of the fall and then caused some surprise by walking deliberately through the sheet of water. Jesse was bound to see the matter out, and he followed unhesitatingly. There was a rather unpleasant dash of water, and then he stood in a recess with the fall on one side and rock on the other. He could see nothing.

"Where are you?" he asked.

"Here!" calmly replied Joe.

"What next?"

"Look here, or feel here, if you wish, and you will see or feel something of importance."

"A hole in the cliff!"

"Yes."

"Where does it go?"

"Gradually upward until it reaches the ground some thirty or forty rods above the horses to go alike, and when you are once on the upper ground where will your pursuers be?"

"They may follow."

"I believe I am the only man in this region that knows of this queer passage."

"You are sure our horses can go up?"

"Positive."

"Then they shall."

Joe Bliss had his own way he would to lead the way. He had had no trusting to it, but this he dared not do now. The pursuers might descend on the band while they waited. He strode out of the recess and took direct by the rear.

"Follow me, every man!" he directed.

It was no easy matter to get the animals to go into such a place, but a success was duly made of the attempt. Thus they disappeared from the outer part of the canyon, and as it was getting too dark for trailing, there was hope that the pursuers would be very much at fault for some time. It only remained to see if Joe Bliss had not been a little premature.

"Lead on!" directed Jesse.

"Come with me."

Joe pushed ahead and the bandit king came next.

They entered a natural tunnel which was but a little higher than the top of a horse's head, but as all had dismounted this clear space was as good as a mile. Under foot they first found sand, but this changed to rock, and they went up on a hard surface.

It was not the best of going, and the horses were restive and worried by the situation, but as they did not rebel their riders were able to lead them up the winding, narrow tunnel in a manner safe if not speedy.

For some time they poked around thus, and then fresh air struck upon Jesse's face and he emerged from the darkness. One after another the men came out, and the underground route was voted a great success.

"Where are we now?" asked Jesse.

"Where you are much safer than before," returned Joe. "It will take your enemies some time to get up there, any route other than the one we followed, an' you 'an kin take a breathin' spell of you want."

"We don't; we want to go on."

"Where?"

"Beyond the reach of those fellows who pursue us."

"Want ter leave the hills wholly?"

There was silence, and the bandits surveyed each other in the dim light questioningly.



"We ought to have put out that signal light before we came," remarked Jesse, uneasily.

"We wouldn't hev stood the same chance of catchin' them."

"That is true. Carefully now; we are near the critical point."

Joe dropped upon his hands and knees and moved forward like a specter. Jesse found it hard to imitate such caution, but he did well enough, and they were soon on the summit of the little peak.

"I don't see nobody," grumbled Joe.

"Make a full search before we decide on the point."

"The search was made, but without result.

"Not a soul here but us."

"Then why is the light still directed here?"

"The women may think there's somebody around."

"Very likely, and we will have an accounting with those same women. I do not like to be severe on them, but our safety is at stake, and this light must be put out. Back to the boat!"

"They want, ordered the craft and rowed toward the opposite shore. Silence had fallen between them, but, when they were half way across, Joe suddenly stopped short and whispered:

"Be still."

"What is it?"

"Listen!"

"Oars!"

"Sure as you live. Others are on the lake, and we want to know who. They are coming this way. Lay low and see the result. By mighty! I'll bet it's old Sim."

Gently the other boat advanced. It was not going so very slow, but was being rowed with the skill of an old hand, and little sound came to tell of its movements, yet the light was strong enough to enable them to see a good deal.

"Only one aboard," remarked Joe.

"It must be Sim."

"I reckon."

"Ah! the boat slows up. He sees us!"

They were now close together.

"See what the critter will do," suggested Joe.

The "critter" ceased to row and the boat drifted like their own. Evidently they were under observation in return.

"Don't give him an ounce of information," requested the previous speaker. "He may give himself away—Thunder an' lightning!"

Joe dropped his oars and clapped his hands to his head.

Bang!

The report of a revolver had accompanied this demonstration.

"Are you badly hit?" asked Jesse.

Bang!

"Burnin' tortures!" yelled Joe, this time clapping his hands to his shoulder. "I shall be shot for this!"

Bang!

Again the other boatman fired, and Jesse thought it had gone far enough. Whoever it was had taken a turn at them without any compunction, and they had the same privilege. He had drawn his own revolver, and he now fired with as accurate aim as was possible.

Once, twice, three times he sent the lead flying away, and it had good effect. Suddenly the other person seized oars and began to row off with speed. Jesse made a move to grasp their own blades, but Joe was ahead of him.

"I hev two mortal wounds, but I kin overhaul that boat or sink in the try, by mighty! Hyer goes!"

He began to pull like one in a match race, and the speed he got up was amazing. Desperately as the other person rowed, Joe gained rapidly. The lead was being quickly wiped out.

Naturally, Jesse was using his eyes, and he suddenly gasped:

"Why, it's a woman!"

"A woman?"

"Sim's gal, you bet yer moccasin. It would be jest like the cattle. Pull her up!"

Jesse aroused. They were now near the other boat, and he deliberately covered the female rower.

"Stop, or I fire!" he shouted.

She dropped her oars, but she was not yet subdued.

Bang!

Joe twice her revolver spoke, and one of the bullets cut through the bandit's clothes. Joe had not ceased to pull, and this took the two boats very near to each other. The woman stood up recklessly.

"By thunder! I don't miss this time!" she declared.

The revolver was leveled, and Jesse felt that

if she was not prevented the discharge would be fatal. With life at stake it would not do to remember she was a woman, and he did not.

With the quickness which he had learned in his wild life he pressed the trigger. He was the first to fire, and he was second ahead of her, and though a bullet whistled past his ears it missed by a narrow margin.

Her shot had been spoiled, but not so with his. He shot and lay floundering around in the bottom of the boat.

"Thunder! you hev killed her!" muttered Joe, startled.

"Maybe not. Put me alongside the other craft, I'll wing you!"

"It was done, and Joe exclaimed:

"It's the old woman!"

"Sim's wife?"

"Well, maybe she wants more of this."

The woman had ceased to struggle, and she now bled:

"Oh! you devil! if I had my revolver wouldn't I wing you?"

"No, you wouldn't!" Jesse retorted. "I have learned your caliber, and you would be treated like a man, or, more properly, like a Jezebel, which you are. So you wanted to shoot?"

"Yes, I did."

"Why?"

"You are Jesse James?"

"How do you know that?"

"Didn't the man who was along durin' the day say you was around and might be here. Oh! I know you."

"Who was this man?"

She suddenly seemed to think she was doing too much talking.

"None of your business!" she retorted, after a pause.

"Well, you see what you have done to yourself by obeying him."

"If I only had my revolver!"

She gripped in the boat for her weapon, but it had fallen overboard, and she had to forego her hopes.

She was as venomous as a maimed snake, and Jesse was not sorry he had treated her like a man rather than a woman.

Joe looked uneasily toward the gate-keeper's house.

"Take a grip on the boat, Jesse," he requested. "an' I'll pull ter land. We may be needed there."

"Yes, your best lick."

Joe sent the boat humming along, while Jesse hung on to the second craft, and both were duly beached.

"Woman," said Jesse, then, "what have you tried to do us! Who are these men you have signaled to?"

"Find out for yourself!" she snapped.

"You are beaten. Why not deserve good usage as us?"

"I don't want it."

"You tried to shoot us. Suppose I turn my revolver on you?"

"Do it, if you want to!"

"You are a fool!"

"Then they are two of us."

"Do you want your wound attended to?"

"Not by you. Get out!"

"Have it as you will, you Jezebel! If you bleed to death it is your own fault."

The bandit stepped ashore, and then he and Joe hastened toward the house.

Later they might have a laugh at the expense of the Amazon they had led, but for the time they were too much concerned about the safety of their comrades.

They way toward the front door took them past the window of the room where the bandits had been left asleep, and they did not miss the chance to look in and see how matters were progressing.

The view they obtained was startling.

The men still slept, but there was one wakened person in the room. Among the sleepers stood the gate-keeper's daughter, a bottle in one hand and a revolver in the other.

Her naturally coarse and repulsive face now had an expression like that of a veritable fiend, and she expected to see her use the revolver on the helpless bandits.

Instead, however, she knelt and applied the bottle to the nostrils of one of the band.

"She's droggin' them!" gasped Joe.

Not so, said Jesse, but he ran toward the door, eager to stop this cunning plot.

He reached the door and flung it open. Another moment and he would have been inside, but something happened.

Crack!

A bullet sped past his head.

Crack!

There was a well-known stinging sensation in his arm, and he knew he had been hit.

Half way between the two main rooms stood old Sim, and it was he who was taking this target exercise. Jesse's blood quickened with indignation. He was tired of having the whole family make a target of him, and he was determined to show one of them what it was to make an uncalled for attack. His own revolver came out quickly.

He fired.

Old Sim fell.

Jesse rushed into the next room. He had dreaded to see a scene of destruction there, but what he did see was not bad. A Dozen of the bandits were on their feet, grasping their revolvers and looking around with a mixture of nervousness and determination to see what needed to be done.

"Jesse, what is it?" cried Frank.

But the bandit king strode to the side of the gate-keeper's daughter. She had hurriedly concealed her bottle and revolver, and was trying to look innocent.

"You are done!" cried Jesse, with fierce emphasis.

"Huh!" she questioned, with an air of dullness.

"Hand over that revolver."

"Me? I ain't got none."

"You lie! Give it to me."

He had caught sight of it in the folds of her dress, and it was wrested away promptly.

"Watch her, Joe," the bandit directed, to Elias.

"That I will, and she goes over the range if she tries a trick on me, by thunder!"

He grasped her arm roughly, which caused her to reel and try to get away—but he held her fast.

Jesse saw that George Sheppard, Wood Hite and Bill Chadwell had not risen. He shook each one in turn, but they gave no sign of life.

"Thunder! are they dead?" asked Frank James.

"I think not. Do you smell chloroform?"

"Yes."

"Our lovely hostess has been doing them. Get them into stronger air and help them out if I do not think they are dead, but if I had not come just as I did, this band would have fared had."

"Have these people proved treacherous?"

"Yes."

"Lynch them!" cried Bob Younger, angrily.

"Keep cool. I reckon we have them foul."

"Don't be so sure!" exclaimed the woman, with a tigerish gleam in her eyes. "It ain't over yet."

"Possibly you think your mother will bring help, but that boom has bursted. We have settled her."

"If you have hurt her, I will kill you!" screamed the gate-keeper's daughter.

"Then you'll have to kill me."

"Demons! Let me at him!"

"Keep your bunnit on, ole gal!" advised Joe Elias, with a laugh.

"She is a woman who is a madwoman, and they took the precaution of hindering her severely. Then they looked to the gate-keeper. He had a severe wound, and was not likely to do any more damage. For the time being the bandits had a clear field, but a mess was not sure it would last. He had the signal light extinguished, and then called all the men around him."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FIGHT IN THE MILL.

"Boys," said Jesse James, "we want to look this matter right in the face and see what is being sending out. The gate-keeper and his brood have been sending out a call of somebody to this place. They will come. Well, what are we going to do?"

"Fight," declared Jack Keene.

"Go easy. Of all times this is the least suited for rashness, for it is one where we are now to make a campaign for life or death. With all of Missouri opposed to us, we want to be careful in our return to get back to a safer region with our lives intact."

"That is correct," said Frank James. "What do you suggest?"

"I shall wait among the hills, or make a break to get out. My faith in our plan of staying here has been weakening."

"Could we cut through if we tried?"

"I could we make ourselves safe here if we tried!"



"Danger is everywhere for us," remarked Cole Younger.

"But which is the better way?"  
This point was debated at some length, and each man was given a chance to voice his opinion.

Jesse was rather disappointed when he found the majority against him, but he accepted the decision, and said they would stick to the hills for the time. This decided, they looked to their visible situation closely. The chloroformed bandits had fully recovered, and there was nothing in that line to trouble them. The gate-keeper and his wife were both too severely wounded to have any danger left in them. The latter had been brought into the house, and the three members of the family were locked in one room so that the daughter could care for her amiable parents.

Some of the men were in favor of seeking satisfaction for all that had been done against them, but it was Jesse's decision that they had gotten the best of the fight and could afford to be easy with them.

Watches were duly set, and those who were not to stand guard at once went to bed. All must be in good condition for the morrow.

One man who did not intend to sleep at all was Joe Bliss. He constantly wandered around with his rifle in hand, seeking to protect his charges, as he regarded them.

Later in the night, when Jesse was awakened by his own order, Joe came to his bedside.

"Do ye 'pose everybody in these parts knows you are around?" he inquired.

"Very likely they do."  
"Still, they may not."

"Waal, I've been thinkin'. Now, it's a part o' Sim's duty, as I've heard say, ter let out a supply o' water from hyer every mornin', shoulter ter supply the 'sawke mills below. Early'n, they see us to that."

"Why should we?"  
"Ter keep folks from wonderin' why the water don't come down."

"The point is, in one, and I think it a useless precaution, so widely are we hunted, but it will do no harm to see to it. Yes, the water shall go down as usual. Let us go to the gate-house and attend to that point."

"I am surprised at the lowness of the dam," said Jesse. "I supposed it would be much higher."

"We see you see this was mostly a natural pond hyer, and only a comparatively little work was necessary ter make the dam. More ought ter be done now."

"Why?"  
"The dam is mighty old an' weak. Some rain will take it all away."

"Once let loose it would go to the plain below like mad."

"So it would."  
They stood and looked down the ravine which stretched to the north. As Jesse had pointed out the liberated water would make a tremendous race down that descent.

"Now for the mill."

They entered the building, but found it so dark that they could see but little.

"We should have brought a light from the house," remarked Jesse.

"I reckon we can attend to it without. Stand where you be, an' I'll find the gate."

Joe moved on. All these structures had been put up, as Joe had explained, at another date and for another purpose, and the gate-house was like the living quarters, out of all proportion to the use it was now put to. Jesse did not know where to go, so he stood still and waited for his companion.

For awhile he could hear Joe moving, but as he receded less was to be distinguished. The roar of the falls drowned much which would otherwise have been audible, too, and he was obliged to wait without any clew to the situation.

Finally he thought he heard a footstep near at hand. Trying to see through the darkness, he asked:

"Is that you, Joe?"  
"Yes."

"Have you got the gate up?"  
"Yes."

All the while the other speaker was advancing. It occurred to Jesse that his voice sounded choked and unnatural, but this he gave little thought. He came almost to the bandit's side.

"I do not hear the water escaping," said Jesse.

"It's all right."  
"Say, is that you, Joe?"

Suddenly the bandit asked the question again. The peculiarity about the voice was now added to by the fact that Joe seemed to have grown in stature. He now looked almost gigantic, and this unnatural growth gave Jesse a suspicion.

As he spoke he raised his hand, but he was not quick enough to prevent the catastrophe. Like a tiger the man sprang upon him.

"Die!" he hissed fiercely.

He and straddled his arms around the bandit, as if trying to strangle him in his constrictor fashion, and Jesse was almost crushed in that tenacious hold. Then he was tripped, and the man fell full length upon Jesse's chest. Jesse was practically a complete surprise to the bandit. His suspicion that the other person was not Joe had been but momentary when he was attacked, and he thus had no time for defense until he was beaten, so his assailant won the first round in the encounter easily. He seized upon Jesse's throat.

Death lurked in that grasp. The bandit rallied and made a desperate effort to throw off the bulky form. A combat ensued which was like that of two wild animals in a grapple to the death.

Over and over they rolled in the struggle. Again and again he girded partially from the arms of his foe, but only to be seized again and subjected to a new pressure.

Whom he was fighting the bandit could not imagine, but one thing was sure. He had got into the fight or it would go against him. He was a hundred pounds lighter than the unknown and he was like one anchored.

Time and again he had tried to get his weapon. Again and again he was beaten, so his desperate attempt, feeling that it must be done then or never.

Raising his clinched hand he struck the stranger full in the face.

Jesse managed to break the stranger's grasp on his neck, but he could not seem to do more. He was over matched in strength, and all his agility barely sufficed to save him from such utter defeat.

Again and again he girded partially from the arms of his foe, but only to be seized again and subjected to a new pressure.

Whom he was fighting the bandit could not imagine, but one thing was sure. He had got into the fight or it would go against him. He was a hundred pounds lighter than the unknown and he was like one anchored.

Time and again he had tried to get his weapon. Again and again he was beaten, so his desperate attempt, feeling that it must be done then or never.

Raising his clinched hand he struck the stranger full in the face.

Jesse managed to break the stranger's grasp on his neck, but he could not seem to do more. He was over matched in strength, and all his agility barely sufficed to save him from such utter defeat.

Again and again he girded partially from the arms of his foe, but only to be seized again and subjected to a new pressure.

Whom he was fighting the bandit could not imagine, but one thing was sure. He had got into the fight or it would go against him. He was a hundred pounds lighter than the unknown and he was like one anchored.

Time and again he had tried to get his weapon. Again and again he was beaten, so his desperate attempt, feeling that it must be done then or never.

Raising his clinched hand he struck the stranger full in the face.

Jesse managed to break the stranger's grasp on his neck, but he could not seem to do more. He was over matched in strength, and all his agility barely sufficed to save him from such utter defeat.

Again and again he girded partially from the arms of his foe, but only to be seized again and subjected to a new pressure.

Whom he was fighting the bandit could not imagine, but one thing was sure. He had got into the fight or it would go against him. He was a hundred pounds lighter than the unknown and he was like one anchored.

Time and again he had tried to get his weapon. Again and again he was beaten, so his desperate attempt, feeling that it must be done then or never.

Raising his clinched hand he struck the stranger full in the face.

Jesse managed to break the stranger's grasp on his neck, but he could not seem to do more. He was over matched in strength, and all his agility barely sufficed to save him from such utter defeat.

Again and again he girded partially from the arms of his foe, but only to be seized again and subjected to a new pressure.

Whom he was fighting the bandit could not imagine, but one thing was sure. He had got into the fight or it would go against him. He was a hundred pounds lighter than the unknown and he was like one anchored.

Time and again he had tried to get his weapon. Again and again he was beaten, so his desperate attempt, feeling that it must be done then or never.

Raising his clinched hand he struck the stranger full in the face.

Jesse managed to break the stranger's grasp on his neck, but he could not seem to do more. He was over matched in strength, and all his agility barely sufficed to save him from such utter defeat.

Again and again he girded partially from the arms of his foe, but only to be seized again and subjected to a new pressure.

"So I did. I die like a fool and I can't complain."

"Why were you in the mill?"

"Zeb an' I was bound ter find ye, an' when we come hyer the moon seted the situation up. We went inter the mill ter consult, so as ter be out o' the way, an' then you an' the other feller come out."

"Want have you done with my companion?"

"He is dead now."

"Are you sure he is not injured?"

"Yes."

"Is anybody else near of your gang?"

"I don't know. Zeb an' I was alone, but Carl Greene said it would be your plan to bite in the hills, an' I reckon the hills will be full o' his men by mornin'."

"Ha!"

"They will have you, Jesse James!" added the man, with something like triumph creeping into his voice.

"Will they? Well, I may have something to say about that!"

The bandit made sure that his foe was not making a pretense of being badly wounded, and then left him and returned to the mill.

After some trouble he found Joe Bliss by the gate, and he was soon stated.

He was released, whereupon his tongue ran swiftly with the tale of how he had been set upon by the other men.

Jesse gave him but little time to dwell upon it, but went to the giant.

Zeb had paid the penalty of rashness, and the last shot had been too much for him. He was dead.

Forgetting all about the gate, the bandit king hastened to the house with Joe by his side.

The men were aroused and told of the latest developments.

"Now," added Jesse, "my advice is that we get away from here at once. We are somewhat rested, and nature thought tells me we only lose valuable time by delaying our departure. We must get away sooner or later, and any further delay will only give the foe chance to get on our side decisively. Why not make the effort now?"

"I agree with you," said Cole Younger.

"And," added Jim Cummins.

"It's the best way, I think," Frank said.

There was not a voice to oppose the judgment of the leaders.

"Get ready!" Jesse directed.

There was not much to be done. Their horses were brought out, saddled and bridled, and all the food they could find was made up in a package. One of their last acts was to unfasten the door of the room where the gate-keeper and his family were, but it was done softly so it would not be heard inside.

The second of the fighting men of the mill was found not to be seriously wounded, and he was brought in and laid on the floor. They had then done all.

"Mount!" ordered Jesse.

They obeyed.

"Are you all ready?"

"Yes."

"Follow me, then."

They rode down the mountain.

Joe Bliss' knowledge of the vicinity enabled him to tell them that the easiest and quickest way, since they were going to the north, was to take the bed of the ravine down which the water found its way after escaping from the lake, and this was done.

Joe did not go with them far. He had no desire to keep them company in their lawless ride so they parted there from the valuable ally after rewarding him well with cash. Then they went on alone.

Night was not yet past, and as they rode the walls of the ravine were blacker than ever by the way. In many places these walls were impassable for horses, and they gradually took the form of cliffs.

In the center of the level space the stream rushed swiftly along toward the lower land where it was to feed the wheels of the mills before referred to.

The bandits used caution in their journey, but they saw no one by the way, friend or foe.

"We shall reach the foot of the mountain before day dawns," remarked Frank to Jesse.

"Yes."

"Which way then?"

"We must go north to the west. It is the natural avenue of escape, and though our course will be readily suspected we can take no other. We are in good condition for the work, and I think we may surprise Carl Greene."

"What is that sound?" asked Jim Cummins, suddenly.

"What sound?"

"A kind of raring."

"Probably the wind."

"It hardly seems like it."

"It's from the rear," added Frank, "and is like the roar of waters in a flood."

"Can it be the dam has broken away?" murmured Jesse, thoughtfully.

It was not really intended as a question, for he did not think such a thing could be possible, but the idea was soon impressed forcibly upon the minds of all. The roar grew louder with rapidity which was startling, and every eye was turned to the rear.

"I believe your suspicion is correct, Jesse," said Frank, uneasily.

"But what should break the dam?"

"Possibly it has been tampered with. Was it strong?"

"I remember now that Joe Bliss said it was not strong."

"Either of the two things may have caused the trouble."

"Set it down that the dam has burst!" cried Cole Younger. "That roar can mean nothing else."

"Quicken your pace, boys!" ordered Jesse. "We can't get out of this ravine, and we would be drowned like rats if the flood got at us."

"Look!" shouted Jack Keene.

He pointed to the rear, and there was need of no more explanation. Between the walls of the ravine was a high white mass which looked like a great tent.

"The flood!" cried Jesse. "On men—on for your lives!"

#### CHAPTER VII.

PURSED BY FLOOD AND MAN.

ACCOUNTED as they were to peril the bandits beheld this awe-inspiring sight with a thrill of terror. Bearing its head in air like a devouring monster, the flood was leaping toward them at speed they could not hope to equal, and if they were overtaken their lives would go out like feeble candles.

Down the bed of the ravine they sent their horses flying at full speed, but for once the feet of the noble animals seemed to their riders as if weighted with lead.

"Look for a place where we can get up the tanks!" shouted Jesse James, hoping there might be some break in the wall of rock.

"How far to the open land?" demanded Hobbs Kerry.

"Half a mile."

"Then we shall never live to see it."

"Keep up courage."

"See the flood!"

They did see it, and only too plain. The great billow was like a monster thing of foam, and even in the night it was a spot of remarkable whiteness, so great was the contrast between it and the surrounding area.

"It gains every rod!" called out a disheartened bandit.

"Men," thundered Jesse, "set your faces to the front and ride! That is what we are here for, not to look back like Lot's wife. Look ahead and ride! Keep your horse well in hand so as to avoid a stumble, and give all your attention to the work in hand. Ride your best!"

It was being done already. Those animals were accustomed to being called upon for their supreme efforts, and they were not slow to respond now.

On, on! It was a magnificent race, however it might end.

Despite Jesse's order no one could keep himself from looking back, and the sight was terrible, and really magnificent.

The great billow was gaining, and its roar was now intense. Faster, too, it looked, and its sweep was tremendous. If it once touched them their lives would go out at a breath.

On, on! It was a mad, a grand race for life.

On, on! Well did they deserve every foot they were over, but the back could not be shaken off.

On, on! But now the foe pressed close and the end is near. Vainly they look for some break in the cliffs, for they are hemmed in helplessly. The most sanguine of them sees no way to escape, and they feel a fear no man could awake.

Nearer presses the flood. Its booming sound is like that of a monster sea, and its front is beingashed into leaping foam.

A grand, a terrible sight—a sight which seems sure death to the score of riders.

Nearer yet! The race is almost run. Like a bloodhound it presses on their heels, and the nearest of the band imagines he can feel the touch of the dashing spray.

"We should have deserted our horses!" mut-

tered Jesse James.

Too late! It might have been done before, but now the men would have no time to scale the cliffs. Too late! And the flood is almost at their backs.

They grow even more and see the great billow rearing its head far above them, filling the ravine from side to side. A moment more and it will cover the riders and steeds.

Too late! No way is open now but that in advance, and there the cliffs rise in midair—

"Hurrah!"

The cry bursts in wild accents from Bob Younger's lips. It comes just as the bandits are moving their heads to the doom which seems surely theirs, but there is that in the cry which makes every one look up abruptly. No time is that for talk, but Bob's pointing hand and their own eyes tell the truth.

In place of the smothered rocks they see open land on either side—a sudden change of scene as glorious as it is unexpected—and with one impulse they swerve to the left and dash out of the line of death.

Not too soon. Foam is flung by the billow on the rear-most of the party, and then it goes with a mighty rush. Some of the water escapes to one side and the horses are wet to their bellies, but the impetus of the flood carries most of it in its direct course sufficiently far so they are in no danger.

They stop, while the flood goes shooting on its way.

For the time the stonest-hearted there are speechless, but Jesse finally finds his tongue.

"Saved—saved!"

He grasps the hand of the man nearest to him and wrings it with fervor, and the example is so contagious that all fall to the task, and they shake hands and laugh like school boys.

"Saved—saved!"

Such was the cry which came from all, but they had too much to think of to waste much time. Of course, all danger from the water was over, and they rallied to the demands of the occasion.

"Our human foes remain," said Jesse. "Give the horses five minutes to get their breath, and then we will go on slowly. No hurrying until our brave chargers are again themselves."

Half a mile they rode across the fields, and then a road was reached which stretched away toward the west. This they took and continued to ride as fast as was advisable. Day had dawned and the sun was up—a pleasant day to look at, but one they saw with them without anything like pleasure.

There they met an old darky and Jesse halted.

"Uncle, how long have you been out?"

"Lard sakes, I was out afore day!" was the reply.

"Have you seen any other riders?"

"No, sah."

"All quiet here, eh?"

"Yes, sah. I s'pect dey is all buntin' fer dem Jesse James boys."

"We are doing that, too."

"Be ye?"

"Yes, we are one of the parties."

"Was you uns de same who was in de ambush?"

"What ambush?"

"Over yender by the big tree."

"So there was an ambush there, was there?"

"Yes, sah; men hid dar all night."

"Where are they now?"

"Where, I don't know. Mebbe dey gone to another of de ambushes."

"So there are more?"

"Lard sakes! You must be funny men de you s' don't know dey is all through yere."

"We knew of something of the kind, but not just where they were, for we are strangers in this section. Well, we do not need to go where regular watchers are set. We want to strike out where we are likely to find no other hunters, and we may find the James boys."

Can you tell us where to go, uncle?"

"Dat I can't, fer dey watchers is all around. Dey is like de sands ob de seashore, sah, an' de Jesse James boys will be bung up high as Hamme's ears nigh."

"Thank you for your encouragement, uncle. Good-bye."

The bandit rode on.

The hands were exclaimed Frank. "If they are as thick as they are said to be we are in a bad way."

"We are warned. Now let us fight our way through."

"It's old work, but it looks a little unpromising."

"On, men!" urged Jesse. "This is our time to make a good showing."

Quickened their speed, they swept away at a lively trot. They had avoided the ambush of which the old man had spoken, but they could not long expect to keep out of danger.

At the rate of a mile they neared a town of some size. If circumstances had been favorable they would have gone around it, but, as this was out of the question, they struck into an easy trot and thus made entrance to the main street.

It was their wish to pass as hunters of the James boys.

Their scheme might have gone well had it not been for the unlucky occurrence. When they reached the center of the place they saw there was something of an excitement. Men were collected, nearly all of whom had rifles with them.

"Getting ready for the hunt?" remarked Jesse.

"Will it not be well to stop and question them as if we were real hunters?"

"Do so, by all means. If we don't they will almost surely be suspicious, but a bold move on our part may enable us to bluff our way through."

A little further they went, and then Jesse drew up in front of the staring countrymen.

"Gentlemen," he easily inquired, "have you seen any strange riders about here this morning?"

A man with a tuft of beard on his chin replied for the crowd.

"No."

"We are looking for the James boys."

"By gosh! we are jest goin' ter start out."

"Have you any idea of where they are likely to be?"

"Up on the mounting."

"Sure?"

"So they all say."

"We are going to try it elsewhere. Have you seen more searching parties to the west?"

"Don't think there is, stranger, but hyer comes a man who kin tell ye sure. That's him!"

The man to whom he had alluded had pushed his way through the crowd quite unobtrusively until within a few steps of the bandits. As there were so many persons there he could not have been so unconscious of his proximity as he was of theirs, and when they faced each other there was a mutual surprise.

"Carl Greene," gasped Jesse.

"Jesse James!" exclaimed the astonished detective.

It was a singular meeting, and one most disastrous would be to the bandits. Of all men they were the least willing to see their sworn foe and pursuer, and there could be but one result of this encounter.

Quickly Carl rallied.

"Seize these men!" he shouted to the force around him. "They are the James boys. Don't let them escape!"

Jesse roused to action.

"A way!" he shouted, and his followers needed no further order.

Like one man they gave the word to their horses and the start was made. It was none too soon, for they were directly among the enemy, and it seemed impossible for any of them to escape.

"Head them off!" thundered Carl Greene.

He had drawn his own revolver, and he now used it without remorse.

Crack!

Crack!

Twice he fired, and two of the bandits fell dead. They were Mart Bray and Reese Wright who chanced to be at the rear.

"Shoot!" yelled Carl Greene.

And he fired, but a little of a start had been raised and the bullet went wild. But the citizens were to his help, and many an ancient weapon was turned upon the escaping men.

A tremendous roar followed.

At last distance even poor marksmen met hit something, and two more of the band fell, parting with the breath of life before they succumbed to the group. They were Alf Morrow and Alf Rose. Five other bandits received more or less painful wounds.

Jesse was stung to a fury, and he gave a loud command.

"Fire!"

The outlaws turned in their saddles and sent in a volley. All their rage was in the attempt, and they did not make a mess of it. Down went several citizens, and of those who remained most had been given a lesson they did not all to heed.

They fled to the cover of the houses.

Carl Greene, however, stood in the middle of the street and shouted to them to rear again.

These near him had seen enough of it, but the danger was not all over. It was quite a distance to the end of the street, and all along that way there was abundant chance for the men who were hovering around the doors of their houses to start a fire.

As a rule these persons turned and dashed into the houses, but their object was soon seen. They came out, or appeared at the windows directly after, and they had all kinds of weapons. These they proceeded to use, and more bullets swept toward the fugitives.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

The air was full of deadly missile, and it was full of bits of lead which carried death in their train.

"Tame those tigers, boys!" thundered Jesse. Other rifles were raised, and this time the bullets sped toward the houses. There was a tremendous rattling of broken glass, but the destruction did not stop there, for some of the lead went to its work more effectively.

It was a ride through a hail of bullets, but the bandits were recovering a little from their shock, and they made themselves heard as well as felt. Loud sounded their yells.

"Down with the meddlers!"

"Fight your way!"

"Give them shot for shot!"

"Long live the James Boys!"

Afterward this day was like a terrible nightmare to the citizens, and even those who first now were a good deal dazed, and it was like real life only in the dreadful execution as they saw the wild riders spending down the street, their horses going like mad and their own Centaurs-like progress so thrilling to behold.

Outlaws they might be, but they rode like masters of the art.

Carl Greene never could claim but the people had rallied well at his command, but to the most warlike of them it was a great relief when the band passed the last house and went galloping off by the west road.

They were glad to part from such visitors. With a rush the town was cleared, and while Carl raged in impotent fury the bandits rapidly receded.

"Pursue!" hissed the detective. "Pursue to the death!"

#### CHAPTER VIII.

JESSE BEKES REYNOLDS.

The band galloped on their way. "Thunder!" but that was one of the hottest calls of our life!" cried Frank James.

"Carl Greene has a measure of revenge," added Cole Younger.

"I should say he has, and a bloody one."

"It's a wonder we got off so well," declared Jesse. "We were right among them when the firing opened, and we have reason to congratulate ourselves it is no worse."

"What! with us for dead?"

"Even there we are lucky. They are gone, and I am sorry, but you see they were not our old members, but the four we added for this occasion."

"It is odd they were all killed and none of us taken," murmured Jim Collins.

"We hear charmed lives, perhaps," suggested Jack Keene.

"You don't want to get that notion," replied Jesse. "If you do we may find ourselves minus more followers before we get out of this. From the hour of the first alarm this has been a ride for life or death, and a little change may make death for us all."

"Carl pursues!" exclaimed Frank.

"It was to be expected, but he hasn't the means of doing much just now. What we want is to keep clear of all regular forces."

The citizens had mounted the best they could and were hurrying along. Carl might have distanced the whole lot, but he did not care to, perhaps. With such followers he could hope for but little, and he doubtless banked more on being able to add his favorite searchers later on. It was a mystery how he happened to be without them, anyhow, but it did not keep the bandits' thoughts a great while.

They kept up their own speed and had the pleasure of seeing the pursuers gradually disappear from sight. Even Carl was no longer visible, and they seemed to have the whole scene to themselves.

This led Jesse to meditate.

"There was some serious misarranging of the detective's plans at the mountain," he finally said. "If it had not been so we should never have got through their lines as we did."

"It does look that way," Frank agreed.

"With all the force he had he must have had a well-defined scheme for our capture."

"It has not panned out pure gold to him."

"No doubt; some of his men are responsible for the failure. There was probably gross neglect, but we have cause to bless whoever did it."

Holding their course as rapidly as was prudent the cavalcade pushed on until past noon. They were moving through a hilly country when one of their number looked back and immediately sounded the note of alarm.

"Look," he directed.

"But men behind us."

"Yes, and riding fast this way."

"It may be a party of farmers."

"It is not," replied Frank, decidedly. "Unless my feelings lead me all astray we are again in for it."

"Let out another link, boys!" urged Jesse. "If we hurry we are sure to attract attention, and maybe there is no need of winding our horses again."

"Do I tell you and perhaps we may be able to trick them."

"How?"

"Do you see that the country just ahead is wooded with a hill on one side?"

"Yes."

"We will try the effects of a stratagem there. It may fail but if it does we may as well fight it out right here. That party is not large, and we can make them tired if they attack us I think. On!"

Rapid riding for ten minutes took them to the woods. It was not so extensive as they had hoped, but this did not prevent Jesse from trying his trick.

The hill rose on the right, with a small stream on the left, and the road curved around between them. At what he judged to be the proper point Jesse left the road and followed by his men, hastened up the hill.

"The greater part of the wood is on the other side," he explained, "and even when they find they have missed what they will be likely to look on the wrong side. With the pretense thus gained we may give them the slip wilyly."

"We want to get quiet before they arrive here," cautioned Frank. "Our horses are making a good deal of racket."

"We will pause on the summit. Here we are, now."

The top was reached, but what they saw beyond was not what they had expected. The woods ended abruptly, giving them a good view, and they were surprised to see a dozen horsemen riding away at full speed. They were crossing a field but the latter quickly joined the road where the highway curved around, and into this they urged their horses at a gallop.

"Well, that's a badly scared lot," remarked Frank, in surprise.

"What do they see from?" asked Cole.

"From us," replied Frank.

"Why should they?"

"That I don't know. It is certain, however, that they were encamped here, and that our coming took them out of the way at the speed you know."

"I reckon they must be as much out of love with the law as we are," surmised Jesse, with a laugh. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth. We have done that ourselves and we know how they feel."

"Well, a cottontail rabbit wouldn't be in it with those fellows."

There was a general laugh at the expense of the men they had frightened so much, but they were recalled to other matters by the beating of hoofs on the hard road below.

"Our own pursuers!" cried Frank. "Now to see if they halt or go on."

"They must have passed where we turned out, and they are still going," nodded Jesse.

"Yes, and they pass the knoll!"

"If only they would keep it up!"

"Ha!" exclaimed Jesse.

"If there is not a chance that they will confuse themselves on the strangers we have scared up! Unless they are men who know us well they may fall to discover the change, and keep on it pursuant to their party, and at a gallop."

"Jupiter, let us see!"

The bandits crowded forward to where they could watch the road further on.

"See the strangers' hoof print!"

"That's a horse and a horse, isn't it?"

"There's the second gang."

"Great luck! they do pursue the strangers."

"Yes, and it's a hot chase."

Despite all the signs the bandits found it al-

most impossible to believe their good luck, and it was not until the rival racers began to get well out of sight that they realized it fully. They there was a hearty laugh. They had no means of knowing why the strangers were so much alarmed, but it was clear they had done the James Boys and their followers a great service.

As they received the bandits consulted.

"Where now?" asked Frank. "We ought to lose no time in a groove."

"This useless chase may do us more good than we suspect," replied Jesse. "Now, I am in favor of striking off to the south, and seeing what we can do there."

"Just the plan," agreed Cole.

"Right here there is chance to throw them all off the scent. Let us make the move."

Once more they got under way, and from that time there was no delay. With they and their horses were in due condition they were always moving on, and when rest was necessary they took it in some secluded grove.

After it was all over it was never plain to any one how they made their escape. They only knew that, having been forced to abandon their project, they acted the part of stealth and succeeded in their work.

Carl Greene, having laid the plot so carefully, and having once seen them in it, was amazed to find they had escaped him. So everybody wondered why it was so. The explanation was that luck favored them. That was the story in brief.

Three days from the scene last described the band halted in a grove. Jesse had been unusually thoughtful for some time, and he finally broke the silence by addressing to Frank:

"I leave you after to-night."

"Leave us?"

"Why?"

"I am going to seek revenge on Thomas Berry."

"The scoundrel!"

"He thought he did a big thing when he betrayed us, but he may change his mind."

"Would it not be well to wait awhile before we go there—"

"I go alone."

"Nonsense, Jesse! I, at least, shall accompany you."

"No, Frank; you will not. I go alone."

"Why is this?"

"I can do the work just as well alone, and it will be safer."

"Not for you."

"I have no fear."

"I must insist upon going with you."

"I go alone," repeated the bandit king, calmly. "I have thought it over, and it is best so."

"But if you get into trouble you will have no one to aid you."

"I intend to keep out of trouble."

"What will you do to Berry?"

"Have revenge!" and Jesse looked ominous.

"Providence aid you."

"That scoundrel was a deliberate decoy to get us into the hands of the detective. Pretending that he had been deprived of his rights as a stockholder in the bank, and ousted from the directory of the concern, he pretended to give us the secrets of the bank so we could go west and rob him. What was the result? We went, and we found Cole Greene associating with men enough to capture a county of Missouri. All a deliberate scheme on Berry's part, I do believe, and now we must reap as he has sown."

"Right, too."

"We lost four men in the useless raid."

"I am not willing to lose my share of the chance at revenge," persisted Frank.

"I know, but I am going alone."

"When?"

"At once."

"If you would consent to my accompanying you—"

"I have planned it otherwise."

Frank James, let the matter drop. It was plain that Jesse was fixed in his determination, and that meant that urging would be useless.

The bandit king prepared for the venture. He secured material for a disguise and made himself up as a farmer. If he had been going against Carl, it would have been a good disguise, for he had often assumed it before, as Carl well knew, but he did not expect to see the detective at all.

Bidding good-bye to the band, he set out mounted on a horse and a horse as good as it was to the forces of law. It would not do to take Stroc along, and the change added much to his safety.

Well did he know that the trip was one of

great peril, anyhow, but that was a part of his daily life.

Making use of a circuitous route he gradually wound around and, at the end of five days, was in the vicinity of the last disastrous campaign. One evening he reached a point where a big mansion stood at the edge of a prosperous town.

A colored man stood by the roadside and the bandit pulled up. Speaking in a dialect suited to his assumed character, he asked:

"Kin you tell me whar 't is?"

"Wh'y, sah," answered the colored man, "you's on Massa Thomas Berry's plantation."

"This it?"

"Yes, sah."

"You work for him?"

"Yes, sah."

"Right smart place he has hyer."

"Dar ain't a smarter one in dese parts, sah."

"Been with him long?"

"Ever since he was born. I arried his father ahead o' him."

"So he keeps the old plantation."

"He do now."

"Now?"

"He's tryin' ter sell it off so he kin move ter New York," and the negro sighed miserably.

"So he's got land ter sell?"

"Yes, more'n the white folks kin buy."

"Wal, I sorter am on the watch for land ter buy. I'm Ben Minker, from Webster County. Up our way we all want ter sell, but we can't get nothin' ter what we own. The land is all laid up on end, ye see, an' it ain't worth haulin' ter the next lot."

"Up in the mountings, is it?"

"I should say it is. The Ozarks jest rare their heads up like a madder come colt."

"You're some ways from home."

"I'm lookin' fer a new land o' promise."

"How is that?"

"Out fer land speculation, ye see. Going ter buy somebaw whar I won't see the rocks all the time."

The colored man sighed. Having seen his master's passion for selling out, it occurred to the negro that it was melancholy to see everybody trying to dispose of the old homestead.

"So Berry would sell?" pursued Ben Minker.

"Yes, sah."

"I'll call an' see him."

"He won't be in until after supper, sah."

"I'll call then. I s'pose I kin git 'commodations at the town yer, can't I?"

"Dar's a hotel thar."

"All right. I'll amble on, an' call an' see you 'ons this evenin'! Will you tell Berry that a gent was along lookin' fer land?"

"Yes, sah."

Ben Minker whistled to his horse and went on his way. He had earned a good deal during this conversation without betraying himself in return, and he was encouraged.

"This land matter will give me an excuse for seeing Berry," he soliloquized, as he rode on, "and if he gets out of the interview all right he will be lucky. Ah, Thomas, you shall see what it is to betray the James Boys!"

The hotel was reached, and the man from the Ozark mountains put up his horse and made himself comfortable.

He said nothing about land buyin' in that quarter. Too much talk on the subject would make himself too conspicuous, so he lay low and waited for evening.

"Then he would see the man who had sold out the band."

## CHAPTER IX.

### WHAT BEFELL THE AVENGER.

JESSE JAMES was not disposed to let anything pass by him in the way of amusement. Many a time in the past his love for what he termed "fun" had placed him in trouble, and he was still the same Jesse James.

There were no men loafing around the hotel, and if there had been, he would not have cared to see them long, so he had to be idle or seek other chances for amusement.

When he first arrived he had noticed a comely, bright-eyed girl, who was undoubtedly an employee of the place; and when, later on, he noticed her in the grove just beyond the buildings, he snatched out the way.

He had a susceptible heart himself, and, as he was not ill-looking in his disguise, he hoped the girl would prove susceptible too.

Reaching the grove, he was surprised to see another girl with her—one who looked so much like her that it was plain they were sisters.

Jesse came to a halt.

"Ladies," he said, forgetting his Ozark dialect, "I hope I don't intrude."

"Oh, not at all," replied the girl he had seen before.

"I suppose you are a guest of the hotel too?"

"Lawdy I'm the table girl," was the laughing answer.

"Is possible?"

"It is so."

"Why, you have a more distinguished air than half of those you wait on, I'll swear!" and Jesse looked astonished.

The girl seemed very much pleased, but she replied:

"They don't think me any more than dirt, but what do I care? I am poor, but I reckon I am as good as any of them."

"I should say so. Folks that are rich don't always have brains. Now, I am blessed with some money—I've seen the day," complacently interpolated the bandit, "when I have made a good, solid haul of cash in one day—but I ain't proud."

"You look sensible," added the second girl.

"So I hope I am."

"Won't you sit down?"

"Do I care if I do?"

The ice was broken, and Jesse had made a good impression on these country maidens. They were accustomed to seeing plain clothes, and one appeared did not disturb them, and his manner was silently voted fascinating by both.

An hour passed very pleasantly. It was only a flirtation with the bandit, but he was with an old hand at it, and he was deferential and polite to such a degree that he made steady advance with the shy-rookied girls.

Finally the table girl had to go to the hotel, but she suggested to the supposed farmer from the Ozark region. He had for the time forgotten all about the revenge he had to seek, and he made the most of this occasion.

He suggested a walk, and they moved away in the gloaming.

He was not bashful and he would have taken the main streets, but she had some reason for not caring to appear too much in public—he was not slow to suspect it was a matter of stern parents, so they kept to the side streets and advertised themselves but little.

Supper and everything else was forgotten by the bandit; but, finally, the girl said she would have to go. They parted in the grove where they had first met.

"I would like to call on you to-morrow," remarked Jesse.

"Perhaps I can see you here," hesitatingly replied the companion.

"All right; here let it be."

"I will come around to see my sister."

"Ha—ha! Very good! Well, pleasant dreams, little girl."

"Thank you, sir. Good-night!"

"Good-night."

She went away, whereupon Jesse laughed lightly.

"What will she say in the morning," he wondered, "when she learns that Tom Berry is killed and that the Ozark farmer is the one who did it? Confound it! I sometimes think I might get more out of life by being a decent man and having a nice woman like her—Bab! what am I talking about! Who am I! Let me get rid of this weakness. Is it like an outlaw?"

He laughed, but there was little mirth in it. He waited awhile to crank down the better feeling brought by the girl's influence, and then went to the hotel. He was waited upon by the second sister, but no conversation passed between them.

After supper he went to his room to make the last preparations for the ominous work before him.

"All this while," he mused, "I have carried the decoy letter Berry sent me before the band came out, as useless quest. I may as well destroy it now."

He put his hand in his pocket.

He felt carefully, but did not find the letter.

"Hail how is this? I know it was in that pocket, but it may have got into another. Thunder—the thing is gone."

There was danger in the letter. It was not addressed to his own name on the envelope, but to the boy's name in full.

"I have lost it since I have left the hotel, sure as fate," he added presently. "I don't like that. If it's found it may ruin me. Where could it have gone?"

He was so worried over the matter that was usual to him in crises, but he finally had an idea.

"I took some things out of my pocket when I was in the grove the last time. It may have fallen out then."

He went to the grove, but did not find the letter.

"What does it matter?" he finally exclaimed. "It's not likely to be found until I am well out of town. I'll let it rest. Yes, for why need I worry about it? It's folly to do so. Now for Tom Berry and revenge!"

His whole mood changed, and he yielded again to the ruling impulse of his trip. Berry must die, and it was time to get about it.

Letting "again to the hotel, he made final preparations and ordered his horse to be ready at a certain time. Then he went out and made his way on foot to the house of the man he had doomed to die, and heard of him from the old darky, and was so anxious to sell the plantation that he did not stand on ceremony when he learned that the prospective buyer was again there.

Jesse was admitted at once.

The bandit could hardly control himself when he saw the man who had decoyed the band into their recent troubles, but he did not intend to do his work inside the house, and he curbed his indignation against him as the most part was over.

"I am glad to see you, sir," said Berry, shaking his hand cordially.

"Thankse, neighbor," Jesse answered.

"Did you find good accommodations at the hotel?"

"Yas."

"I would have been glad to entertain you had I been at home."

"Wal, it's all right, anyhow."

"I hear you are in dese parts on business."

"Lookin' fer land."

"Did my servant tell me you are from the Ozark region?"

"Very likely, fer I be. Ye see, the land thar all turned up on edge, an' when our stock feed they hev ter take one another by the tail an' lower themselves down the cliffs ter git anything ter eat."

"Ha, ha! I have heard it is a rocky, hilly country."

"Powerful!"

"Well, sir, I am going to move to New York and try to do business with the Yankees, and I am going to sell this plantation."

"How much?"

"Twenty thousand dollar."

"A bit more than I thought o' payin', but I hev the stuff ter buy it, ef I say so."

"You will find it well worth all I ask, and if you will come around in the morning I shall be glad to show it to you."

"I'll see it in part, ter-night."

"How?"

"Ef you'll guide me I'll look around a little now."

"But you can't tell nothing in the darkness of night."

"Not as ter the soil, but I kin see the general lay o' the land! I'm powerful on the lay o' land."

"It seems a waste of time, but if you say so—"

"I do, an' then I kin think it over durin' the night."

It was Jesse's object to lure the planter away from where he could wreak his vengeance and get out of town before any one would know of the deed. Berry did not suspect this, and though he thought the whim of his visitor a queer one, he could not afford to anger him.

He was about to agree to the proposition when a servant appeared and announced:

"Massah Alfred Haynes is here an' would like ter see yous fer a moment, sah."

"I am occupied, girl."

"He says he is goin' out o' town ter-morrow, early, an' I want ter see ye jest ter a minute."

"Well, well," replied Berry, impatiently, "I will see him if you will excuse me, Mr. Minker."

"All right," answered Jesse, unobtrusively, "I will return directly."

Berry went on as if somewhat surprised when he saw a full dozen of his fellow citizens awaiting him.

"What is this?" he asked.

"Berry," returned Haynes, "whom have you got in there?"

"An Ozark farmer—"

"Farmer be hanged! He's nothing of the sort, I think. Can you guess who it is?"

"No, what?"

"Jesse James."

"What?" cried Berry, leaping to his feet.

"W' think it is the famous outlaw in disguise?"

"By my life! you are mad, Haynes."

"See that!"

The visitor extended a letter. It was the same Jesse had lost in the grove, and it was the one Berry had written to decoy the James



Boys to that vicinity on the former occasion, he was not slow to recognize it.

"Where did you get this?" he asked.

"It was found in a grove where this reputed farmer had been, and we suspect it was he who dropped it. You can guess the rest."

"But this man is not like Jesse James."

"Of course; he is disguised."

"Tell me all about it."

"The hostler at the hotel found it in the grove and brought it to the landlord. They consulted, and agreed that the so-called farmer seemed to be a man in disguise, and then they came to me. In a twinkling it flashed over me that the outlaw had come here to kill you for deceiving the band into danger."

Berry turned pale.

"You startle me," he confessed.

"We are in time to save you, as you will see. We have brought men enough to subdue him, and this we will do immediately."

"He is a desperate fellow."

"I know it."

"He would kill us all if he could."

"We will give him no chance, but rush right in and secure him."

"He is doubtless well armed—"

"So are we."

"Then there may be a mistake—"

"There is not."

The visitors were so confident that Berry was convinced, and he said little more against the plan. It was arranged that they should make a great rush when the chance came and subdue the bandit before he could use or draw his weapons.

It was easy to plan, but the numberless cautions they gave out, not only showed how their courage was affected. They regarded Jesse James as a veritable demon, and were as much afraid of his revolvers as if he had been a dozen ordinary men.

It must be tried, however, and the less delay there was about it the safer it would be for them.

They went secretly to the door. Jesse was sitting as Berry had left him, and wholly unsuspecting of danger.

The men looked at each other. It was to be noted that some of them had lost the ruddy color of their face they usually showed, but the bravest of the party was not in mood to jest about it then.

"Ready?"

Haynes asked the question, not by speech but by motion, and there was an affirmative nod from all.

The door was flung open.

The dozen of men rushed in. The sound of their feet was Jesse's first warning, and, though he had not suspected danger, it was enough to cause him to leap to his feet. He turned, and a swift change came over his face as he saw so many intruders. His hand flashed to his pocket, but he was not in time to make a stand like himself.

They piled upon him in a body. He was dashed to the floor and then they piled upon him again.

He was under the weight of hundreds of pounds of human flesh, and strong arms were grasping at his hands or legs to prevent damage.

It needed no explanation to let him into the secret of all this. Ever prepared for rough work and the enmity of men who obeyed the law he had defied, he knew now that his plans had all miscarried.

He struggled in vain, but at that time there was still the ruling impulse in his mind. Capture was certain, but he wanted to be avenged on Thomas Berry.

He had succeeded in getting his revolver out, and, as he caught sight of a certain man through the mass that hemmed him in, he acted accordingly. Pushing the weapon a little through the arms and legs around him he pressed trigger. Crack!

One chance he had, and then a sudden twisting of the mass of men pinioned his revolver hand and it was all over. A skillful person enveloped his arms with a rope, and a few turns made him helpless. Another rope and his legs faced the same way.

Force of numbers had prevailed, and the lion was netted.

Not until then did the captors realize that the triumph had cost one of their number dear. Thomas Berry lay on the floor bleeding profusely from a wound.

"I am dying!" he gasped.

"The outlaw has killed him!" cried Haynes.

"Lynch the ruffian!"

"Ay, use me rest of the rope to swing him up!"

Such was the advice advanced by some, but

others had more regard for the majesty of law. Realizing that, no matter how much a criminal may deserve death, citizens part from every semblance of their manhood when they try to rob the law, and do its work themselves, the cooler-headed of the party combated the idea and carried the day.

The lynching project was abandoned. A messenger was hustled away to bring a doctor for Berry and the constable to take charge of the prisoner.

This done, they tried to stop the bleeding of Berry's wound.

"It's my death-burr!" he gasped.

"You will rally, won't you?"

"No, no; I feel that I have my death."

"If that is so," added one of those who favored lynching, "Jesse James dies before another sun rises!"

## CHAPTER X.

## WHAT HAPPENED IN THE BANDIT'S CELL.

The bandit smiled sarcastically. "I shall live to see you a dead man!" he retorted.

"We will see."

"The rope is not grown which will end my career, but you can't say the same with confidence."

"Jesse James!" retorted the citizen, "I swear to you that if Berry dies of his hurt you shall swing for it, and not wait for trial, either."

"I defy you all!"

"You will feel different when you are brought to account for shooting Thomas Berry."

"It was done in self-defense."

"You came to his house to murder him."

"How will you prove it?"

"Wait and see. But little proof is needed to convict such a ruffian as you."

"Easy, my man, or you will bring on apoplexy in your rage."

Jesse was irritating his captors, but they saw the folly of talking to him and let it drop.

The doctor came in haste. He examined the wound for Berry and he was in immediate danger of death, but the wound was one which might well be regarded as serious to an extreme. The bullet had passed close to the spine, and he feared that vital part of the system had received harm which would be permanent.

Berry was put to bed, and Jesse was then escorted to jail by all the men of the party. He smiled in derision when he saw how he was regarded. He was bound so securely that he could not by any means have broken loose, yet all they walked close to him, watched him sharply, and as many as could keep their hands on him did so.

Thus might a captive Bengal tiger have been escorted to a place of imprisonment.

The jail proved to be a place much stronger than towns of the size usually are able to boast of. It was of stone, and gloomy to look upon, and Jesse could quickly see that it would not be easy to break out.

He was hurried into a cell, and, with the ropes still on his arms, left alone. This was perfectly safe for the local men, but quite a different matter.

Left alone he gazed around by the dim light of the candle left with him. He would have to put up with primitive comforts while he remained there—the jail was not for luxury. He sat down at the edge of the cot.

"Well, this is interesting!" he muttered. "I am netted as sure as fate, and the outlook is not promising."

He struggled once with his bonds and then stooped.

"Useless! They have me secure, and what Carl cannot do they have done. Fine chance for me. The news of this will go singing along the wires, and Carl will hasten here, and all Missouri will be up in arms to greet me—with hangman's ropes and the like."

The bandit king was taking it coolly, but he was far from satisfied with his situation. Well did he know how firmly they would try to keep the prize they had won.

"And the land is too far away to help me!" he muttered.

Bold as he was it was a discouraging thought, and he tried to turn his thoughts for awhile. His old mood was brought back by the occurrences outside. The natural sounds of the jail were soon added to by the murmur of many voices, and he knew the whole town was gathering to witness the excitement of the news of his capture.

It was a big night for the citizens.

Jesse heard them clamoring outside. Some called for ropes with which to give him over to

Judge Lynch, but the greater part were simply eager to see the renowned outlaw.

"It don't look as if I am to be put on exhibition, to-night," remarked the prisoner with a yawn, anon, "so I may as well lie down and get some sleep."

This he did, and when his keepers looked in, later on, they were amazed to find him sound asleep. Such nerve impressed them as being 'little less than astounding.'

With this one exception there was little sound rest in the town that night. While Jesse slept the people nearly went wild over the capture, and they were too nervous to become quiet right away.

When morning dawned Jesse awoke.

"Not lynched yet!" he laughed, lightly. "Possibly they mean to let me die of these bonds. They are getting rather monotonous."

It was still early when the old murmur outside told him that the crowd was gathering once more, and Haynes finally put in his appearance with a man who proved to be the jailer, Matthew Fyne by name.

"Jesse James," said Haynes, "I have come as a representative of the people."

"Among geese there is always one that quacks louder than the others," was the bandit's encouraging comment.

"Don't insult me, sir!"

"Did I! Bless me, I didn't think it possible."

"Attend to business," angrily replied Haynes.

"Where is the rest of your band?"

"Do you want them?"

"Yes."

"Then I would suggest that you go and look for them."

"We shall."

"Let me know your luck afterwards, will you?"

"Your men are near."

"Good!"

"Are they not?"

"You say they are."

"Confound it! I am after information!" cried Haynes, sharply.

"Proceed!"

"Of course you brought your followers along with you."

"How did you guess it?"

"Is it true?"

"Since you request me to tell, it is true."

"Where are they now?"

"I don't know."

"Are they disguised?"

"Oh, yes! and in fine shape."

"What do they assume to be?"

"They are disguised as men," coolly replied Jesse.

"Confound your impudence! I did not come here to be insulted!" almost shouted the citizen.

"If you had done so it would have shown poor judgment."

"Jesse James, it will be to your good to treat me with respect."

"I was just thinking of that."

"Where are your men?"

"Where they are I don't know, but they are around. One is made up as a minister, another as a lawyer, another as a laborer, another as a peddler, and so on through the list. They are so well disguised that their own mothers would not know them, and you may as well give it up."

"I shall arrest every stranger who puts in an appearance."

Jesse tried to hide the twinkle in his eyes. Unfortunately, his men were far away, but he would be likely to put somebody in danger and make things lively for strangers who might strike the jail.

"Berry is very bad off," said Haynes, anon.

"He always was."

"You are likely to swing, Jesse James."

"Oh, I shall swing to be a hundred."

"Your career is ended."

"It's only just begun."

"It's only fair to you to say that the lynchers are gaining in numbers here. We who believe in law will do all we can to save you, but you had better be prepared."

"Give me weapons, and I am not afraid of all the carrion the lynchers can get together."

"We would not think of doing that."

"At least use my hands."

"Not yet. Possibly we may later on."

Jailer Fyne put in an appearance.

"The citizens are clamoring to have a view of the prisoner," he explained, after a long look at Jesse.

"I suppose we must let them march through."

It was done, and a notable occasion it was. They came with feelings of hatred, awe and horror about equally blended, but Jesse put on

his most pleasant smile, and going to the barred door, laughed and poked at the expense of all who passed by. It was a steady stream until nearly all men, women and children, had been satisfied, and then the jail resumed its old quiet.

This was in part accounted for by the fact that, as Jesse James gained from a chance remark, so many of the men went out to search for the other outlaws.

The king of the bandits laughed anew as he thought of the vast noise at the expense of all who had an hour passed. During that time no one had been in sight, but he finally heard light steps in the corridor, and he looked with interest. No man made those steps, and he was curious to see who was coming. Some one appeared at the barred door, and he felt a singular thrill.

It was the rosy-cheeked girl who had been his companion in the walk of the previous night.

Something made the blood mound to his cheeks, but if he expected a cordial greeting he was disappointed. She stood still and looked with a strange expression upon her face. Rallying suddenly Jesse stepped forward to the bars.

"I was very good of you to come here," he said.

Her lips moved, but she said nothing.

"Very kind," he repeated, somewhat awkwardly.

Now he could see that her face was pale, and that there was much in her face which told of deep feeling. There was horror with all the rest, and the momentary spark of better manhood she had before a wakened was stirred anew.

Again he flushed.

"Things have changed since last night," he said, more awkwardly than before.

Her silence was suddenly broken.

"You—you!" she gasped. "Are you Jesse James?"

His usually bold eyes fell.

"I am," he confessed.

"The outlaw?"

"So men call me."

"And it was you I was with last night?"

There was so much in the words that he felt the blood increase in his face. This was a good woman, and he had won her respect once.

"I—I did you no harm," he muttered.

"You claimed to be an honest man, and oh, what would they think if they had seen us together!"

She clasped her hands, and her fine face was tremulous with emotion.

The evening stroll which had been so little to Jesse, had been much to her, and it had been no trifling matter to see the delusion shattered thus rudely.

"But they didn't see us!" asked Jesse, and he sincerely hoped for a reply in the negative.

"I think no one did."

"I am glad of that."

"But, oh, I did not suspect this!" and again she clasped her hands with emotion not to be mistaken.

The bandit was uneasy, but he was becoming much like his old self, and he inquired:

"How happens it that you were allowed to come here now?"

"No one knows I am here."

"Then how did you get here?"

"I am the jailer's daughter."

"Ha! Is that so?"

"Yes, I am Vesta Pyne, and the jailer is my father."

"Your sister?"

"She is horrified to learn who you are, and she says she would be glad to pull on the rope to hang you."

"She is not kind, but you are a treasure—"

"Don't say that!" cried the girl, sharply.

"Why not?"

"I should have believed you last night."

Her pretty face darkened and her head fell, and Jesse was elated. Right here he saw his hope.

"Why not now?" he asked, assuming a melancholy air. "I have my faults I know, but I am human stuff. Was it little fancy which made me the prince in the midst of severe work to walk with you? No, no; it was something deeper than that; it was the homage of a man to true woman."

"Stop, stop!"

"Why do you object?"

"I know you now."

"Does that end all?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because you are Jesse James."

"Is that a crime which cannot be atoned for?"

"On earth, it cannot; in heaven, it may."

"Are you so unforgiving?"

"I am not the one I wish could pardon you in reality, and I would do so gladly. I can do nothing, though—"

"No, no; say not that. You can, and surely you will do something for me!"

The eager bandit leaned forward and devoured her face with his burning eyes. With her, right there, was the one hope of his success. The girl loved him and upon that weakness he must work.

"Nothing, nothing!" she asserted. "I am sorry for you, but that is all. I know you now, and it seems to turn my blood to ice. You are Jesse James—"

"And do you think me all bad?"

"Ask the men of Missouri!"

"Is there not such a thing as a man being less black than he is painted?"

"One is the best, may I commit, but to sin repeatedly shows the heart which prompts the crimes."

"Vesta, if I stay here I shall be lynched." She shivered at the blunt speech, and buried her face in her hands.

"I am not fit to die," said Jesse, with assumed mournfulness. "My life has not been what it should have been, and if the lynchers come, I shall be hurried into eternity with my sins still scarred."

"Why did you not think of that before?"

"Your city quickens the flow of one's better thoughts."

"Let these thoughts have full scope."

"But the lynchers—"

"Do not speak of them."

"And must I fast to be rid of?"

"Think of the other future."

"Vesta!"

"Well!"

"You will not see me die here?"

"What can I do?"

"Your father is jailer here. Somehow, you can get the keys and liberate me."

"No, no; I would not if I could."

"And must my life go out thus?"

"Look for other help; I can do nothing."

She turned to go away.

## CHAPTER XI.

## A FOOL AND HIS REVOLVER.

"VESTA!"

Jesse James spoke in the most pleading voice, and the jailer's daughter paused.

"Are you going to leave me thus?"

"I must. There is nothing for me to stay longer for."

"It is not nothing that my life is in danger?"

"But I do not say that."

"Little girl, do not desert me now. If I were in a regular prison I would not care, but this is not that. It is a jail so weak that it may easily be entered and a prisoner taken out to be lynched. Vesta, do not desert me! Bring me help! When the way is clear, come with the key and open the door—"

"No, no; I cannot," the girl cried.

"Will you not save my life?"

"Look to the proper source for aid."

"But the lynchers will come first—"

"Heaven forbid, but be that as it may, I can do nothing. Do not ask it of me. I must go now. No, no,"—he had called her name pleadingly—"I cannot, will not listen. Good-by!"

She hastened away.

Jesse looked after her thoughtfully.

"There is hope," he murmured. "Yes, just one. As it is no more, but I will cling to it. The girl is touched. Now she knows who I am her very soul recoils from me, but she can't shake off the spell wholly. Cheer up, my bold bandit; there may be hope in the maiden yet. Thank! I hope she will not make a vow to come here no more!"

Jesse walked his cell and meditated. The girl's visit had changed the current of his thoughts strangely. Before there had been no hope, but now he had taken all philosophically, and it was not so now. Life was as dear to him as to any one else, and he began to look to the future and speculate on how much he could hope for from Vesta.

A woman's love will lead her into all kinds of folly, he mused, "and it may not be my fate to die in this den of foes. No gallovs for me! I can help it, and I'll keep my eyes open for Vesta."

Again a footstep in the corridor.

"The jailer," said Jesse, aloud. "No, I think not; it is a shuffling, uncertain step, like that of a drunken man. Who comes, I wonder?"

A man appeared at the barred door.

He was young, but seemed to have gone to seed. His hair strayed over his shoulders and face in a wild erratic manner, and that face was dull and vacant of expression.

He took hold of the bars and looked in. Big growl his eyes as he looked.

"Well," cried Jesse, after a pause, "what do you think of the grizzly bear?"

"The man at the door giggled."

"Be you him?" he asked.

"I am."

"Where be your claws?"

"Don't worry, but I have them with me."

"I didn't think you would look so mild as this."

"Who are you, anyhow?"

"Little Willie Benson."

Jesse had easily perceived that his visitor was weak of mind, and he determined to see if there was any hope in him.

"You are lucky, Willie."

"I be? Why am I, mister?"

"You are free."

"Yes, that is so."

"But you're a rap up."

"That is because you are an evil man, and the people don't like you. The old ladies shiver when anybody says Jesse James to them and they say, 'Oh that terrible man!'"

"Do they say that?"

"Yes."

"The old ladies wrong me, Willie."

"I don't know," replied the simpleton. "The old ladies are good, and they know lots of things. I like them and it makes me feel bad to see them shiver and be so much afraid."

"There is no reason why they should be afraid of me."

"They say there is, and they know a lot of things. Do you know what I am going to do?"

"No."

Willie produced a revolver.

"I am going to shoot you!"

"Thunder! why should you do that?"

Jesse was really startled. The heretofore blank face began to light up with a wild expression, and it became evident that simple Willie was dangerous.

"I am not going to have the old ladies worry," repeated Willie, "and the only way to help it is to shoot you. You had better pray, for I am going to begin right now."

"See here, you idiot, put up that revolver, or you will kill yourself with it. Willie, as a new idea struck the bandit, "let me buy the weapon of you; I will pay you well. Will you sell it?"

"No, I won't," was the stubborn reply. "All I want is to kill you, and I am going to do it."

He took aim.

"Hold up!" shouted Jesse.

Bang!

Willie fired, and the bullet cut a hole in the bandit's sleeve.

"Stop—stop!" yelled the prisoner. "Drop that gun, you fool!"

A fool Willie was, but he had the stubborn nature often seen in his kind. He was determined to kill Jesse and put the old ladies at ease, and he set out to do it.

Bang!

The bandit did some of the liveliest dodging on record.

Jesse seemed to be training for the position of color-guard.

Harden-ed adventurer that the prisoner was, he was appalled at the thought of standing in the little cell and being shot to pieces so deliberately, and he did all he could to prevent the foolish man from getting a good bead on him; but Willie held his purpose grimly, and blazed away whenever he could accomplish the feat, his aim, difficult task of getting the hammer into position.

Help did not come, and Jesse felt that he must disarm the fool or be killed eventually.

In order to fire to his satisfaction, Willie had thrust the revolver through the bars, and as the fourth shot was fired the bandit suddenly rushed forward. Jesse was there, but he raised his arms as they were and struck at the weapon.

As he had hoped, it was torn from the simpleton's grasp, and it went rattling to the floor. Just then there was a sound in the corridor, and a loud voice broke in on the drama.

"Here, you fool, what are you doing? Get away from there!"

Willie grew panic-stricken. He looked around in alarm, and then fled headlong down the corridor. Some one else approached. The revolver lay at Jesse's feet, and with a quick motion he kicked it under the bed. The jailer appeared.

"Hailo! What is going on here?" he asked.

"Well, sir," the bandit answered, "there is a

ball now, but one of your fellow citizens has tried to shoot me."

"Trying the same trick you like so well, eh?" returned the jailer, with anything but friendly attention.

"Am I to be butchered in here?"

"I think the lynchers will select some tree." With this unsatisfactory and non-committal reply, the jailer went down the corridor to look for Willie. He had no sympathy for the prisoner, but he did not wish to have the village fool invade the jail and do any such promiscuous shooting. Willie had fled, however, and the jailer returned to the cell.

"Are you his?" he inquired.

"No," Jesse replied, "but is this a sample of what I am to expect?"

"No; our way is the rope."

"Be serious, sir, for once. I object to this latest work."

"Property, too," more soberly returned the jailer. "You shall be troubled no more with the fanny. I'll keep him out. I don't know what fancy sent him in, anyhow."

He wandered on, but, now Jesse was over his panic, he did not feel so very bad about the simpleton's visit. Under the bed was the revolver, and though he was not now in condition to make any use of it, it might do him a good deal of service later on.

"The idiot made me dance the liveliest dance of my life, but there is balm in Gilead. Now, if foolish Vesta will help me out, this revolver will come in play, as there are still contrabands in it. I darsay. Dear Vesta, come quickly."

The bandit laughed lightly. He liked to bend people to his will and make use of them, and the hope from Vesta was so strong that he did not yield to gloom in the least.

Anon Haynes and the other men came to the cell. They had hunted for the other bandits and found no one, and they had an idea that Jesse might be induced to betray his comrades.

He was given all the chance in the world, but he continued cheerful and frivolous and helped not at all. Instead, he was quietly saucy, and he often stung them to the quick, so that they went away in an angry mood.

As night approached Jesse grew nervous. Several times men had gathered outside his cell, and the voices of sentinels which worried the bandit. The threats of lynch-work became more clearly distinct, and it was not to be taken with composure.

If it had not been for the one hope from Vesta he would have been glad to see Carl Greene appear, for that man would find a way of saving him from mob-law, and it was one thing the bandit could not think of with calmness.

He got the revolver out from under the bed and managed to thrust it into his pocket.

"Confound these bonds!" he muttered, "why can't I get them off! If I am to be lynched I want to make some move in the game, myself."

After some thought he selected a place where he could chafe the ropes, and then began the long task of breaking them asunder. It was not easy, but he labored on, being interrupted several times, but sticking to the work faithfully.

Night fell.

The bonds were weakened but not removed.

"Confound these bonds!" he muttered, "why can't I get them off! If I am to be lynched I want to make some move in the game, myself."

After some thought he selected a place where he could chafe the ropes, and then began the long task of breaking them asunder. It was not easy, but he labored on, being interrupted several times, but sticking to the work faithfully.

Night fell.

The bonds were weakened but not removed.

"Confound these bonds!" he muttered, "why can't I get them off! If I am to be lynched I want to make some move in the game, myself."

After some thought he selected a place where he could chafe the ropes, and then began the long task of breaking them asunder. It was not easy, but he labored on, being interrupted several times, but sticking to the work faithfully.

Night fell.

The bonds were weakened but not removed.

"Confound these bonds!" he muttered, "why can't I get them off! If I am to be lynched I want to make some move in the game, myself."

After some thought he selected a place where he could chafe the ropes, and then began the long task of breaking them asunder. It was not easy, but he labored on, being interrupted several times, but sticking to the work faithfully.

Night fell.

The bonds were weakened but not removed.

"Confound these bonds!" he muttered, "why can't I get them off! If I am to be lynched I want to make some move in the game, myself."

After some thought he selected a place where he could chafe the ropes, and then began the long task of breaking them asunder. It was not easy, but he labored on, being interrupted several times, but sticking to the work faithfully.

Night fell.

The bonds were weakened but not removed.

"Confound these bonds!" he muttered, "why can't I get them off! If I am to be lynched I want to make some move in the game, myself."

After some thought he selected a place where he could chafe the ropes, and then began the long task of breaking them asunder. It was not easy, but he labored on, being interrupted several times, but sticking to the work faithfully.

inability to know whether there is hope that you will reform."

Her voice shook with emotion.

"Try me!" he urged.

"If I do—"

"Then I will be your friend forever!"

"No, no!" she cried, with a shiver. "I do not want that—I only wish you to be a friend to yourself. Save yourself when you are gone, and I will save you now."

"Foolish you!" exclaimed Jesse, in an intense voice.

"See! I have the key to this door!"

"Angel of my life!"

"Then I think of a way of getting you a horse, but I know of none."

Jesse thought he could find a way, but he replied meekly:

"I am a good foot-traveler."

"It is a condition of the help I give you that I do not furnish you with any weapon."

"It may be best so," agreed Jesse, thinking of his present prize in that line.

Vesta applied the key to the door and then hesitated.

"Quick!" Jesse breathed.

"It may be a mistake—"

"No, no; it is not. Hasten!"

She turned the key, and the door swung back.

Jesse hastened out. His hands were all worked, but she had thought of that. She had a knife and the bonds quickly fell away. He made a move to seize her hands and press kisses upon them, but she had anticipated it.

"Come with me," she said, triumphantly.

A few steps along the corridor and they were where the open land stretched away before them.

"Go!" spoke the girl, "and may the impulse of good be strong within you. Go, but do not forget that your life is given you to repent."

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE HUNTED BANDIT.

JESSE JAMES had devoured the scene before him with eager eyes. He now turned to the girl, and thought it was to impose his gratitude with lover-like warmth, but right then she made a mistake. She drew back to avoid him, but the bandit was practically a different man than when he was in the cell. He had made use of the key, and now that the service was done her usefulness had departed.

He felt able to care for himself, and did not think seriously of her any further.

"How can I go so as to best avoid them until I am out of town," he asked quickly.

"Keep to this side of the town."

"I will. Thank you!"

Abruptly he hastened away.

She had been anxious to avoid any warmth of demonstration, but she was hardly prepared for this summary ending of their interview. Except for the erratic words by the cell door he had made no show of thanking her, and she had risked enough to deserve something, she thought.

She watched him hurry away in the night shadows, and then shook her head.

"I hope I have made no mistake," she murmured, "but she does not act like one who is beginning a better life."

She paused, hesitated, and added:

"I fear I have made a mistake!"

"This idea often came to her in future years. She had seen and now Jesse James again, and as her stare in his escape, through good luck, passed unsuspected by all, she had no trouble over it; but when, in the future years, cured of her fancy for the bandit and happily married to a worthy man, she thought of the events of those two days, she suspected as she did then, that she had made a mistake in releasing him.

Jesse had no such thought to worry him, and he went off away with a light heart.

"They don't take me alive again!" he muttered.

"I am free, and free I will remain. Where do I go now?"

He passed and looked around in uncertainty.

"Tom Berry still lives, but perhaps I have revenged myself there sufficiently."

The idea was correct, for Berry lay for two months on a bed of sickness before he was able to desert that town forever, and carry out his plan of removing to the North.

"I must have a horse," added the bandit, "and, as I can't go to the hotel in anything like safety, I will see what the nearest stable is."

Moving on he arrived at the point named and unhesitatingly opened the door. A horse was in the stall, and though it was too dark to admit of anything like a good examination, the

bandit found that the animal's legs were trim and smooth to the touch, and his manner was that of a mettlesome young horse.

Finding the saddle and bridle Jesse put them on and commenced taking the horse out of the stable. Just then some one else entered.

"Hello! what is going on here?" he cried.

Jesse was for the moment too much dismayed to reply.

"That!" cried the owner of the stable. "You think to steal my horse, but you will find it won't work."

He sprang forward to seize the bandit, but it was no time for the escaped prisoner to hesitate. He had mechanically drawn the revolver acquired from foolish Willie, and he now used it. Taking quick aim, he fired, and the owner of the horse dropped.

Jesse hurried out.

"You accoutred!" cried the wounded man "you have done your work poorly, and I'll be the death of you yet! Help—help!"

The cry startled the bandit, but he could not stop to attend to this man. Besides, he had not one bullet in the revolver, and that might be needed for a more pressing occasion.

He leaped upon the back of the horse and dashed away.

The cry of the wounded man rose with power which told that he was not fatally injured.

"Help—help!"

"On, good horse—on!" urged Jesse. "You now belong to a man who will put you to severe tests if you long remain his property. On—on!"

There was a sort of lane which led through the town back of all houses, and this was the course the bandit was taking. He lacked the knowledge of the place which one ought to have to flee for his life, but he intended to take a direct course and keep on to the best of his ability.

"They are being aroused by the yell of that fellow," Jesse muttered, looking back. "I hope I shall not have a brush before I get out of the town. I want a little breathing time. Yes, and what would Vesta think of her protégé? I have had to shoot one man already, and if the record is lengthened she may not think my repentance sincere."

He laughed lightly, but the laugh died away as a hoarse shout came on the air.

"Hallo!"

Several men appeared where a street intersected the lane he was following.

"Hallo!" added the speaker.

"Go!"

Jesse dug his heels into the horse and the sprited animal sprang away with long bounds.

"Hold on!"

The bandit turned his head.

"Some other time!" he cried, mockingly.

"Stop or we fire!"

Such was the order, and as they were in hot chase it was not without an idle threat. Jesse bent forward over his horse's neck and said nothing. He was speeding as fast as possible, and in that lay his hope.

"Crack! crack! crack!"

It was the sound of rifles, and the bullets cut close to the fugitive's ears. A close call, but this he was used to.

"Pursue!" thundered the leader of these men.

They came sweeping along in the rear, but Jesse's hopes ran high. Unless he was outnumbered he thought he ought to give a good account of himself, and that night he did.

"Oh! for the band now, and there would be music these fellows can but poorly guess at!" he thought.

There was music of a certain kind, now.

"Crack! Crack! Crack!"

How the bullets sang around his head!

"I don't like it," he confessed. "They can hunt me without any danger. I have only one shot in all, and the advantage of a rifle would be a veritable bonanza to me. I haven't it, and they will make it unpleasant. What is ahead of me?"

He could not answer the question, but he knew what was behind. The cracking of the rifles told a story plain and decisive. He longed to see the end of the village, and get on good ground where he could speed his horse.

"Crack! Crack! Crack!"

A bullet tore through his arm.

"Perdition, these fellows will be the death of me!" he cried. "Why am I defenseless when I need life the most? Had powder in a bridge, and it looks to be level land beyond there. If I can't sail this animal there as well as they can, I am a fool. On, good horse, and we will take the bridge flying."

The river at that point was very wide, and the covered bridge which spanned it was like a long, shed-like structure. He did not doubt his ability to get through in safety, but as he reined the horse round to take it he had a great shock.

It was not part of a highway, but a railroad bridge, and as he saw the rails sticking up so high in front of it, and the fact grew upon him that it was not intended for the passage of anything but trains, another thing dampened his zeal.

Beyond doubt the ties would be destitute of planks, as a covering.

Quickly the handit looked back. The pursuers were still coming at a gallop, and now so close that he could not change his course. He had to take to the bridge, and the only question was, what should be done with the horse?

He decided speedily. Giving the animal the sharpest reminder possibly he urged him on to the bridge at full speed.

"Go it!" he yelled, "we cross it or the ties, or fall to death somewhere along here!"

Mad was the venture, but for a time it prospered. The horse kept on, though the ominous rattling of his hoofs told that he was fluting holes in the bridge. Plainly, only the ties were there.

"On!" shouted Jesse, "Keep your courage up, for mine is good.

Too few, twenty, thirty, forty—

The horse fell.

Jesse had released his feet, and when this occurred he made a leap and landed safely, but one of his own legs was through a hole between the ties, and he nearly fell through the bridge.

Pulling himself up he took an account of stock.

The horse was floundering about helplessly, and the bandit arrived at a decision with much of regret.

"I've got to trust to my heels. Well, here goes!"

He started, but only a few steps had he taken before a voice sounded just ahead of him.

"Halt, or I shoot!"

The bandit paused in dismay. With the old pursuers coming fast after him, and this unknown menace on the opposite side, he was hemmed in.

"Do you surrender?" was the demand of the unknown.

Jesse said nothing, but stood still and peered into the darkness. As far as he could see, there was only one person on that side, but it would not do to be imprudent. He held his revolver ready and watched for the foe, but the darkness was so intense he could not distinguish even the outline of a form, and did not fire by guess, for he had but only one bullet.

That shot was too precious to be wasted.

"What is your answer?" pursued the speaker. Jesse did not reply or move.

"Confound you! you can't play any tricks on me!" suspiciously added the unknown. "Take that!"

Crack!

Crack!

The first bullet grazed Jesse's neck, but he was careful not to let the next do so. Quickly he dropped flat, and all the rest of the shots went wild.

"Hallo!" yelled one of the original pursuers, "what is going on in here?"

"That you, Haynes?" asked the marksman.

"Yes; who are you?"

"Ellis."

"What's the shooting?"

"The man you were chasing is penned up in here."

"Good! Has he killed anybody?"

"Reckon he ain't armed, for he ain't returned none of my shots. It may be I have killed him."

"Are you alone?"

"No. Bonner and Gray are with me."

"Hold that side of the bridge and we will soon see the end of this. The man you shot at was Jesse James."

"I thought likely."

"We have him foul, sure as you live. He can't get out of here, and we can secure him, certain."

"He may drop to the bed of the river."

"It is sure death to try it. The water is shallow, and the sharp stones stick up all along. No human being could survive the drop."

This was of interest to Jesse. Lying flat on the ties he had been wondering if he could make the descent in safety. He was looking down freely, but it did but little good. He could see the bed of the river far below, but just what the chance would be he could not tell. Certainly,

however, unless there was ample water the fall would be fatal, and he was inclined to believe the citizen held the truth about the matter.

"This 'fine!' he thought. "Penned up like this, and no way out, and only one bullet to help me through. Bad!"

The horse had been floundering around, and he tried to get a hold with its feet on the footwalk which passed through the bridge and pull itself to the level. Then it backed out with remarkable skill and luck, and was clear of the bridge. It was greeted with a cheer, but hunched back towards its stable.

Jesse saw his one friend go with real regret. It seemed to make his situation all the more helpless.

"Ellis," called Haynes, "suppose you and Bonner and Gray work your way onto the bridge gradually."

"Why?"

"To drive Jesse James out."

"We want him on this side."

"Well, I don't know that I hanker for the job."

"Nonsense! Come ahead!"

"If you want anybody to poke their way into this pitch darkness, do it yourself!" retorted Ellis.

"You are afraid."

"I am," admitted Ellis, calmly. "I've heard of Jesse James before, and I'll be hanged if I go in and let him kill me like a duck. We agree not to let him pass through here, but if there is any invading of the total darkness he is in, you can take the job. I won't!"

"How now are we to get him?"

"We might wait until morning."

"Never!" declared Haynes. "We are not to be bluffed by one man, if he is Jesse James, Boys, charge!"

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### TROUBLE IN THE MAIL CAR.

HAYNES started to read the charge, but a certain tact quickly impressed itself on his mind. Not one of his men were following him. He stopped short.

"Are you asleep?" he demanded.

"We can't go in there to dig a hole 'n' let Jesse James shoot us later hit!" declared a sturdy citizen.

"Nonsense! Are we not a dozen to his one?"

"Yes, but there is only one of 'em, 'n' if I'm the only one, what good would it me ter mediate that the rest of 'em was left alone?"

The logic of this reply silenced Haynes.

"Possibly you are right, and we will try another system. We are well supplied with ammunition, and though we can't see this fellow, we will give him our compliments. Boys, get into position and send a rain of lead into that hole until every chamber of your revolvers is emptied. Make the space in the bridge too hot for him to live through it."

"Thunder!" thought the bandit. "I reckon they have me."

The last order suited the men and they proceeded to carry it out. They took a position, and the firing began. It was all haphazard, but the bullets flew through the bridge in all ways and at about all points and angles for the next few minutes.

When they stopped all listened intently.

"Do you hear him?"

"No."

"He must have been hit."

"I'm sure 'n' sure."

"Hallo, Jesse James!"

There was no reply.

"Boys, we have winged him!" declared Haynes. "Now, Ellis, you push ahead and—"

"So ter thunder! I'll wait 'yer until morning before I venture in there and get hit. Have we any proof he is shot? Would he be fool enough to answer you if he was alive? Well, I reckon not."

"I found it we waste time. Go for a light, Randall, 'yer, a dozen of them. We'll have light so the bridge will be plain to every eye. That will settle it."

"So it will!"

These words were muttered under his breath by Jesse James. He had escaped the bullets by lying close to the ties, but he realized what the new scheme would do for him.

Foot! foot!

There was a sound up the track, and Ellis shouted:

"The train is coming!"

"Good!" retorted Haynes. "If anything is left of 'em, let 'em take that, will and his career."

Jesse scarcely heard the last few words. The announcement from Ellis had given him an idea.

The train would pass through the bridge. Would it be possible for him to seize onto a car as it went, and thus make good his escape?

"Risky!" he murmured, "but by thunder! I am going to try it. Here goes for victory or death!"

There was not much time for preparation. The train was but almost at hand, and he rose and stood by the track. He had hoped that it would slacken speed greatly before crossing the bridge, but if it held up at all he was not conscious of it.

"A mighty big risk," he muttered.

He set his teeth tightly and waited for the critical moment.

On came the train. The headlight gleamed brightly, and the monster engine made the bridge shake as it dashed along over the rails. It was like seizing death and trying to win in a grapple, but the bandit did not let his courage waver.

The locomotive passed, and so did one car. By that time he had calculated the moves he should make, and he grasped bravely at the second car. His hand closed on the hand rail. It was impossible to run by the car and leap at his leisure. He had to do all in one breath.

His hold was secure.

Then the decisive spring was taken.

Up he went, and then he found himself sprawling on the platform.

For a moment he was in danger of falling again, but he quickly recovered his balance and as the train went thundering along, he found himself a passenger, without a scratch.

He got up.

Grimly he laughed as he realized how well he had beaten the men by the bridge, and then he stood still to think about his chances with the train men.

"It's not likely they would recognize me as Jesse James," he thought, "but there is one thing in the way of my success. They took all my money away at the jail, and I have nothing with which to impress myself on the men. If I have struck here, anyhow, and how long I can bluff it out without cashing over for my ride."

No brakeman was near, and he surveyed the cars nearest to him.

One was for passenger service, and the other a mail car.

He put his hand into his pocket where nestled the revolver with the loose bullet.

"There must be registered letters in that car," he soliloquized, "and I might be able to hold up the two men I see there and raise a stock of money. Shall I try it?"

Uncertain how to act, and feeling that, without a horse, weapons or money, he was very helpless, he sat down on the steps to meditate. His will was good to attempt robbery on the mail car at once, but every mile he could progress on the train was vitally important to him.

While he was still considering the point a man came out of the passenger car. Jesse first saw that he was the conductor proved to be groundless.

"Hallo!" said the stranger, "are you sick?"

"Sick?"

"Yes, or why do you ride where you are?"

Jesse took the hint.

"Yes, I was sick, and I came out here to get the air."

"Look out you don't get flung off the car."

"I will."

"This is a nice run."

"Yes, forty miles further without a stop."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. My time table says so, and I heard a man ask the conductor if there wasn't some way he could get off sooner, and the captain said there was no stop."

"That is good."

"So it is."

The stranger thought only of the speed they were making, but Jesse had other things in his mind.

"Do you know what time we make the next station?" asked Jesse.

"Eleven-ten."

"Thank you."

"Do you get off there?"

"I am sure, I may."

"I have to keep on all night, so I'll go to the sleeper now, I hope, and the stranger laughed, "we shall not be wrecked by the James Boys on the way."

"Are they here and here?"

"Not to my knowledge; but those fellows are as uncertain as the wind itself, and about as speedy."

"I don't suppose you want to see them?"

"What! See those heads? Well, I should



say not! Why, it would give me a fit if I got within a mile of one of them."

The passenger laughed as he said this, and Jesse joined him. A few more words the stranger said, and then he gave a pleasant good-night and went into the car again.

"Go your way," muttered Jesse. "I don't imagine you will see any of the James Boys going to night, but you may hear from them again before you go far."

After considering the chances of meeting the conductor and being asked for his ticket, Jesse finally decided to enter the passenger car and ride in as easy a way as possible while waiting for the next stage of affairs. This he did, and as his entrance caused no attention from any one he settled down comfortably in a seat.

"Shall I try to rob the mail car, no?" was the all-absorbing question with him.

He finally decided positively and in the affirmative. He wanted money and was willing to create fresh excitement.

He had no watch to keep track of the time, but a man who sat just in front of him did this often enough for all practical purposes, and in plain sight of the bandit.

When Jesse thought the time for action had arrived he left the car and walked outside. Frongers survey had satisfied him that the men in the mail-car were wholly unsuspecting of danger and that the door to their resort was not locked.

Thus, when he walked out he did not linger, but promptly entered the other car. The clerks had been lounging around, but one of them now spoke with sharpness.

"You've made a mistake!"  
 "How is that?" Jesse inquired, meekly.  
 "Your place is in the other car."  
 "Why so?"  
 "This is not for ordinary passengers."  
 "I am not an ordinary passenger."  
 "What are you?"  
 "A mail inspector."  
 "You are my grandfather as much. Get out of this car."

The clerk advanced a step, but Jesse suddenly produced his revolver.

"Handle up!" he cried.

The clerk fell back a step and made a motion toward his pocket.

"Draw that weapon and you are a dead man!" cried the bandit, fiercely.

"Why-what do you mean?" gasped the astounded clerk.

"I mean that you are my prisoner, and if you try to resist I shall shoot you between. This train is in the hands of my men. Each car is full of them, and the passengers will be held up. We reign here, and resistance means death."

"You are joking."  
 "Do you know my name?"  
 "No."  
 "It is Jesse James."  
 "Thunder!"

"Now you will see that I mean business. Your lives depend upon your keeping quiet and obeying me. Come here."

"What for?"

"Because I say so. Fool! would you dare to disobey? But you need not be alarmed if you are prudent. Come here."

The revolver enforced the demand, and the clerk did not demur further. He went to Jesse's side much as he would approach a tiger, and the bandit, relieved him of his revolver. When this was done his companion was served in the same way, and the robber's triumph seemed assured.

"Both of you sit down yonder and attend strictly to your own business. I have three revolvers now, and it's an arsenal that would blow you to pieces if I should put the screws on. Don't tempt your fate. There will be nobody hurt if you act like sensible men, but just so sure as you try to bamble my plans you die!"

The bandit's blackest look accompanied this threat, and the clerks subsided entirely.

"Where is the registered mail?" asked Jesse. He got the information in a weak voice, and then he went at the next stage of his work. He handled the letters with dexterity, opening them readily. The amount of money thus secured were not so large as the hauls he was accustomed to make, but seldom had gains been more welcome to him.

He was getting the means of paying his way to safety. He had not forgotten that the train was nearing a station, and he finally stopped work and approached the clerks.

"Let me see your watch," he requested.

It was done, and the bandit noted the time,

but the clerk, mistaking the motive of the demand, said:

"I beg that you will not take this from me, for it was given me by my grandfather, who is now dead."

"Keep it until you see him again!" was the grim reply.

Jesse opened the side door of the car. It had been his purpose to ring the bell and bring the train up, but luck favored him. The train was passing around a sharp curve, and, in order to make it in safety, it was the custom to run very slow.

This was being done now, and Jesse saw it was his chance. Along the track was a bank of sand, and he decided that he would run but little risk if he made a leap from the car there.

His decision once made he acted promptly, and without a word to the clerks he went boldly. He had sprang with good judgment, but this did not prevent him from turning a somersault or two when he landed. He picked himself up unharmed, but he was well aware that he could not afford to waste time.

The clerks would soon give the alarm, and then he would have to move with agility if he did not improve his time immediately. He ran up the bank and saw a house close at hand with accompanying buildings. The stable, in particular, interested him.

"We will see what is there?" he muttered.

He ran toward the buildings were all dark, and when he opened the door of the stable there was nothing to show that he would have to meet man or dog. He heard a horse moving and went to the stall. Casual examination satisfied him it was a good animal, and he led it out of the stable.

"Young and trim of build," was his comment. "It will do, and with its help I shall be some miles away before day dawns, I reckon." Finding saddle and bridle he put them on, and then, still without being seen by any one, he rode away.

"Possibly I'll send pay for this brute sometime!" he joughed.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE BANK TREASURE.

FRANK! FRANK! FRANK!

A body of horses moved along the highway with slow and measured tread. On the back of each was a rider, and these men were acquainted as the horses. A chance observer, seeing the men, would have been likely to call them the most peaceful persons in the world had he not been led to wonder why nearly a score of men rode thus together.

Again, if he had been given a chance to look closer, he might have given him a shock to see that each and all were fully armed.

If he had known that the man at the head was Frank James he would have understood a good deal, especially if he had been a resident of Missouri.

"Yonder is the town, Frank," remarked one of the other riders.

"I see it, Cole."

"As appears quiet."

"Yes."

"Two to one that we rifle this bank in successful style. Who bets against me?"

"We don't want to bet against our own enterprise," declared Frank James. "Besides, I am more than ordinarily interested in this break. When Jesse returns I want to have the news of the great success to tell to him."

"We will do it," asserted Cole Younger.

"Jim Cummins, what is the time?" asked Frank.

"Just one o'clock."

"We are about right. Ride on and we will see what this sleepy old town will give up to us."

The bandits continued until the very edge of the collection of houses was reached, and then, dismounted, placed their horses in an out-of-the-way place and put Frank Little and Cole Younger over them as a guard. This done the rest continued by a side street, and thus drew near the very center.

"Halt!"

The obeyed Frank's command, and then he added:

"Jim Cummins and Jack Keene, come with me."

The three glided away, Frank evidently knew the way well, and at the end of five minutes he halted again in front of a neat little cottage.

"All is quiet," he remarked.

"The cashier must be in bed," Jim suggested.

"I think so. Anyhow we will not delay about entering. Jack, you have the tools!"

"Yes."

"Open the door!"

Black-haired Jack attacked the lock, and in a few minutes the door swung back before his efforts.

"Now comes the pinch," added Frank. "I know this house well, but there may be a slip-up, in spite of all, and trap like cats. Follow me!" They entered, and Frank crept along the hall and then up the narrow stairs. Like ghosts the robbers ascended to the upper floor.

"Have you the light, Jim?" questioned the leader.

"Yes."

"Give it to me."

A dark lantern was thrust into Frank's hand, and he next turned the knob of the door which was directly in front of him. As he had expected, the door was not locked, and the way to the room was made open. The bandit stood on the threshold and sent out a ray of light.

It revealed a man in bed, and the fact that he lay so still with the light gleaming in his face, was proof enough that he was asleep.

The light was shut off.

"Forward!" whispered Frank James.

Noisily the three crept to the bedside, and then they crept again swiftly.

"Remember your directions!"

He turned on the light fully once more. The sleeper remained unconscious of it, but the time had come for the robbery to begin.

Frank asked him rudely.

"Wake up!" he commanded.

The stranger's eyes opened.

It was a startling sight which he saw.

In front of him stood the trio of intruders, and while Frank kept the light going fully, Jim and Jack held revolvers to the head of the ex-sleeper.

"Be still, or you die!" ordered Frank, sternly. Wild grew the expression of the man in bed.

"Who—why—what?"

"Try to sound an alarm and you are a dead man! Remain quiet, and you are in no danger. Which shall it be? Do you take life or death?"

"It is a joke!" cried the stranger.

"It is no joke, James Collins. We are your masters. Do as we tell you and you live. Refuse, and you die. Do you take life or death?"

With those revolvers staring him in the face, it was not singular that he took the side of prudence.

"I certainly am not going to be shot if I can help it," he replied, frankly. "What do you want?"

"Get up and come with us!"

It was an imperious command, and Collins saw that it was made in earnest. He was a frightened man, and he determined to take up cushions. Under the persuasive influence of those revolvers he rose, put on his clothes and was ready to go with them.

Out of the house they marched him. Each of the bandits cast a wary glance around, but there was no one in sight but themselves. Straight they went to a point near where the rest of the band had been left, and paused before the most substantial building of the town. It was the bank.

"Open the door!" Frank ordered.

"Collins turned very pale.

"Great heavens! don't ask me to do that!" he gasped.

"Obey!"

"But I can't open it if I would—"

"You are the cashier, and you have the key. Open!"

"Gentlemen, I will do anything—"

Closer to his head the revolvers were placed. "You will obey us or die!" declared Frank James. "No words, now; all you have to do is to obey me."

He raised his hand, made a gesture, and the rest of the band came forward. The cashier found himself surrounded by this grim and terrible band and his heart thumped heavily in his breast. He began to realize the situation, and the desire which every honest man has to be faithful to his trust was now put on his personal fears.

Defly Frank slid his hand into the cashier's pocket and brought out a big key.

He passed it to Jack Keene with a quiet order, and in a moment it clicked in the lock. Jack turned the key and it opened.

"Odd!" muttered Jack. "I did not feel the pressure of the bolt at all. The lock must be weak."

The bank was open, and the prisoner was hauled inside by the bandits and the way closed again behind them.

"Collins," said Frank, quietly, "we may as well tell you who we are. My name is Frank James, and these are my men. We wish you to open the safe. In fact, you are going to open

it, whatever you may desire. It is death to refuse. You know the combination, and we do not. Go to the safe and turn the combination."

They pushed him toward that point. The safe stood a little out of sight, of one who might enter the bank, and with the faint light they had not yet had a good view of it. Now the view was secured, and they gazed in amazement at the sight presented to them.

"The safe was already open."

"Thunder!" Frank exclaimed.

All eyes were fixed upon this marvel, and then the bandit turned to Collins.

"How is this?"

"I don't know," replied the cashier.

"Is it the practice to leave this open?"

"No."

"Did you forget to close it last night?"

"I'll swear it was closed."

"Then why is it thus now?"

"That I don't know!" declared the cashier, and his expression bore testimony to his veracity.

"Somebody else may be in here," suggested Jim Cummins.

"Collins, do other bank officers ever come here at night?"

"No."

"Then who could be here?"

"Nobody should be here."

"Where does yonder door lead to?"

"There is a small room there."

"Cole Younger, take two men, and see if any one is there," ordered Frank, uneasily.

Cole motioned to Jim and Jack, and they went and pushed open the door. All was dark and silent within, but when they flung the light beam upon them, they easily saw a human figure near the extent of the room.

More, they saw two revolvers extended and bearing on them.

"Dogs!" cried a deep, sepulchral voice, "you are dead men!"

It was an ominous warning, but the bandits did not forget the force behind them. It looked as if their surprise was not complete, but they were prepared to fight it out.

"Hands up!" added the unknown, with sudden ferocity. "He who tries to fire at me dies. I have the drop. Hands up!"

They were not just the kind of men to obey such an order tamely, and reckless Jack Keene threw up his hands—not empty, but with a revolver firmly clasped in one of them.

Crack!

Jack's revolver went flying away, torn from his grasp by a bullet which struck the weapon so near his fingers as to benumb them for the moment. It was a startling occurrence, and all the bandits rushed to action. Like angry bees they swarmed toward the point of action, and it looked as if the marksman would fare hard if he was alone.

Suddenly he broke into a hearty laugh.

"You blind me!" he cried, "don't you know me? Am I so soon forgotten? Is there one who remembers me, or shall I have to be introduced all around?"

"Jesse James!" gasped Cole Younger.

"Nobody else, boys!" laughed the bandit king.

Dumfounded were the outlaws, but as the man came forward and the light fell fully upon him there was no room for doubt. They gazed in blank silence, and he seemed to find it very comical.

He laughed long and merrily.

"This is one on you, boys," he declared, "if I had been a fool I should have been likely to defeat your plans, but such is not the case you see?"

"Jesse, how in thunder came you here?" Cole demanded.

"I was on my way to rejoin you."

"But this bank—"

"Tempted me, so I broke in. I picked the lock—it is a weak, simple old contrivance—and then came in and blew the safe open with powder."

"Upon my word!"

"You see, boys, I have done alone what you could not do as a body, without getting the help of the cashier. We never have about got possession of the bank treasure, so we need delay but little longer. Captain Frank James, kindly direct your men to rifle the safe of what is left, and then perhaps we had better be going."

"Jesse, you had the joke on us."

"I have, Frank."

"We can endure it, though."

"So can we all, if we get away with the treasure," and Jesse grew serious. "Boys, get to work, and clear out where I have left. We want to bid adieu to these accursed—"

It was no time for explanations, and work was attended to first of all. The bandits secured whatever was portable, and then they tied up the cashier and prepared to go.

They saw their horse was near—the one he had secured after leaving the train—and by the means of rapid work the whole party were able to depart in a comparatively short time.

They rode away toward the west.

"Jesse, I am amazed to find you here," asserted Frank.

"It is all simple enough. I came on a train until within forty miles of here, and then borrowed a horse from a farmer and finished up. This bank tempted me, and I just raised it for fun."

"We supposed it much stronger than it proved to be, and gave a good deal of time to it. I went in disguise and boarded a few days in the house with the cashier, thus gaining much information."

"Our methods were different, but the results the same."

There was considerable to be said, especially by Jesse, and conversation was lively as they rode on.

All that night they hastened on and until noon of the following day. Then, as they had seen no sign of pursuers, they rested until nine o'clock of the evening, after which they resumed their way. A few hours more of sleep late in the night and they were themselves.

The following afternoon found them traveling a road which ran along a level and flat. They knew a great swamp was on the south side, and, having slight knowledge of the vicinity, they were aiming to keep to the north of it.

This they thought they had done, but Frank spoke suddenly:

"Jesse, is this right?"

"What?"

"Are we on the right road?"

"Do you think otherwise?"

"The track seems to grow fainter all the while."

"Have we missed the main road?"

"No, I am not afraid of it."

"By thunder! it may be so. This way is singularly faint, I will admit. But say, if we are on the wrong track we are liable to have serious trouble. This is a mighty big swamp and we should not lose it. I have heard of its reputation. It's a perfect combination of ponds, quagmires and desolate stretches of all kinds except solid land."

"We must not go on blindly," declared Jim Cummins. "Do you remember the knoll we last passed? I believe if I can go there and take a view I can decide from the points there visible whether we are on the right track or the wrong."

"Then go, Jim."

"Come with me, Cole."

The two galloped along the back track. Ten minutes later they were on the elevated ground referred to. They gazed around sharply.

"Cole, we are wrong," asserted Jim.

"I think we are."

"I know it. I remember this region as we were over it a year ago. We should have kept to the right here, not to the left. The course we are pursuing will plunge us into the swamp sure."

"Has there are other riders?"

"There?"

"Coming along our track."

"Yes, and a large party. By heavens! Do you recognize the man in front?"

"Thunder! It looks like—"

"It is Carl Greene!"

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE FIGHT IN THE SWAMP.

The bandits, waiting on the road, soon saw their comrades come riding back at full speed.

"Something is wrong!" declared Frank James.

"They do seem excited," admitted Jesse.

"I don't see what can threaten us in this out-of-the-way place."

"Are we ever safe?"

Cole and Jim arrived at a gallop.

"Boys, we are in for it!" cried Jim.

"What is the wrong road?"

"We are, but that is not the worst."

"What more?"

"Carl Greene is pursuing us!"

The announcement was so unexpected that the men sat still and could say not a word. Jim Cummins went on hastily:

"Carl is at the head of a large party which is following our trail, and they are so near at hand that there is no time to lose. We can't turn to recover the right road unless we can cut across to—"

He paused and looked to the north.

"Impossible!" asserted Jesse. "There is enough of swamp there, too, to get us hemmed in."

"Then we must go right on and trust to luck. Carl is at our heels. Go, and lose no time."

Such a warning from a man like the speaker was not to be disregarded, and Jesse gave the order to start. The band went off at full speed in their former direction.

The fact that the detective was again on their track was a surprise to all. They had thought that by following the course now being pursued they would have escaped, but now they found he had been dogging the main body while Jesse was on his lone quest, but this hope was proven futile.

As in the past the tireless hunter was keeping them on the run, and they were seeing the result of the life they led.

For two miles they held to their course, but all the while the trail grew fainter. Signs of human habitation had ceased to be seen, and they were finally brought to the point where not a mark guided their steps.

"We are enmeshed in the swamps," said Frank, gloomily.

"And liable to arrive at any moment where we shall have to fight or abandon our horses."

All looked dismayed at this thought. They did not have their favorite steeds on this occasion, having given them opportunity to rest, but this was but little consolation. They did not want to forsake what they had, as it would leave them helpless.

"The animals sink deep in the treacherous footing," muttered Jim.

As he spoke his horse almost became mired.

"Boys, what are we to do?" asked Jesse.

"We may as well fight now as ever," suggested Frank.

"Then do we make the stand?"

"Yes."

All agreed to the proposal, and they dismounted.

The horses were put sufficiently in the rear so they would not be any more exposed than was absolutely necessary, and then the bandits took place by the huge trees and waited the result.

In a short time the pursuers came in sight, and they recognized Carl Greene at the head. It was a force big enough to occasion the liveliest apprehension, and the bandits would much rather have stood and tried their ground, but it was out of the question.

On came the detective's men until they were comparatively near, but they did not commit the folly of running directly into the danger.

Perhaps the realization of the nature of the way that the fugitive must soon halt. Be that as it may, he pulled up his own force.

Soon all disappeared among the trees and bushes.

"What scheme had he?" wondered Jesse.

"He knows what he's about," confessed Jesse, regretfully.

"Possibly the idea is to surround us."

"If so, we can't prevent it."

"No."

"We had better throw out scouts."

"Let me and Cole go."

"Go at once."

The scouts went their way. For ten minutes nothing was seen of friend or foe, and then Frank and Cole came in.

"We see nothing to the rear, but it is almost impossible to tell anything about their movements. One or two were beyond this line of open space, and there is a mat of undergrowth that an enemy can crawl through and never be seen."

"Stand to your places, men!" Jesse directed.

"Be it in mind that they are now here to fight, and for no other purpose. Observe how thick the undergrowth is, affording abundant concealment, and see the tops of the trees, each a perfect jungle. These trees are easily climbed, and once up we should be able to annoy the enemy more than we could in the open. Keep this all in mind when the struggle opens."

Crack!

A bullet passed between Jesse and Frank, but it was not the only shot. Cole Younger had seen the marks of the pursuers, and he had prevented his work, but not too late to retaliate in like fashion.

Crack!

He replied, and the fee dropped with a suddenness which suggested that the movement was not wholly unexpected.

Then a loud yell rose from the area in front of them, and the woods seemed to be full of the opposing force. This was followed by a volley of bullets, fired haphazard, but the bandits had

thrown themselves down, and no one was harmed.

"This is lively!" cried Frank. Jesse was about to reply, when a voice rose in a clear hall:

"Do you hear me, Jesse James?" It was Carl Greene who spoke, and though he was too wise to show himself, he had knowledge of just what they had to expect.

"We have you helpless here," pursued the detective, when he saw he was to get no reply, "and the best thing you can do is to resign yourself to the inevitable and come out of your skins. Do you yield?"

"Do you take us for fools?" retorted Jesse. "Have you seen our numbers?"

"Yes."

"Would you be mad enough to defy us all?"

"We do defy you."

"Then you will all die here."

"Prove it, Carl Greene!"

"Your old plan of running away on speedy horses will not work here. You can't run, and we have you surrounded, so it is only common sense to surrender."

"I see you have it all planned for us," cried Jesse, with sarcasm.

"Will you surrender?"

"No."

"Then we move at once upon you."

"Go ahead!"

The coolness of this reply was proof enough to Carl that he would waste breath by talking further, and he dropped the conversation at once. He called his subordinate officers to him and spoke again.

"Let the men move on. The idea is for them to push their way through the undergrowth and root the James Boys' gang. It will not be so very dangerous, for in this tangle no one need expose himself if he is careful. Let us crawl on until we are at close quarters, and then our superior numbers will result in the speedy fall of the foe."

Fisely planned, but would it work? The man-hunters were put in motion.

On toward the bandits a steady tread.

For some time there was not a sound in the swamp which told of the presence of man, but the lull was to be broken.

On crept the close of men, closing in on all sides, but they grew to feel wonder when they failed to hear from the bandits. They were getting so near that there must something happen soon, yet they saw nothing and heard nothing.

This was mysterious, and it made them decidedly uneasy.

Had they miscalculated their own prowess, and would there be a violent awakening soon.

One of the men saw a bush just ahead of him waver in what he thought an unnatural manner. He did not like this. If he went on he must approach the bush and risk being shot. He decided to try his own luck.

He aimed at the bush.

He fired.

The report came dully, and the bullet whistled through the bush. What it found behind it he never knew, but the woods immediately seemed to spring from death to life. Rifles cracked here and there, and a perfect storm of bullets whistled through the vicinity where the pursuers were.

It was close at hand, and the volley was far from harmless. Men were wounded by that discharge, and were stirred to action, too. It showed that vigorous measures must be adopted or it would go hard with the detective's men.

"Up!" shouted Carl. "Up and charge!"

To their feet sprang the assassins.

"Forward!" yelled Carl.

Bravely they dashed ahead, and all around they looked to see the bandits. They could see a number of them, yet the lines had not been broken at any point. Nobody had gone through, yet nobody was within. They stared blankly at each other.

"What does this mean?" demanded Carl.

"That's not here."

"I see they are not."

"This must be a haunted wood."

"Yes," put in another speaker "and they have said their souls to the devil and he has spirited them away."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Carl.

"Then where are they?"

"Surely," said the detective, "they have broken the lines somewhere."

"Not near me!"

"Not near me!"

Stoically the men defended their faithfulness.

"This passes my comprehension," admitted Carl.

Many of his followers were rough, ignorant

fellows, and with their superstitious fears aroused, they had grown pale of face and weak of limb.

"I don't want to fight the devil!" declared one.

"The only devils you have to fight are Jesse James and his gang," stubbornly replied Carl.

"I don't see that we are fighting them."

"The detective had arrived at last, and he turned his face upward. The tree tops made a tangled mass, but he caught sight of a human leg among the foliage, and then the mystery was explained.

"We have them!" he cried, exultantly.

"We will hail him."

"Wait! He has not seen us yet, but he's coming this way."

On came the Indian, with the same slow and easy movements of the paddie, and he was soon so near that they could call without sounding their voices above a conversational pitch.

"Hello!" said Jesse.

The red man looked up suddenly, and seemed surprised at seeing others in his section.

"I greet you," he replied, in English as good as theirs.

"Do you live near here?"

"Yes."

"Can we pass over this lake?"

"Have you a boat?"

"No."

"There are no boats to be had here."

"How far to land?"

"There is an island in the middle of the lake, and it is only a few rods distant, but to the other part of the mainland is a mile."

"If you will direct us we will swim to the island."

"That place is my home," slowly answered the Indian.

"Do you object to having us there?"

"The good are always welcome."

"We surely will not abuse your hospitality. Give us leave to find shelter there for a time, and we will not only remember you in gratitude, but give you money more than you ever had before."

The canoe man's eyes brightened.

"Money?" he cried.

"As much of it as you wish."

The paddle dipped in the water, and the canoe was set skimming along toward the shore. It touched, and the Indian quickly added:

"Let the leaders of your party, if they will wait, I will paddle all alone within three hours."

"We prefer to go now. How many will this hold?"

"Three besides myself."

"Frank and Cole, come with us."

Carefully they entered the frail craft, and then the others prepared to swim. The singular procession set out from the shore, and the place was soon deserted. The distance to the island proved to be greater than they had supposed, and many of the swimmers were glad to rest awhile on the way, and cling to the protuberances of the giant trees which rose from the water.

All reached the island at last. It was a dry knoll of several acres, and, but for the swamp which encompassed it, would have been a pleasant place. In the center the Indian had built a shanty of bark and the like, and it was large and roomy.

He did all he could to make them feel at home, and proved to be a rather pleasant old fellow.

"What is your name?"

"Running Wolf."

"This is a strange home of yours."

"The destiny of the fading red men is strange."

"Who else of your tribe is near?"

"All are dead but my wife!"

"Is she with you?"

"You will see her presently. Her name is Smiling Sun, and she is a prophetess. She is not like you and me," and Running Wolf touched his forehead with an awed expression, "for to her strange things are revealed. She reads the past and the future, and her mind dwells on things we know not of."

"We shall be glad to see her."

"She will come. Like me, she is of simple life, for we are poor—very poor."

Jesse thought he ought not to let his companion look wholly promise, and he made haste to give Running Wolf the money he had promised. The Indian had much of the hoariness of his race, but his eyes brightened perceptibly as he held the crisp greenbacks which the bank had so recently issued.

Further conversation developed the fact that no one ever came to the island, and the bandits

from enviable when something unexpected was seen.

"Look!" cried Frank.

"Hail a man!"

"Yes, and an Indian at that; an Indian in a canoe!"

The sight filled them all with wonder, and they gazed in silence. Directly toward them the craft came slowly, and it sat the red man, paddling with slow and graceful strokes.

"I would as soon have thought of seeing Tecumseh to come to life," murmured Jesse, presently.

"Perhaps he can direct us."

"We will hail him."

"Wait! He has not seen us yet, but he's coming this way."

On came the Indian, with the same slow and easy movements of the paddie, and he was soon so near that they could call without sounding their voices above a conversational pitch.

"Hello!" said Jesse.

The red man looked up suddenly, and seemed surprised at seeing others in his section.

"I greet you," he replied, in English as good as theirs.

"Do you live near here?"

"Yes."

"Can we pass over this lake?"

"Have you a boat?"

"No."

"There are no boats to be had here."

"How far to land?"

"There is an island in the middle of the lake, and it is only a few rods distant, but to the other part of the mainland is a mile."

"If you will direct us we will swim to the island."

"That place is my home," slowly answered the Indian.

"Do you object to having us there?"

"The good are always welcome."

"We surely will not abuse your hospitality. Give us leave to find shelter there for a time, and we will not only remember you in gratitude, but give you money more than you ever had before."

The canoe man's eyes brightened.

"Money?" he cried.

"As much of it as you wish."

The paddle dipped in the water, and the canoe was set skimming along toward the shore. It touched, and the Indian quickly added:

"Let the leaders of your party, if they will wait, I will paddle all alone within three hours."

"We prefer to go now. How many will this hold?"

"Three besides myself."

"Frank and Cole, come with us."

Carefully they entered the frail craft, and then the others prepared to swim. The singular procession set out from the shore, and the place was soon deserted. The distance to the island proved to be greater than they had supposed, and many of the swimmers were glad to rest awhile on the way, and cling to the protuberances of the giant trees which rose from the water.

All reached the island at last. It was a dry knoll of several acres, and, but for the swamp which encompassed it, would have been a pleasant place. In the center the Indian had built a shanty of bark and the like, and it was large and roomy.

He did all he could to make them feel at home, and proved to be a rather pleasant old fellow.

"What is your name?"

"Running Wolf."

"This is a strange home of yours."

"The destiny of the fading red men is strange."

"Who else of your tribe is near?"

"All are dead but my wife!"

"Is she with you?"

"You will see her presently. Her name is Smiling Sun, and she is a prophetess. She is not like you and me," and Running Wolf touched his forehead with an awed expression, "for to her strange things are revealed. She reads the past and the future, and her mind dwells on things we know not of."

"We shall be glad to see her."

"She will come. Like me, she is of simple life, for we are poor—very poor."

Jesse thought he ought not to let his companion look wholly promise, and he made haste to give Running Wolf the money he had promised. The Indian had much of the hoariness of his race, but his eyes brightened perceptibly as he held the crisp greenbacks which the bank had so recently issued.

Further conversation developed the fact that no one ever came to the island, and the bandits

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE KNIFE AT MIDNIGHT.

THE bandits soon found they had made a mistake in their retracing. The character of the trees changed, giving them no such chance to hide in the tops as they had done before, and when Carl pursued, as he did speedily, they were badly placed. They fell back, and were forced into a region where the ground was very low, and water covered many places in large pools.

Suddenly Cole Younger sounded a new alarm.

"There is a regular lake ahead."

"It can't cross that," admitted Jesse.

"We're not swimmers!"

"To where? We do not know where the lake will end."

This was correct. Trees grew all along in the water of the lake, slooting off, and was what the water was called Frank.

They stood looking in a frame of mind far

felt quite hopeful of being able to avoid further acquaintance of Carl Greene and his men for a time.

Presently there was a stir at the door, and another person entered. One look was enough to satisfy them that it was Running Wolf. He came, and, second, that she was, indeed, "not like them."

Her eyes gleamed with an unnatural fire, which told of a mind far from right.

Running Wolf introduced her, with his expression of awe back again.

She regarded them, and her eyes grew wilder than ever. Pointing a finger at Jesse, she exclaimed:

"These are men of blood."

"The bandits could not avoid a cold chill. There was that in her manner which was very unpleasant to the nerves.

"Blood is on their hands!" she added, with emphasis.

"Smiling Sun, they are our guests," said Running Wolf, deprecatingly.

"Be that as it may, blood drips from their hands."

"Madam," replied Jesse, "for once you are deceived. We are poor and humble men, but we thank our good monitors we are not evil."

"Blood, blood, blood!" echoed Smiling Sun, eyes more wildly.

"My good woman, does the spirit of prophecy never fail you?" inquired Jesse.

"Never!"

"It has now."

"Not so, for I never saw more clearly. Dark is the way where you have gone in life, and I see clouds hovering all around; and men, women and children weeping for what you have done, but through it all sounds the drip, drip, drip of blood. Ah, your hands are steeped in it!" she wildly added.

"Confound it, Jesse, and this!" requested Cole Younger.

"Never mind the past, madam," said the banditing. "We live for the future."

"But your future is short!" and Smiling Sun's eyes fairly seemed to turn to fire.

"Short, is it?"

"Ay, and the end bloody, but to you it shall not be as in the past, for ten all went in your favor, and in the future you fall. Yes, you fall, and you die like the hunted tiger. Sudden and violent shall your end be!"

The woman was tall, as in a certain way of impressive figure, and in a coupled with her manner, so worked on the bandits that many of them were sorry they had ever seen her. Evil predictions are never agreeable, but when uttered in one's ear by such a person as reputed prophetess—it was more than unpleasant.

"Do I die the same way?" asked Cole Younger, recklessly.

"You! Ha! there is no end to you; no, no, end. Your life goes on, but you shall pay for death. Stone walls shall hem you in and your cries will rise in woe, but you shall cry in vain. Immured like a man in his grave you shall envy him, for your memory shall not die as his dies!"

"Enough of this!" exclaimed Frank James, uneasily. "We are not here to learn the future, true or the reverse. Running Wolf, be so kind as to stop this."

"Great is Smiling Sun, the daughter of Speaking Life, the grand-daughter of Wise Bear, and herself a prophesess of a rare skill!" murmured Running Wolf, devoutly, but he made no good impression.

"Here is more money," said Frank. "We want to be left alone to sleep."

There was one thing which would touch the old Indian deeper than the faith he had in his mystic wife, and that was the money of the wide United States. Having seen more of it now, he led Smiling Sun outside and had peace restored.

As a night approached, they began to think of the accommodations they could get. Running Wolf could give them supper and shelter, and that was all, but was it not enough? They thought so, and were duly satisfied. Thus far nothing more had been seen or heard from Carl Greene, and they hoped the assurance of the old Indian that no one ever came to the island would prove equally true now.

As the time all lay down to sleep, Running Wolf taking position by the door, where he could, as he asserted, hear the slightest sound, if anybody came near.

Time passed. Sleep was on all the bandits. The fire burned low in the hut, though its rays were still strong enough to light up the interior. The glimmering rays went dancing along the walls, and played fantastically on the faces of the sleepers.

Frank James dreamed. Evil was the drift of

the dream, and uncomfortable the feelings which went with it.

He awoke—he opened his eyes.

He saw something besides sleepers there.

Over him some one was bending. It was Smiling Sun, and in her upraised hand was a knife, bright and sharp.

As if for a stroke between that knife in the air, and the hand which clasped it was as strong as that of a man.

Yet the hand was a woman's; it was that of Smiling Sun, and Smiling Sun's face was above his own, dark, grim, misshapen and threatening.

Words passed her lips in low but intense mutterings.

"Die!" she whispered. "Die, man of blood, and so shall all your party go after you! I am called to slay you as I would a snake, and I lean but to obey. Your hour is come, now the doom is to be met. Doom of darkness—dark the past whence you have come—dark the future whither you are to go!"

Frank lay like one palsied. Clearly he realized that the woman was as mad as a lunatic, and he knew, too, that his life was in danger, but he could not move—he could not break the spell of horror which was upon him.

Perpiration started out on his person, and never had his agony been greater.

"You are called and you must go," pursued Smiling Sun. "I hear and I obey. Go!"

Down came the hand—down came the knife. Frank James could never fully realize how it happened, for he had no other evidence that he had aroused from his spell of horror, but something—a instinct of self-preservation, perhaps, since it was not knowingly done—led him to throw up his own hand.

The prophetess' wrist fell into his grasp, and the blow was checked. Then the spell was broken fully.

Frank uttered a wild cry and threw the woman away from him. Then he leaped to his feet.

All were quickly astir, and with that cry ringing in their ears, they came up, with weapons in hand, prepared for severe work. They found Frank keeping Smiling Sun at bay with his revolver.

Running Wolf was inclined to be angry at first, especially as the wild wood of the prophetess had passed, but when the explanation had been backed up with a little more cash, he grew mollified, and peace was restored.

Only slightly after midnight, and as there could be no safety with the mad woman around without a due guard being kept up, it was arranged that the men should have their watches through the rest of the night.

Ed Miller drew the lot which put him on guard first. He was followed by Hobbs Kerry, and at three o'clock Bill Chadwell took the post. Bill had been sleeping soundly, and he was sleepy still, but he intended to keep a good watch.

Whether he really dozed for a moment, or whether another pair of ears was keener than his own may not be known, but when he had been asleep for some time, the old Running Wolf suddenly leaped to his feet and held a warning finger.

"Halt!" he cautioned.

Bill was afraid another mad person had broken loose.

"What is it?" he asked.

"A spy!"

"A spy?"

"Where?"

"Listen."

"I hear nothing."

"Come with me."

The chief's manner was sane enough, and Bill did not refuse the invitation. Silently the Indian led the way out of the hut with Bill close behind, and the former's pointing finger soon brought light to Bill.

"A spy!" the bandit whispered.

#### CHAPTER XVII.

##### THE BANDITS STRIKE BACK.

THERE could be no doubt of the correctness of this assertion. All the bandits were in the slant except the present observer, yet some man was by the structure, peering through one of the openings in the wallings in the night.

Bill Chadwell needed no explanation of this affair. It was clear that Carl Greene and his followers were still active, and that fresh danger menaced the band.

"I do not know him," remarked Running Wolf, softly.

"Well, I am going to," replied Bill.

"Shall we speak to him?"

"Wait! Indian, stay right where you are and let me manage this."

The bandit walked away, using caution which made his steps inaudible to the casual listener, and thus approached the spy from the rear. He had come quite close before he was heard. Then the spy leaped to his feet, but it was only to find himself looking into Bill's revolver.

"Hands up!" cried the bandit.

"What?" gasped the spy.

"Surrender."

"Way do you point that revolver at me?"

"Because I am going to blow your brains out if you resist," frankly admitted the bandit.

"I protest against this—"

"What are you doing here?"

"Nothing."

"You are a spy from Carl Greene."

"No, oh! no; I am not."

"Nobody else would have any business to do here."

"I don't know the man you mention."

"Then why are you here?"

"I am a lost hunter."

"And spy?"

"I am wrong me."

"We will see. Go before me and enter that hut."

The spy was rebellious, and he stood and measured the athletic figure of the bandit, looking to leap upon him. Bill read his thoughts.

"Try it and you die!"

The spy drew a sigh.

"Go!" Bill ordered.

It was but, but the unknown saw he had got to obey. Silently he consented to be driven to the hut, where their entrance soon brought all the bandits to their feet. Bill made his work known, and then turned the prisoner over to Jesse and Frank.

The man was duly questioned, but nothing was gathered from him.

He stoutly persisted that he was a lone hunter who had been out in the woods, and his breaths were useless to shake him in this claim. The bandits consulted, and the result was that Jim Cummins and old Running Wolf went to the mainland on a scout. When they returned the report was just what was expected.

Carl and his men were waiting on the mainland for the coming of the spy.

"Men," said Jesse, "this is no longer a place of safety for us. If Carl is suspicious enough to send a follower over here he will be wise enough to come himself, when he sees his man does not return. What is the lesson we learn from this?"

"To get out," replied Frank.

"That is it, and we must go."

"Jesse, I think there is a fine chance ahead of us now," said Jim Cummins. "I saw several horses well apart from the men, and I believe they are our own. Is not the chance open for us to recover our animals and slip quietly away?"

"Do you think it possible?"

"Yes."

"Then we will try it."

A little more money was given to old Running Wolf to quicken his ideas, and then the Indian agreed not to release the spy until the next day, or until friends of the latter came. This settled, the bandits all went to sleep.

They went safely to the mainland.

"Lead on, Jim," Jesse directed.

Cummins took them along to one side of the detective's party. Once they were so close they could hear the conversation, and it corroborated the suspicion that they had sent a spy to the island. They were now becoming impatient over the delay.

"Hasten, Jim," urged Jesse.

"No, don't be too headlong," replied Jim. "Caution is now better than courage. The horses are over yonder. It is delicate work to get them away, and it must be done on the quiet."

"True. Guide us."

"Follow me."

A little further and the animals were reached. They stood in a group and with those of the detective's party. The darkness it was not easy to select their own, so a new and brilliant plan was evolved.

"Take all you can get," directed Jesse, "and we will try to leave Carl helpless. Get away with it!"

Silently and skillfully the bandits worked. Every moment they expected the alarm to come and they were ready for anything.

It was a dark night, and the horses seemed to get to ground safe and dry enough to



make any degree of speed possible after mounting.

One after another was led to this dry ground. As time passed and the labor progressed so well the bandits grew more and more exultant. They were so near they could hear the murmur of voices as the fore talked, yet they were taking the horses from under their very noses, as it were.

At last all was done.

"Mount!"

Jesse gave the order, and all swung into the saddle. Each man held several superfluous animals by the reins.

"Go on!" was the next command.

"Jesse, let us give one yell," requested Jack Keene. "It would be such fun to hear Carl storm."

"No, we can take no such risk. Go in silence."

Quietly they went their way, and no sound came to tell of an alarm while they were within hearing. They had missed the chance of hearing Carl rage at the loss of men, but they could imagine how this and the accompanying loss of horses would work on him.

They must have possession of at least half of his own steeds.

Their previous experience enabled them to retrace their steps without much difficulty, and they drew out of the west of the swamp. By the time that the first feeble rays of day began to be seen, they were on fairly firm land, and they went along merrily.

Finding the point where they had first discovered on the previous day that they had taken the wrong road, they continued until they found the right one, and then pushed away toward the north.

It was an uneventful ride, for no sign of danger was seen during the day. That night they slept in a barn, and then pursued their way at leisurely pace toward the north.

It was supper time when they saw a town before them, and they halted it with pleasure.

"We will have a good square feed," said Frank.

"And sleep in a hotel to-night if the place boasts of one," added Cole.

"Do you think it safe?"

"Why not?"

"Best assured Carl has not abandoned this hunt."

"True, but we want to live like human beings when we can."

"Well, we will see how things look."

They rode into the town and found a good hotel. There they put up and had supper, after which they proceeded to size up the situation.

"I see nothing wrong," said Frank to Jesse as they stood on the piazza a little later.

"Not a person here has looked at us suspiciously."

"I think that is right."

"What is that disturbance down the street?"

"Some excitement in front of a house, sure."

The landlord came out and stood looking in the same direction with a troubled expression on his face.

"What is the tumult down there, sir?" Jesse asked.

"One of our old citizens is in trouble, sir."

"How?"

"They say he is crazy."

"Isn't he?"

"We don't think so."

"Who does?"

"Lawyer Anderson."

"What has he to do with it?"

"Well, you see it is like this: Mr. Mullen has always lived here and was a most valued citizen of ours, but he is now very old. A year ago a relative of his came here and took him to keep. This was Anderson. He was a lawyer, and he began to practice here with much success. We all thought him a great and good man, and he grew to be very powerful not only here but all through the county. He grew rich, too—"

"By what means?"

The landlord shook his head.

"I make no charge," he replied, "but I do not believe poor old Mullen has so much money as when Anderson came."

"I see."

"Mind you, sir," hastily added the landlord, "I make no charge."

"True, you have not. Go on."

"A short time ago Anderson announced that Mullen was crazy, and he was going to have him sent to a private asylum," he replied.

"A nice plot. Did no one help the old man?"

"A young man named West Chase did, and he concealed Mullen in the house you see yonder. Anderson had put over the old man as an

alleged nurse a young woman he brought from St. Louis, Myra Rossmore by name, and it was she who finally found Mullen where West had concealed him. Now Anderson has him again, and he will keep him, too."

"Why don't you interfere?"

"We dare not."

"Because Anderson is so powerful."

"Yes. He is a great man all through the county."

Here the landlord had a call to business, and the bandits were left alone.

"Frank," said Jesse, "let's go down and see to it."

"Done! If we think old Mullen is sane I do not believe the great man of the county will overawe us."

"That he will not."

They went, and found the group decidedly interesting to look at.

West Chase, the young champion, was not present, but Anderson was, and so was a flashy looking young female, who proved to be Myra Rossmore. The lawyer had sent for a carriage to take Mullen away, but the latter was not reconciled. He looked around him and spoke plaintively.

"Friends!" he said, "you have all known me for many years. You will know me but a little while longer if this outrage is allowed to go on. I have associated with your fathers and your grandfathers, and they were glad to have my good friends. I was glad to have theirs, for they were friends I loved. Now, is there no one to stand by me in my old age?"

Clearly, there were many who would have been glad to do this, but they looked at great Lawyer Anderson and said nothing.

"He who says my mind is diseased speaks an infamous falsehood!" added Mullen, with emphasis. "Who will say it among those who have known me in the years past?"

They spoke quickly.

"Gentlemen, do not heed him. This is a very painful matter, but the poor old gentleman does not mean so bad as he says. Only those who have been daily with him know how he is situated."

"I have been with him," declared Myra Rossmore, "and I know all this. The old man is a mental wreck."

"The woman lies!" declared Mullen, excitedly.

"Hear him rave!" murmured Anderson.

"Who would not rave to be thus accused?" retorted Mullen. "Now, not one of my friends think this of me. Who will say he does?"

"None of them have been with you, as we have," hastily replied the lawyer.

"It is my money you want, knave!"

"Poor old man!" sighed Anderson.

"Time will prove this, and you will be shown up as a desperate and villainous plotter."

"Gentlemen, do not heed him," said Anderson, meekly. "He does not know the harm he may do his unsuspecting reputation."

As he spoke, he cast an anxious glance toward where he expected the carriage to come from, and was delighted to see it approaching.

"Jesse," said Frank James, "this is all a vile plot on the old man's part."

"You are right, Frank."

"These people fear the lawyer. Do we?"

"Then let us stop this."

"We will. Mullen is as sane as you or I."

The carriage drew up, and Myra officiously seized the old man's arm and tried to pull him forward. He resisted, and Anderson gave his help, so the venerable citizen was compelled to go away steadily. He grew excited.

"Help, help!" he cried.

"Come!" cried Anderson, and feeling his triumph secure, he exhibited some of the roughness of his nature. "There is no help for you."

A stern voice pronounced the words in his ears, and then a strong hand flung Anderson back from his prey. He almost fell, but, as he struggled up, he was surprised to see two strangers in the midst of his captured prey.

"Who touched me?" he shouted.

"I did," calmly replied Jesse.

"How dared you?"

"Why, your poor little fellow, I don't see that there is any about it."

"I will have you arrested for assault!" yelled Anderson, madly.

"Oh, go off and put ice on your head!"

By the assistance of this reply—a reply made to the great man of the county—absolutely made Anderson speechless, but Myra took her turn and shook her fist in Jesse's face in a very un ladylike manner.

"We will put you in State's prison!" she declared.

"Hello! Are you here, Venus?" sneered Jesse. "Who bleached your hair?"

Myra almost fainted.

"Are you an Indian that you put so much point on your face?" he added, mockingly.

"Wretch!" she gasped.

"What bar-room did Anderson pick you up at when he went to St. Louis? No employment office would give place to you."

"These shots hit hard, for there was ground for each, and the painted young woman, who had thought her complexion invulnerable to the dull eyes of Jesse, was almost wild with rage. She made an attempt to scratch Jesse's face, but he flung her aside so roughly that she almost fell to the ground.

She managed to recover her balance, but she was choking with her wrath. She attacked him no more, but her voice arose shrilly.

"I will live to be avenged for this!" she cried, venomously.

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

##### IN FRESH DANGER.

DRINKING this diversion Anderson had been doing some thinking. He was afraid of the men who had thus interfered with his plot, but he hoped all was not lost. He determined to make one more effort to get old Mr. Mullen into the carriage.

Seizing him by the arm, he began to drag him along, but Jesse promptly knocked the lawyer down. Then the bandit turned to the people.

"Men!" he cried, "I am not going to see this outrage done if you are. Mullen is not more in danger than I, and I shall defend him. Who is with me?"

No one volunteered.

"To see which of you stand in awe of Anderson, the latter leaped to his feet, almost foaming with rage.

"Where is the constable?" he demanded. "I will have this meddling scoundrel arrested at once."

"No, you will not," Jesse said, calmly, "and you will lose on Mullen, too. Who will help me in this?"

A young man pushed hurriedly through the crowd, breathing hard, as if after a run.

"I will!" he exclaimed.

"West Chase!" cried Mullen, joyfully. Jesse recognized the name of the man who had helped Mullen before, and he snook the new arrival by the hand.

"We can do this," the bandit added. "Take your old friend to the hotel, and my comrade and I will guard you."

"Are you sincere?" demanded West.

"Have I not proved it!"

"Was it you who struck Anderson?"

"Yes."

"You have proved it, indeed."

"It will prove his death stroke!" cried Myra Rossmore, excitedly. "He will live to repent this."

"Hello!" exclaimed Jesse, easily. "How much does Anderson pay you, my painted dame, to fight so zealously on his side?"

Myra flushed.

"You are a coward to insult me!" she cried.

"Don't deserve it, then."

"As for the pay, I get none."

"Oh, you are a matchless liar!" coolly retorted the bandit king. "Of course Anderson brought you down from St. Louis to help him do his vile work. Well, he chose his helper well. Do what you can fight for, I see you have your war paint on."

Jesse saw that this continual allusion to the artificial color in her face maddened Myra, and he kept it up pertinaciously. Now her composure gave out, and she came and sprang at him and tried to scratch his face. He gave her a shove so rough that she nearly fell, and then turned to West Chase.

"Are you ready to go?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Go, then."

"And you?"

"My friend and I will follow you. Go on." Jesse was not widely satisfied with the notion of lingering where they were.

While old Mr. Mullen had a good many sympathizers in the crowd, they were all afraid to come out for him, and the fact that the plotting lawyer had been seen to do work against the James Boys, to speak in low tones with certain law-brought men in the crowd, suggested that he had brought up the lower element of the population, body and soul.

To avoid a clash, it would be well to get to the hotel.

West took Mullen's arm and led him away. Myra was the only one who showed a disposition to remonstrate, and when Anderson had whispered to her, she relaxed into inactivity. "The old fellow has some well defined scheme," remarked Frank.

"Yes," Jesse agreed.  
 "He will set a force upon us."  
 "What do we care?"  
 "He may get all the citizens."  
 "Not all; and if he did, what then? Is not the band with us?"  
 "We could beat them off, no doubt, but any action would advertise us too much."  
 "Anyhow we will beat him."

The hotel was reached in safety, and Mullen was taken to the parlor.  
 He was very grateful for what they had done, and his words proved more fully than ever that he was fully in possession of his mental powers.

"Gentlemen," said West Chase, "you never did a better deed than when you helped this old man. But what is to be done now? Do you remain here long?"

"No."  
 "Where do you go, if I may ask?"  
 "North."  
 "It will never do for Mr. Mullen to stay here."

Jesse was silent. He was thinking that the James Boys would not be the best of guards for an old man, especially if Carl Greene should get after them again and force them to flight and fighting.

"Do not mistake my interest in Mullen," West added. "I am not his heir, and shall refuse to take any pay for what I may do for him, but I am bound to help him all I can."

"Quite right."  
 "Now, of course, his remedy is with the law."  
 "I should say so."  
 "My idea, now Anderson has taken this bold step and made decisive action necessary, is to engage a lawyer for Mullen, and see that he is vindicated and saved in court."  
 "Right."

"But where can he remain in the meanwhile?"  
 "Do you know of no place?"

"Yes."  
 "Why not take him there?"  
 "This is where your help is needed if you will give it. In the town, or rather the settlement of Briggs' Bend, I have many friends, and they will league themselves boldly with me and against Anderson. Some of them are not so law-abiding as they might be, but that is all the more in our favor if we have to fight the lawyer."

"Why not take him there?"  
 "Anderson will surely attempt to regain possession of him on the way, you see."  
 "I think I do see. You would like our help, eh?"

"That is it, precisely."  
 "We will guard you and Mullen to that hamlet."

"Good!"  
 "Shall we go to-morrow?"  
 "Would it be safe to wait?"  
 "Why not?"

"Anderson may try to trap us this night."  
 "He will not succeed," confidently asserted Jesse, "though if you say the word, we go now."

West assumed a thoughtful air.  
 "Possibly we can get help which will make it easy for us to stay here and defy the lawyer on our way home, this afternoon, I saw men who are now to be expected here any minute. They were a detective and his band."  
 "A detective?" echoed Jesse.

"Yes."  
 "What is he doing here?"  
 "Hunting the James Boys?"

West made the announcement with all the innocence in the world, but it fell forcibly on the listeners.

"The man is Carl Greene by name," (the young man went on. "He is the famous detective of the same name, and you must have heard of him.) He observed in my hearing, that he and his party would arrive in this town to-night, so we may soon look for him. He is likely to arrive at any time."

This was not pleasant news for the bandits, and they lost all desire to sleep in the place themselves.

"Did you speak with him about Mullen?" asked Jesse.  
 "No."

"What talk did you have with him?"  
 "None."

"Not a word?"  
 "Whatever. I merely listened while he talked with others."

"How many men had he?"  
 "About thirty, I should say."  
 "Why do you mention him in connection with Mullen's case?"

"Being an officer of law he might interfere."  
 "But he has other business."  
 "True."

"And would not Anderson have more power to take care of him than we?"  
 "You are right, and it becomes clear he would be against us, not in our favor. Then we ought to get away."

"We will go immediately. Have you a horse?"  
 "Yes."  
 "How about Mullen?"

"I have two here at the hotel and he can go with me."  
 "Is he strong enough to ride?"  
 "Oh, yes."  
 "Then let us be off."

Preparations began. Several of the bandits went to make the horses ready, and this was soon done. While final efforts were being made to get old Mr. Mullen into the best possible condition for the journey the landlord, who had been very nervous ever since his hotel became the headquarters for the opposition to Anderson, approached the leaders with haste.

"Anderson is coming," he announced.  
 "Ah! is he?" replied Jesse, calmly.  
 "Yes, and many other men with him."  
 "He has no right to ride the citizens, has he?"  
 "There are more than them."

"More?"  
 "A lot of strangers who have just arrived on horseback."  
 "What?"

"Yes, and I am told he has had conversation with them, and they are going to help him."  
 "Carl Greene!" exclaimed Frank James.  
 "To horse, men!" ordered Jesse, quickly.

As he spoke Frank stepped to the window and was staggered by what he saw. Not less than fifty men were there, with over half of them mounted, and at the head were two men he was not slow to recognize.

They were Anderson and Carl Greene.  
 "Jesse, this way!"  
 "Thunder! we are in for it!" the bandit king exclaimed.

"Can't we slip away?"  
 "Yes, let us go by the rear."  
 "Anderson tries the door."  
 "I have locked it," said the landlord, trembling.

"The lawyer knocks."  
 "Gentlemen," cried the landlord, "if you are going, for Heaven's sake do it at once. This will be the ruin of me if Anderson knows I am in any degree against him."

"We will go. West Chase, see to Mullen. Away, boys!"

Quietly the banditti hastened out of the rear door. The stable was in that direction, and they hoped to get a good start. Cole Younger and Jim Commins were by the horses waiting for them, and all there was to do was to mount.

"Saddle!" cried Jesse, and the direction was quickly obeyed.  
 A loud thumping was now to be heard at the front door, but suddenly Anderson's voice sounded outside with the shout:

"Open this door, landlord, or we will break it down."  
 "Go softly, boys!" spoke Jesse.

The banditti began to ride out of the yard, and gained several yards without any mishance. Then a hoarse shout suddenly came from near the front of the hotel.

"This way—here they are. They are making off."  
 Almost immediately sounded another voice.

"Pursue, men. They are outlaws for whom a large reward is offered. Pursue—they are the James Boys."

"Ride hard!" cried Jesse James.  
 Off dashed the banditti.  
 "There they go—there they go!" was the outcry.

"Give them a volley!" shouted Carl Greene.  
 "Fire!"  
 Crack!  
 Crack!  
 Crack!

The detective was obeyed, but so hurriedly, that though lead flew in abundance, and it

ought to have done some execution at that distance, it was all lost. Nobody was hit.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Jesse. "You have forgotten how those Carl Greene. Better change your business."

Derisively laughed the bandits, and then they dashed away down the street. Carl swung his arms about wildly.

"Pursue!" he thundered. "Do not let them escape us this time."  
 His men were those whom long practice had made about as adept in quick action as were the bandits themselves, and before the words were fairly out of his mouth they were in motion.

West Chase was looking keenly at Jesse, and he spoke in a low tone:  
 "Did you hear that charge?"  
 "What charge?"  
 "That you were the James Boys."

"Yes."  
 "Is it true?"  
 "Since you ask it I will say it is. Now what charge does that make in the situation? Do you object to Mullen being saved from such a source?"

"Never! never! I care not who you are, if you will only stand by this old man. I will say frankly that I have no sympathy with you as law breakers, nor with other law breakers, but adversely makes strange bedfellows, it is said, and I am not so thin skinned as to reject help so nobly offered. More than this, if you will stand by me I will stand for you. In the little hamlet of Briggs' Bend, to which I intend to go, I have great influence. Once let me introduce you as my friends, and all the hamlet will stand by you, and it's a fact that they have a reputation just as a shade of better than ours; therefore, they will be with you, if I say so, beyond the Governor of the State or the James Boys."

This hearty speech settled one point, but there was time for no more words.

The foe were coming rapidly.  
 Crack!  
 Crack!

The bullets whizzed unpleasantly close, and Jesse grew tired of it. He commanded his men to give a volley in return, and the result was momentary confusion among the enemy which told they had not escaped wholly. Carl rallied them anew, however, and he and Anderson kept at the front.

The bandits were getting along well, but they went amidst a storm of bullets. Hot was that leaden hail.

West lagged at all this, however, for he knew the country well and assured the bandits he could lead them so they would soon throw the pursuers off the track. He kept his word, and after a sprint of a few miles the last of the pursuers faded away in the distance.

"All well!" declared West. "Now for the place where we hide."

#### CHAPTER XIX.

MARKED AS A SPY.

It was three days later that a man rode into the settlement of Briggs' Bend on a dilapidated-looking horse and called at the local store, the proprietor of which was sunning himself during a full in trade.

"Where is the hotel?" was asked in a high, cracked voice.  
 "There ain't none," replied the merchant.

"What is to travel do?"  
 "Sometimes they hoof it, and sometimes they stay with me."  
 "Wal, I'll stay!"

"How do you know you will?" tartly inquired the merchant.  
 The stranger had begun to dismount from his bony steed, and his assurance did not please the man of trade.

"Didn't you say I could?"  
 "I certainly did not."  
 "Why, I kin pay you kin. I want ter rest myself an' boss, an' you kin hev the hard cash."

"Let me see it."  
 Enough was displayed to satisfy the merchant, but he still looked sharply at the traveler.

"Who are you?"  
 "Old Sam Miffin, from 'op the country. I'm a farmer, I am; an' I kin till the soil with the best of 'em."

His former speech was forced and unnatural, and the questioner was ready to swear he was listening to a lie. The traveler was dressed like one of the station in life he claimed to fill, but he did not look in keeping with his claim. His appearance was without any taint of the soil. He had no rustic show outside of his clothes.

All this the merchant saw, but he did not comment upon the fact.

"Traveling for your health?" he questioned.

"Out to buy hogs," replied Mr. Milfin.

"We have them here, two-legged and four. I reckon I can keep you, for I don't want Briggs' Bend to lose its reputation for hospitality. I'll call a nigger to care for your horse, and you can fall into the house and get something to fill the yawning gap in your stomach."

Milfin looked pleased and proceeded to obey all these directions.

The host saw him in the hands of the cooks of the establishment, and then went into his store. A plain-looking man was sitting on a barrel.

"Business is booming," quoth the merchant. The man on the barrel seemed interested.

"In what way?"

"A traveler to feed."

"Who?"

"Says he is a farmer."

"Don't you think so?"

"Mr. James, you know what you said to me about a possible spy?"

"Yes."

"I believe the spy has come."

"Ah!"

The man on the barrel appeared still more interested.

"Tell me all about it," he requested.

The merchant did as directed, while his companion listened attentively. When all was known he quietly remarked:

"I shall have to see the hog-buyer."

"Come with me, and you shall have a look on the sly."

They left the store and went up the back stairs. It gave them a position where they could look as discreet, and as Mr. Milfin said, he was subjected to espionage unknown to himself.

"I agree with you perfectly," finally asserted Jesse James. "The man is not what he claims; there's no farmer about him. That being admitted, the question arises, why should he lie about himself? There is not usually anything about this hamlet to invite a person to come with a lie on his lips—"

"But there is none."

"Exactly. Well I think we are in for it. Where is West Chase?"

"There he comes now. See him yourself, and I'll tell you the rest."

West came in and was duly interviewed.

When the facts had been presented to him, he, too, was ready to believe there was danger in the air. Nearly all the members of the James Boys' band, as well as West and Malten, were in Briggs' Bend. They were there awaiting the time when West would have his lawler and his lawnet in hand so he could sight Mullen's case out in court. Nothing had been seen of the ensaloned looked for some manifestation from Carl Greene and Anderson.

This was to be expected in a secret way if at all, for Briggs' Bend had its own peculiar reputation, and the officers could hardly expect the Banders to fall into their arms.

Very few persons of the hamlet knew that their guests included the famous bandit, for the leaders of the latter element had assumed a sort of disguise by dressing very plainly, and they mingled meekly with the people and lived their assumed character of quiet men of humble life.

So they were harbored day by day at West's request, and all had been peace in the hamlet.

It was expected that the lawyer would soon be at hand to take charge of all and relieve the James Boys of their guardianship, but the lawyer had not come, and it was thought the agent from the detective had.

An attempt had been made to keep watch of Carl Greene, but after he found he had lost sight of the bandits, he disappeared suddenly and all his men with him.

Since then there had been nothing to do but to watch carefully.

"Have you any suggestion?" West now asked of Jesse.

"Only that we must not lose sight of this hog buyer. If he's here as a spy, he is, of course, a sharp fellow who is dangerous. He must be seen to, and with shrewdness to match his own. The chances are that he is not alone in this section."

"Greene and his men may be hiding near."

"Yes."

"Perhaps they seek to abduct you and Frank."

"Very likely."

"We will give them all they seek!" cried West, his face flushing. "Let us all stick together as we did in the past, and we can give a good account of ourselves."

"Several things must be remembered," gravely answered Jesse. "If they had brought to this

vicinity all the men we had opposed to us before, nothing but a hot fight can pull us through."

Next, one-third of our men are out of the hamlet now. They are supposed to be within call, and we don't know how that is, and don't know what to do for them."

West's face sobered.

"I had forgotten that," he confessed.

"Still it don't put us hopelessly in a hole. We have several men to rely upon, and I think that will be enough for all the calls upon our resources."

"We have the old courage."

"I hope so."

"I'm ready for all things."

"Let us hope there will be no severe tax upon us. For the present, our plan is to watch Mr. Milfin."

Presently Jesse returned to the house, and he and Frank agreed to take time at watching the pretended hog buyer, and see that he did not leave the building unfollowed.

Milfin did not put them to any trouble for some time.

He remained close to the store and talked hog wisdom with zeal and enthusiasm. If he did not understand the true inwardness of hogs he had good luck in his efforts, for those of the loungers who had been enthusiasts in hog lore all their lives were obliged to confess he was their match at talking about the quadrupeds.

As the evening waned Mr. Milfin spoke of going to bed, and the chance was duly given to him to do so.

He retired and extinguished his light. Perhaps he was soon asleep after that—perhaps, but the bandit kings had their opinion.

So they were thrown out, and the utmost efforts made to learn if any strangers were skulking in the vicinity, but nothing was developed.

Jesse and Frank took place in the store where they could watch unceasingly, but as they were in no distress there was nothing to tell of their occupation.

It was past twelve o'clock when the slightest possible stir was heard in the hog buyer's room. It could have been the most trivial of matters, but the James Boys became on the alert.

"It's coming!" predicted Frank.

"Well, see."

A door opened carefully.

"What do you mutter?" muttered Jesse. "What does he think he is doing? He has mistaken his calling."

Soft footsteps followed.

"I don't know any longer be any doubt that the sounds came from the hog buyer's quarter, and the bandits made ready for action. The store was an unusually large and rambling structure, but they thought they were sure of the man's path, and they were directly in that path. If he came they were all prepared.

He did come. With the lightest of footsteps he crossed the floor and neared them. They retreated a step and let him pass. He headed for the stairs and went down with the same stealth. Jesse watched silently after.

Milfin reached the outer door, and laying hold of the key, carried it and sprang back the bolt. He opened the door.

Just then a hand fell upon his shoulder.

"Going for a walk?"

Milfin made a great start and wheeled abruptly. He could see no more than the dark figure before him, but that was enough to cause him alarm.

"Eh?" he muttered.

"Going out?"

"Is it my host?"

"No, but it's another man. Going out?"

"I—I was a bit faint, and I thought I would take a breath of air. That's it—that's all."

"I will go with you."

"Eh?—I am not going out."

"Why not? The night is fine. Why shouldn't we go for a ramble? We may meet some hogs."

Mr. Milfin would have been stupid not to see that there was a good deal of sarcasm in the talk of this man. He tried in vain to make out what he looked like.

"All I want is to get over this faintness," he persisted. "Just a moment here, and then I shall be myself again."

"Are you when you're yourself?"

"Eh?"

"I think my question was plain."

"I do not care to bother with a fellow who talks nonsense," declared the hog merchant, trying his little unconscious under a thin veil of resentment. "I'll go to my room."

"Very well. Pleasant dreams!"

Milfin did not deign to reply, and he mounted the stairs with quick steps for a faint man and soon disappeared in his own room.

Jesse had learned enough to settle Mr. Milfin's position in his mind. He had seen keen dis- appointment and agitation in the fellow's manner, and there was no longer any doubt in his mind that Milfin was just what he had been marked to be—a spy for some of their foes.

Carry the news to Jim Gammons and the boys," Jesse said to Frank. "But them be on the watch."

Frank went, but at the house all settled down to his old condition. Milfin did not make any move, although he was given all the chances in the world.

Two o'clock came.

The James Boys were still lying in a quiet but watchful state of mind.

"Do you smell anything unusual?" Frank asked.

"I had not noticed it."

"Try your nostrils."

Jesse was doing so, and he suddenly remarked:

"There is an odor like something burning."

"So I think."

"It may be a fire in some stove—"

"It may be a fire in some stove. He did not like his own explanation, and he could not see why a legitimate fire at that hour should be big enough to make an odor like the one discovered.

They waited a few moments longer, but the odor seemed to increase, and their uneasiness grew with it.

"This must be looked to," finally remarked Jesse. "It strikes me it comes from the lower part of the building. The store may be on fire, and it is our duty to know how it is. Wait, and I'll see to it."

He went down the back stairs as far as the door at the foot thereof, and then pushed the latter open. The moment he did this he knew where the fire was.

Smoke and flame met him with a rash. The store was indeed on fire, and it was so far advanced as to furnish an element of lives, concern and danger. Quickly he closed the door and retreated. A word to Frank brought him to the scene, and then, while the latter scurried away to warn the merchant, Jesse started to fight the flames.

He saw where the chief trouble lay, and gave his attention to it with zeal. There was an abundance of water at hand, and with this he began to drench the fire. The store may be on fire, which was all centered, thus far, in a pile of stuff at one point.

Before he had gone far he was joined by Frank and the merchant, and the combined efforts of the three men made a mark.

In a few moments there was no longer danger, and they ceased operations to let the rest die out naturally.

"How do you account for this?" asked Frank, abruptly.

"The fire seems mysterious," admitted the merchant.

"It wouldn't to me, if we hadn't had your hog-buyer all the while under watch. As it is, I am not so certain, but of one thing be sure—this was an incendiary fire."

"Right," Jesse agreed. "Look at the stuff that led to the fire. All is put up together, the work of human hands, and brought about by the unquestionable purpose of setting the building on fire. Some one has tried to burn you out."

"Who could it have been?"

"The cater door is locked!"

"Yes."

"Could any one have been in here when you looked up?"

"I suppose it might have been done."

"Then rely upon it, it was done. The motive is not so clear, but you will remember you have a guest upstairs who is not to be trusted."

"Yes, and he should be looked to at once!" exclaimed Frank. "We are losing time here; let's look up our man and see if he is still with us. We have been neglectful. What may he not be doing now?"

The suggestion was enough to send all up the stairs in haste.

Listening at the door of Milfin's room they could hear movements within.

"Still with us. God! He grows mysterious!"

"See here!" cried Frank, from the window.

"What is it?"

"Several horsemen are outside the house!"

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE STRUGGLE IN THE STREET.

JESSE JAMES listened to the window.

The horsemen were plainly visible, all drawn up in a group.

"They are not our followers."

"No."  
 "Their gaze is on this building."  
 "So it is."  
 "By Jove! I reckon we are in for it."  
 "Who can they be?" asked the merchant.  
 "Who should they be but the foes we have been expecting?"  
 "Thunder! and where are your own men?"  
 "Not far away, you may rely upon it."  
 "These fellows are waiting for the fire, perhaps," said Frank. "They will wait some time for it."

The riders looked grim and uncanny. Their silence was suggestive of evil plots and secret work, and the James Boys did not doubt that they were there with just the intention ascribed to them. The movement against the band had begun once more, and begun in earnest, unless again went for nothing.

"They now gaze at the lower door," added Frank, suddenly. "Why? Can it be the fire-setter is still there and now is opening the door to them?"

The question was enough to send Jesse down the steps with quick but silent steps. He bounded into the store, and though there was no light burning he had no difficulty in discovering a dark figure close to the door. He sprang forward and seized the unknown in a firm grasp.

As he held he was impressed with the fact that he held a remarkably slight figure.

"What's that?" he demanded.  
 The prisoner struggled desperately but vainly.  
 "You are unclosing the door. Why?"

There was no reply, and, when Jesse had made sure the door was not unlocked, he dragged his captive back to the rear of the place. It seemed to be a boy, and of such slight form that, reaching that point, he lifted him and bore him up the stairs without any effort.

This brought them both into the strong light of an inner room, and he held his prize out to get a good look. His first idea was that he had, indeed, secured a treacherous boy, but a familiarity of the face suddenly dawned upon him.

"Myra Rosemore!" he exclaimed.

Despite the male attire he had correctly named the prisoner.

She stood panting in his grasp, not so much from breathlessness, as wisely suspected, as from anger and chagrin.

"Old friends are always welcome!" he laughed.

"Oh, I could kill you!" the girl hissed.

"Don't!"

"I hate you—I hate you!"

"Melancholy fact, if true."

"Take your hands off from me!"

"Don't be in haste. What are you doing here?"

"Seeking your ruin, Jesse James?" she dashed coolly asked.

"Oh! if I had a knife!"

"You would do me up?" calmly suggested Jesse.

"I would kill you!"

"You said something of the sort before. Fray, why do you do a decent woman like what I ever do to excite such severe emotions in your gentle womanly mind? Your sex are so amiable and—"

"Enough! Do not seek to degrade me."

"If there has been any degrading done it was your own work. I had no share in it; I have none now. Still, it strikes me you are pretty well on the road to degradation. You have evil advisers, I am afraid."

"I hate you!"

"Never mind; you will outgrow it."

Myra burst into tears. She was not proof against the mingling of disappointment and ridicule. Jesse let her weep for awhile; then he came to business again.

"Why were you going to undo the door?"

There was no reply.

"And why did you set fire to the building?"

Only silence.

"You are bound to keep bad company," sternly observed the bandit. "Lawyer Anderson and his gang seem to have some strong hold upon you. My advice is that you give up such company and act like a decent woman. You have brains—why can't you have more?"

During this conversation Frank had slipped into the room from which they could see outside. He now returned.

"The gang outside are trying to get into the store," he announced.

"Tired of waiting for their allies, eh? Well, we will tire them still more. Take a revolver and send them about their business. Then, if we are

to have a row, it may as well come now as ever."

"This is in keeping with Frank's desires, and he made his way back to the window, which he had already raised cautiously. He could now overhear part of their talk.

"Something surely is wrong, and we may as well get ready to act on once. They may have been found out, and perhaps we are even now in danger ourselves."

"We ought to have got here sooner."

"We didn't, and that's all there is to it. Let's do something at once; we can't afford to delay—we may be under watch."

"You are!"

Frank uttered the words from the window, and then he leaned out and distinctly asked:

"Get out of here!"

Several faces were turned upward, but no reply came.

"If you don't leave, I shall open fire on you and shoot the lot!"

"Get out of here!"

"Say, who are you?"

"A dead shot."

"Get out of this building!"

"I do to-night."

"We want to buy some supplies—"

"I keep only lead, but you will get this right from my revolver if you don't get out!"

"If I don't believe it is Frank James!" exclaimed one of the strangers.

"It is, sure. Call the men!"

A whistle rang out on the air.

Frank saw it was good use to try and proceed secretly any longer, and he uttered a call to Jesse and then took as no aim as the circumstances would admit and sent a shot into the body of horsemen. This he proceeded to follow with others, but he was not alone.

The word of command the whole party suddenly turned their own weapons upward and lead flew in a shower.

Crack!

Crack!

The glass was shivered to atoms over Frank's head.

A bullet grazed his neck.

"Beat in the door!" shouted the leader of the upknobs.

All leaped from their horses except one man, and from the way he acted it was safe to assume he had not been left in condition by Frank's shot, and fired his revolver in haste.

The door was fiercely attacked.

Up the street came the sound of rapid foot-strikes, and toward the store other riders came at hot speed. It was clear the fight was on, but it did not cease the bandit and alarm. Jesse had left the prisoners to the merchant, and rejoined Frank.

"Give them your compliments!" Frank directed.

Jesse leaned out and fired into the crowd. Like all the firing before it was a work where accurate marksmanship was out of the question, but he evidently fired too well for the wishes of the foe. They broke away from the door and got out of revolver-shot in haste.

Several riders came up at a gallop.

One of the late runners raised his voice loudly.

"Riddle that house."

"The meaning was plain, and a volley was sent toward the point indicated. Frank and Jesse remained untouched, as they had flung themselves on the floor in time.

"We are in for it again," commented the latter.

"Yes."

"I see nothing of our own followers."

"They will not desert us."

"But I should say not."

"Tell the store-keeper to bring all the rifles he has. We may have to fight alone for awhile."

The merchant appeared, well laden with the articles required.

"I am with you," he announced. "Let's make it hot for them."

His manner was very cheerful for that of a dispenser of dry goods and molasses, but of the most kind and friendly of the best of youth.

The foe began to form.

"They are going to make a rush."

"I believe you are right."

"Well, we are here to receive them."

The rush came. Evidently relying on the weight of numbers, the opposing party swept toward the building, and when the firing was renewed from the windows they were not checked in the least. Some fell out by the way, but

the main body reached the house and there themselves against the door, or the shuttered windows of the lower story.

Thunder! but if they get in 'won't there be music!" quoth the merchant. "We are a bit too weak for real fun, but we will see them all the same. We wouldn't back out if we wouldn't. The James Boys looked anxiously for their allies.

They knew very well that if it came to a fight they would not be able to resist such odds, and even courage was its element of prudence and common sense.

But they were not to be all alone. The door was cracking under the force of the attack upon it, but now there arose a new sound from down the street—a cheer, a ringing shout of encouragement; and the strained eyes of the James Boys caught sight of other riders speeding toward the spot.

The cheer was returned, and there could be no doubt that the wild horsemen of Missouri would find their way.

Again the cheer, and this time it was heard by the besiegers.

They saw they had more than a few hired-up men to deal with, and some of them were perceptibly. But the voices of leaders rose to instill firmness away, and no one left his post.

"Face the other way and receive them!"

So the order was given, and the besiegers turned about to face the James Boys. No one body could tell. The band had the advantage of their headlong dash, but the enemy was so far their superior in numbers that the chances seemed far in favor of the latter.

"Harrah for the James Boys!"

This had been the cry of the band, but as they came nearer it was lost; in a series of wild yells intended to intimidate the enemy, and there was no doubt that they succeeded in a measure.

Crack—crack—crack!

It was something more than shouting now, for the band had come near-enough to make it plain that somebody was to get in the first blow soon, and they did not intend to give this advantage to the foe.

Crack—crack—crack!

Then in a hailstorm of bullets from both sides, all sent with the haste of such a crisis, and by no means all of any effect, the collision followed.

With a crash the bandits flung their weight against the solid body before them, and the scene became one indescribable in its character.

Jesse and Frank did not miss the opportunity thus afforded, and they hastened down and joined the others.

There was work for all, and they plunged into the thickest of the fray.

"Down with the invaders!" was the cry.

"Death to the outlaw!" recited the besiegers.

And all gave blow after blow with the ready zeal of those skilled in such work.

From the first the James Boys noticed how small the force was at their command, and they looked anxiously down the street for some sign that reinforcements were coming. Where the absent members of their band were they did not know, but they hoped they were near enough as the sound of firing was bringing them to the aid of their imperiled comrades.

The help did not come.

That the enemy had made a great effort to mass their force was apparent, and the numbers against the defenders were more and more observable. It was the old style episodes over again, and the bandits had to deal with more than any ordinary party could have stood for any long time.

It began to tell on even the band.

Slowly they were driven back from the position they would have held. Frank sought Jesse's side.

"We are fighting at a loss," he hurriedly said.

"Yes."

"What can we do?"

Jesse looked back at the store.

"Would we be any better off in there?"

"We should be safe from their bullets."

"Yes, and we shall be cut down one by one if we stay here."

"Sound the word and let us get to cover and make a fort of it."

On the order run through the ranks of the bandits, and all responded promptly. One moment the foe had them at their faces; the next, they were getting away with speed and skill.



in a few moments the bandits were all in the store, and the fight was over for the time.

Would the smaller party be able to hold the refuge they had chosen? It was a question. First of all they proceeded to make it as near impregnable as their means would allow. The big door was barricaded in short order, and then each man took his rifle and prepared for the next act.

The surprise of the movement had prevented the assailants from following quickly enough to do any harm, but when the truth was realized the leaders sent them to the attack again.

It was a rash movement, for the attack lacked all system, and at almost the first fire they broke and fled.

A full ensue, during which both parties had chance to think and plan.

The bandits had been obliged to abandon their horses, but they did not give this serious thought. The animals were not likely to be lost if their masters were saved, and would no doubt be on hand when wanted.

The besieged settled down to await the coming of friend or foe. Unless all hopes were based on nothing, the missing bandits must soon appear, and when they did the matter would be fought out.

The James boys had faith to believe they could overmatch anything opposed to them under such circumstances. The only question was, would they come in time?

"We could hold this place until they have a fair show to arrive," said Jesse, as he and Frank considered the matter, "but if they are too long it is a different thing."

"I can't understand this absence."

"I have been wondering if they have been decoyed away."

"By Jove, there is something in that!"

"If that is it, we are in a fix, truly."

"A very bad one, for we have not the chance to run that we had on the former occasion."

"We should have guarded against this, and cautioned the boys not to be hoaxed by the foe. But it's too late to think of that now."

Jim Gammins approached.

"A man is coming outside under a flag of truce. He evidently wants to come the talking game."

"We'll see him. I want to be sure who is running this scheme."

By the time the James boys reached the window the man was as near as he need to come, and there he stood under his flag of truce.

"Hello!" he shouted.

"Carl Greeney!" Frank exclaimed. "Talk with him. I don't want to."

Jesse made no answer.

"I am here to demand the surrender of this house," added Greeney. "You see we are here in such numbers that it would be folly to resist us, and now the best thing you can do is to yield at once, and not arouse the temper of my followers."

"Disinterested advice, surely! What do you want of us?"

"I think you know me?"

"I think we do."

Jesse answered dryly, but the sarcasm of the rejoinder was unobscured.

"I demand the surrender of all here in the name of the law. In the past you have had wonderful luck in escaping your just deserts, but this will be the case no longer. All has been planned this time so that there is not one loophole for your escape. You may as well remember this, and yield before any more blood has been shed."

"You seem to have it all planned for us."

"I am sure of my grip this time."

"And you think you have us?"

"I know it."

"One thing remains undone."

"What is that?"

"To take us."

"Will you be mad enough to resist?"

"Try us and see. We shall shoot every man who comes near our fort. You must be very unsophisticated to suppose you can work upon our fears. The only way to deal with us is to fight."

"I give you another chance."

"It is not necessary."

"We will hold off for half an hour. If you have come to your senses by that time we can save some lives. If you remain obstinate, you will be considered merely as brutes and dealt with accordingly."

Carl turned and walked away, followed by a loud shout of defiance from the bandits. They had heard all, and not one of the party was inclined to accept the doubtful mercy offered by the detective.

"Now're in for it, and may the gang work their will as soon as they see us!" cried Jim

Gummins, and the defiance was an echo of the thoughts of all.

It was a serious question to consider how long the captives could the impregnable fort. It had no especial element of strength, but their rifles counted for much. Right there lay their strength.

Carl evidently meant to impress them with a story of his own. His men, many of whom were fellows of the roughest kind of life, began to ride back and forth in a wild and dashing way which would have done credit to cowboys, and they sang a yell of derision and taunting shouts which they intended as reflections on the courage of the defenders.

Happily, the latter had seen too much of life to be moved in the least by such cheap exhibitions.

Presently the detective appeared and announced that the thirty minutes had expired.

He expected to get some answer, but none came. Not one of the band deemed to make reply.

Carl retired, and the next move came. The self-supposed wild riders had been aspiring to show off, and they now dashed past the fort at full speed. As they went, two or three abreast, they recharged their revolvers at the refuge of the besieged, but even this provoked no notice. They were waiting until the decisive time for their share and not for cheap exhibitions.

The wild riders retired, and there was another pause. It was not hard to surmise what would follow, and the result was in keeping with their expectations.

There was a stir around the "fort," and then one of the riders rushed a line of men who speared toward the besieged with the utmost of exertion in every step—well did they know the danger of every moment passed where the defenders could get their rifle with their finger.

Jesse James had his followers well under control.

"Ready!"

A murmur ran along the line.

A whisper of attention.

"Fire!"

The rifles spoke, and though there was not the best of chance for execution there could be no doubt that there would be a good account rendered.

But the advance was not checked, and the detective's men reached the door and again firing themselves against the well-guarded obstacle.

It was not a weak point, if they had but known it, for the resources of the place had been drawn upon heavily to make it secure, but the attempt was kept up until it became clear to all that they were throwing everything away in a vain attempt.

They broke and fled.

Then arose loud and angry yells. Greeney had not expected the retreat, and though he was far from satisfied with the way matters were going, he was maddened by the way all took to inglorious flight.

He talked in vain; the retreat was on, and nobody was more pleased thereat than the besiegers.

The defenders laughed and shook hands.

There was not much to show for the victory, except that the coast was for the time clear, but that was the one thing most important in their estimation, and they could afford to exult over such a well earned gain.

For a time they could hear the voice of the detective, but it finally became quiet.

"The retreat scheme is on," remarked Frank.

"Yes. What can it be?"

"I don't know. I fall to see how they are to get at us except by direct action. Still, they may study out something."

"Yonder goes one of the fellows we winged before. He seems about done for."

A man was to be seen crawling off from the scene of strife.

One of the bandits raised his rifle.

Frank descended to the lower floor to see how the men there was getting on.

"All is lovely," was the report. "Keep your section clear, and we will look out for ours."

"Singular how the odor of that rifle which the girl set all lingers. Do you notice it?"

"It is a very plain to me."

"Yes," added another man, "and the smoke is still curling up."

"Where?"

Frank asked the question with a start.

"Yonder!"

"By heavens! we are on fire again!"

Frank bounded toward the corner of the room where the smoke was to be seen.

It was curling up through the floor, and the inference was easily drawn.

"On fire below!" added Frank. "Quick—tear up the boards! If it gets much headway in this dry old atmosphere it will be a bad business."

A pick was secured, and they used it with zeal.

The floor did not come up as easily as was to be expected, but one board was finally torn loose.

When this was done the result was most alarming.

A sheet of flame rolled up to meet them.

All below seemed to be a well of fire.

"The store is doomed!"

So cried one of the bandits, and the prophecy found echo in the minds of all there.

But Frank bravely exclaimed:

"Water! Bring it by the barrel. We must put this blaze out!"

Every man hustled to get a pail and do his share, but before they could get to the gap in the floor, the uselessness of the endeavor occurred to Frank.

Before they had made the discovery, the flames had crept all along beneath the boards, and it was of no avail to try and head off such a rolling billow.

Frank hurriedly replaced the board.

"We may as well stop right here. The store is gone, and the sooner we get out of it the better. We shall only get into worse difficulty if we linger and try to fight it out. The fellow whom we saw crawling away there is the one who did this, and his hurt was bogus. No doubt he has reported to his superior, and all are now waiting to see what the result will be. Should we wait until they too can see the flames, we shall merely have to encounter them the more on their guard."

The last words were said as he was hurrying up the stairs, and he sought the other leaders at once.

All had faith in his judgment, and when he said the store was gone they accepted the fact without discussion.

"What's to be done?"

"We must cut our way through."

"It's the one hope."

"Get all ready."

Such was the spirit of conversation, and the last order was carried out without delay.

In a very short time all was ready for the critical move. Little was said about it, but those who knew best were silent simply because they could say nothing that was helpful.

To run the gauntlet there was a matter which even the boldest of them did not covet. And there was no sign of the desired reinforcements.

They gathered at the rear of the store, a small but resolute band, and in the midst of all Mullen was placed. The prisoners they could do nothing with, so they were left to their own devices.

"Ready!" Jesse asked.

"All ready!" was the general response.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## FIGHTING THEIR WAY.

"Throw open the door!"

Jesse James gave the order, and the barrier swung back.

Every man knew his duty then.

Of all the shots they had been able to distinguish the horses left when they entered the mill named fort. To reach them; to mount if they could; to fight their way through the obstacles that might intervene—this was the order of the night.

The dash was made.

Perhaps it was wholly unexpected; in any case, some considerable gain was made before the alarm was given. When the besiegers did see them, the store broke forth.

A roar of many voices rose, and the enemy started up at all points where they chanced to be.

What a rare chance they had to gobble the whole band! So they thought.

West Chase and certain other men had been selected to give special attention to Mullen, but it fell to the James boys themselves, with Jim Gummins and the boldest spirits of the number, to smother the tide of retreat until the mounting could be done.

It was a gigantic task, but they had no fear to weaken their courage. When the foe came rushing toward them they gave them shot after shot, and then the work was done.

The advance was, in a measure, checked, and it became more of a general fight than a rout.

Ich by incli the rear guard stubbornly retreated, until a backward look showed that the foremost of the band had gained the horses and mounted. Then Jesse gave the word anew, and all suddenly turned and flew toward the same spot.

It was the labor of but a moment for such men to gain the saddle. It was done, and then they were ready for the next move.

According to directions those who had gone first were already hastening out of harm's way. The James Boys and their nearest followers took the same path.

It was not to be an easy retreat.

Mounted foes were speeding for them, and a volley of shot whistled along the fugitives' way.

The voice of the detective was heard urging his party on.

"The road was only clear!" That was the chief thought of the band. With an open course they had no fear but their horses would take them out of harm's way, but there were great problems yet to face. It would be strange if nothing occurred to prevent the retreat thus happily begun.

"I have had a mind to try them a fight as it is," muttered Jesse.

"You forget the old man we have to guard." "True, true!" "We were alone, or that the band was all together. Then we would show them. I don't believe it would take much to put these fellows to flight."

"Look!" The exclamation came from Jim Cummins. He pointed down the course they were to take.

"Just what I feared!" In the path in front the fugitives other men had suddenly appeared—a force large enough to awaken every possible alarm.

The retreat was cut off unless they could ride through the obstruction.

"Out!" cried Jesse James. "We must go through at all hazards!"

"Out!" "Out!"

Each rider took up the cry, and as one man they dashed forward to the help of West Chase and his companions.

"On!" thundered Jesse. "Stop not! It's life or death now. Go through or die in the trying."

Mullen turned a pale face toward the speaker. The sound of his voice suggested the one chance, the one hope left.

To the front went the bandits with their horses at full speed. No matter, then, what was in the rear—it was to cut through or lose all.

Revolvers in hand they swept to the charge. Discordant yells arose from the rear to meet the yells in front.

Truly, the prospect was dark.

The shock came. The bandits dang themselves forward with reckless daring peculiar to them, and the sound of weapons seemed only an accompaniment to the sterner work which was theirs. The two forces met with a shock, and the hand went through without trouble. But the foe was still there, and the two halves were ready to unite, while from the other party shouts of encouragement were followed by their headlong rush to the scene.

But now a new phase.

From beyond the fleeing bandits come cheers which have no origin from detective followers, and the eyes of the fugitives are turned to that quarter. The sight they see electrifies them.

The missing members of the band are at hand.

The longed-for reinforcements are at last in sight.

"Hurrah!" "Hurrah!"

Cheer answers cheer, and the command of Jesse James floats out on the air:

"Turn about! We are going to do our part of the whipping now. Turn about!"

Welcome order! And the sound the bandits do rein in their fast-going horses. On come the rescue party, and all unite at just the right point.

"All charge!"

So commands Jesse as he sees his men in form, and the work is begun when it is obeyed. Down upon the detective's force flash the gallant riders, and the curious spectacle is presented of the rival forces meeting at full speed.

All see what a shock it will be, and there is a manifest wavering of the enemy. Now the bandits are united and on the offensive, it is remembered what their reputation is for reckless bravery and hard fighting. The detective's men must take this quality under different circum-

stances, and only the voice of the detective keeps them in line.

Heralded by bullets the shock comes.

The bandits are like a reckless wave, and not one shrinks from the test of his courage. He goes in to win or die, while the half-hearted enemy has a very different feeling.

Through the hostile ranks go the wild riders, and the work is done. It is as if that great collision to tell the foe they have met their superiors, and like cravens they turn and flee.

All are in retreat.

Ally! No; for still at the front is one figure who has not, and with frantic voice he tries to keep his men steady. It is Anderson, game to the last. Carl Greene, superb as his courage is, has seen the folly of fighting there any longer with the rest, but the plotting lawless will not give way an inch.

Well does he know that if he does not get Mullen now he will lose his case forever.

There are men there who have their grudge to settle with the lawyer, and they seek his side with no kind intention. But now another figure hurries to the spot—a figure clothed like a boy, but one easily recognizable as that of Myra Rosamore.

She sees Anderson's peril and with the spirit of an Amazon she seeks to protect the man from whom comes her daily wages in hard cash.

She raises a revolver and fires at Anderson's feet. There is a crack and a man falls. One of the bandits! No, for her aim has been wretched and it is Anderson who receives the bullet. He drops his own revolver, reels and falls helpless.

He lies still.

"Dead!" mutters Jesse James.

It was true. Anderson was hit in a vital part, and it is doubtful if he ever realized that he was hit at all, so quickly did the fatal shot do its work.

Myra stood like one dazed, and Jesse rode hastily to her side.

"Are you pleased with your deed?" he asked, coldly.

She looked up, but, contrary to the bandit's expectations, made no hostile movement. She seemed to be dazed still, and there was a wild light in her eyes which made Jesse soften a little.

"You did obeyed," he added, "you had better go your way. We don't want to do you actual harm, and this we shall do if you don't leave us alone. Here, Hobbie Kerry, escort her away, and let us see no more of her."

She did obeyed, and Myra did not rebel in the least. She soon recovered her nerve, and realized that the place was not one of safety for her after killing Anderson, and she made haste to get away, and paused not until she reached St. Louis.

Although Carl was driven back for the time the wild riders had no desire to remain and let him inaugurate a new campaign, and they prepared to go. Anderson's body lay where it was at last sight. Some of the band wished to look up Miffin and have revenge on him, but Jesse cared not for it.

Bidding farewell to the men of the Bend who fought with them on the occasion, the bandits took their departure, with West and Mullen still with them, after making good to the merchant all he had lost by the fire.

As for as was known there was now no one to seek the price Mullen of unbound mind, and West decided to take him to St. Louis and see the best of legal helpers there. In pursuance of this plan he and the old gentleman separated from their allies as soon as was prudent, and went on alone.

Now, that Anderson was dead, good friends were found for the rich man, and in two months he was living at his old home, with nobody to molest him.

The James Boys and their party, being rid of all encumbrances, now pursued their own course alone. They made good time for awhile, but were agreeably surprised in seeing nothing more of them.

It was two days later when Jesse suddenly broached a new idea.

"Frank," said he, "our horses are about worn out."

"Yes."

"What are we to do?"

"We might make an exchange, with or without the knowledge of those with whom we swap."

"What?"

"Sell our horses."

"What then?"

"Go to a place of safety on the cars."

"Do you want to die?"

"Not yet."

"Then why risk our lives on a train?"

"I have been considering the line of rail we would naturally use, the probability of meeting those who know us, and all such things. My advice is that we try it by rail."

"Why not?" asked Jack Keene.

"It has not been our way to risk it on trains when we could keep to our horses," persisted Frank.

"All the safer for us."

"Wait until we are discovered and then see what you will say."

The discussion was fairly started, and it was kept up until Frank yielded to the wishes of the majority and the plan was decided upon. They were nearing a town, and they paused just outside until Jesse could go forward and see what their chances were. He came back smiling and confident.

"Just time to get supper, sell our horses and take the eight o'clock train," he observed.

"Will the animals sell readily?"

"Yes, for I saw there was a horse dealer there. A couple of us can go to him alone and our favorites steady are and start anew."

"Is the train an express?"

"Likely to be safe?"

"For us, yes."

"Will it be dangerous for anybody?"

"It can't be dangerous for the train."

"Why?"

"Because we are going to rob it."

"Jesse, do you mean it?"

"Certainly do."

"Will it repay us?"

"I learned that a banker was going to send a large sum of money by the train. But for that I should not have dreamed of attacking it."

"Jesse, you are a trump!" cried Jack Keene.

"If we can sack the train it will be a bit wind-up for the campaign we have been on. Carl has made it a dash for life or death with us, and now we want to be heard from ourselves."

There was a murmur of approval.

"Cole Younger, you and Ed McMillan may take the job of selling the horses. The rest of us will go to the hotel, and you may meet us there," said Jesse.

The plan was adopted, and when the bandits sat down to eat they had done all but start on their journey.

Wishing not to be too conspicuous at the depot, they kept back so as to have just time to get the tickets. They happened to be near the banker's office, and they saw a team drive up there. Soon a man came out.

"Look!" directed Cole. "He carries a box."

"Yes, and it is full of greenbacks, sure."

"That is the treasure."

"Why not take it now?"

Jack Keene asked the question eagerly, but Jesse brought him out of his rash mood.

"You take the horses are sold, and that is what we must now go on the train anyhow."

"So I did. Well, if we go, we will go with the treasure, by thunder! And it shall be ours before the day dawns!"

## CHAPTER XXIII.

TROUBLE IN THE EXPRESS CAR.

The man with the box entered the carriage and was driven away toward the depot.

Two citizens, passed near the outlaws and themselves watched.

"Old Nettleton is sending of his gold," said one.

"Yes."

"Do you suppose he enjoys it?"

"He seems to."

"If he does, he must be thick-skinned, for he must know he has the reputation of being the richest and the meanest man in his country."

"What does he care?"

"He has been playing dice with the Evil One all his life, with his soul as the wager."

They passed on, and the bandits walked to the station.

When the train came, they saw the box placed in the express car.

"If we were not late," remarked Jack Keene, "we might put our label on it now—it's sure to be ours."

Smiling with satisfaction, they secured their tickets and entered the smoking car.

The car was pretty well filled, the men seeming to be farmers with their best clothes on.

The meeting of this soon appeared, for their conversation revealed that they had been to the State convention, which had nominated the candidates of their party for the offices of governor and the lower places on the ticket.

Some were jubilant and others downcast, and

the reason for this was made known at the time.

"Great ticket!" declared one, "and sure to sweep the State."

"It will be defeated," declared another man.

"Defeated?"

"So I said."

"Then you're crazy."

"Wait until election, an' see, by gosh."

"Damn it, you are clean off your base."

"Jones ought ter have been nominated."

"Sah! he ain't no use alongside Smith."

"He's a popular man."

"Then why wa'n't he nominated?"

"Because Smith bought up his votes."

"What?"

"I say Smith bought you fellows up in convention."

"What! Am I ter let a nora-head talk ter me like this! Wall, I reckon not. Bought up? Sah, you're a liar, you be."

"Me a liar?"

"You be."

"The man who says so has got ter lick me or be licked."

And with this the discipline of Jones fell upon the admirer of Smith with malice aforethought and his fists, and proceeded to see how they could settle one phase of the nomination outside the convention, and in the air rose discordant yells and howls as the rival politicians clawed like old women and struck like boys in their zeal to avenge their supposed wrongs, but, though they got a good deal mused and soiled in the fight, but little damage was done.

When they were out of breath they stopped, but each promptly challenged the other to fight a regular duel when they reached home, and everything in the way of challenge was accepted promptly.

Enough blood was spilled in imagination to make the car into a lake.

Now, this was not so trivial as it seemed.

"This takes attention away from us, Jesse," said Frank.

"Nothing could be better," agreed Jesse.

"As long as they squabble they will think only of themselves, and as the train is probably full of them, we shall have just the freedom from scrutiny that we want."

"They did have. Men of the same party go bravely to the polls and vote as one on election day, but this happens several weeks after nominations have been made. From a convention they depart very sore at heart, and full of disappointment because each does not have his favorite in nomination."

The wrath of these old farmers was now both valuable to the bandits and highly amusing as

the train rolled on with the quarrel still under way, and the James Boys say nothing that need trouble them.

"When do we go for the treasure, Jesse?" asked Jack Keene.

"Beyond Phillips we have a run of fifty miles without a stop. If we wait a while. When we get under way beyond Phillips, we get under way in something else."

On through the night rolled the train, and they steadily approached the scene of action.

At each stop they looked carefully to see who entered, but there was nobody worthy of suspicion to be seen.

"I believe it is a safe train," said Jesse.

"Looks so," admitted Frank, said Jesse.

"How are we going to arrange it?"

"I have not thought of the subject."

"If we could make up the express truck to get into the express car we might secure all there is in it before giving a general alarm."

"Of course there is a safe in there."

"Could we make a pretense of wishing to deposit something with them and thus enter?"

"Perhaps somebody has tried the dodge on this road before."

"It was do no harm to try."

"No."

"Then I will do it."

His plan was not changed by subsequent discussion, and, as they passed safely out of Phillips, Jesse rose and sought the express car. This road was not conducted on the strict plan of farmer ones in some sections, and when he tried the door and found it locked, he had no trouble in getting an answer to his knock. A messenger appeared and unobtrusively inquired:

"What is wanted?"

The bandit king had forgotten that he had on the clothes of a farmer, and he replied in dialect:

"Sah, mister, hev you any place whar you could put a satchel o' mine over night?"

"Why do you want to get rid of it?"

"Wall, that is things in it I don't like ter trust while I sleep, an' I thought maybe you had a box or satchin' you could put it in."

"We have a safe."

"Is that one o' them iron things they keep in banks 'naked the pretended farmer, very unaccountably?"

"Yes," answered the messenger, smiling.

"There ain't no danger o' gettin' it locked so you can't open it yerself, is thar?"

"Yes, and the messenger was more amused than ever."

"Then I'll bring it in an' let ye lock it up. You'll let me see the thing afore you turn the key on it, won't ye?"

"Yes, all right. We won't steal your belongings."

Now, if the messenger had not been less smart than he thought himself he would not have let the supposed farmer into the car. It was against orders, but the messenger thought he and his companion might have some amusement with the greenhorn and no harm come of it.

Jesse went back, but soon returned with Frank by his side.

"Mister, my brother says you may lose the key to that tarral iron thing," he said, with a show of nervousness.

"We will show you to the contrary! Come in, and see about this key business," and again the messenger had to laugh.

Jesse and Frank entered very promptly, and then stood around with wide open staring eyes.

"Gosh! you've got a nice place hiar, mister!" remarked Frank.

"Yes. When we took this job," explained this very witty messenger, "we told the President of the United States we would not touch the job unless things were done just to please us."

"Do tell!" exclaimed Jesse.

"Yes, we did that."

"I won't let no dardet ter say that to him, but I suppose public men like you an' the president is more free with each other."

"That is just it."

The facetious messenger was well aware that it was against his orders to open the safe for the inspection of the farmer, or any other stranger, but he now thought it safe. He did open it, and the James Boys easily distinguished the package which had been put in from the banker's coin.

"That's a great place," observed Jesse.

"Yes."

"What ye got in there?"

"Oh! treasures like your grip-sack."

"Let us look at them."

"Hardly, my friend; that is out of your province. Look, but touch not, handle not."

"Mister, can I ask a favor o' you?"

"Yat."

"Give me all that is in that sash."

Meek and modest was the manner of the bandit. If not his request, and the messenger still saw nothing but a joke.

"Hat ha! You are a witty fellow. Well, call around some other time and I may possibly do it."

"I want the things now."

"Ah! Perhaps you would also like the moon and the Sun?"

"No," replied the bandit, with a change of voice, "but I want the contents of that safe, and I am going to have it. Hands up!"

"Yes," cried the detective, pointing to the head of the messenger, while Frank did the same thing to the second guardian of the car. A more astonished couple it would have been hard to find. Their smiles died away, and they looked supremely demoralized.

"Don't try to draw your own gun!" cautioned Jesse, "for if you do I will blow your head off!"

"What do you mean?" gasped the messenger.

"Just what I say."

"That will get you into trouble."

"That is my business."

"If it is a joke"

"It is not."

"Then you are liable to be arrested for beating up the guardian of the car."

"Not arrested, for I shall not be caught, but, since your wits move so slowly, I will inform you that we are here for just that purpose. We are not the farmers we have assumed to be, but the robbers we claim to be. Hands up!"

The hands were up already, but Jesse meant to keep them there. A cold sweat broke out on the messenger's person.

"Leave this car," he said, feebly, "or I will call for help."

"You will not call."

"I shall."

"Then you die!"

"Yes, that is my intention."

"Let us drop child's play. We are here to rob that safe and we are no novices at the work. We said do what we undertake and you can't prevent us. If you resist, or if you call for help I will shoot you in your tracks!"

Yast had been the change in the speaker's manner, and as the messenger realized that he had to deal with no farmer, he buskily asked:

"Who are you?"

"My name was the deliberate reply, "is Jesse James."

"Thunder!"

"This is my brother Frank, and in the other cars you find many more men. You will see it would be madness to resist us. Yes, and it would be death to you."

Jesse had more than doubted the number of men they actually had, but this mattered little to the messenger. He knew he had to deal with the James Boys and their gang, and the knowledge was simply overpowering.

"Now," proceeded Jesse, after a slight pause, "I want your weapons. Where is your revolver?"

One of the hands strayed toward his pocket.

"Stop!" cried the bandit king, "hands up!"

With a groan the messenger obeyed. Jesse had the clew, and he soon produced the weapon and all the arms his victim possessed. The second man was used in the same way, and then the bandits seemed to have a clear field.

The guardians of the car could not fight or go for help.

Jesse grew jubilant.

"We are much obliged to you for opening the safe so kindly," he declared, "and we will try to show how much we appreciate it. When we have got to a place of safety we will not fail to drink your health many times. Now, Frank, do you go through the safe while I keep an eye on these men."

Frank advanced to the repository and stooped to take out the valuables with pleasure expressed in his face.

"Stop!"

It was a commanding voice behind the bandits, and as they knew the speaker must be some intruder they turned quickly. Behind them were two men, standing with presented revolvers, and the weapons were aimed on the observers.

A startling light it was, but it was rendered all the more so by the fact that one of the newcomers was no stranger.

"Carl Greene!" gasped Jesse.

"Yes," cried the detective, "your eyes do not deceive you. Carl Greene it is. Hands up!"

It was his turn to say it, then, but would he be able to carry out the position he had taken?

The bandits were dazed as they seldom were. The habit that man of always popping up when he was not wanted was so near to the realms of the supernatural that they were unwearyingly momentary, and they could only stare blankly.

The detective grew more confident and advanced upon the James Boys.

"I have you in my power," he asserted, "and it will be madness to resist. Throw down your weapons!"

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## WILD SCENES ON THE TRAIN.

The forward movement of the detective aroused the James Boys from their stupor, and they would have felt like laughing at the force opposed to them, but that it was not all that they had to deal with was soon proven.

Into the car came a dozen other men, and the way in which they ranged themselves behind Carl Greene was proof that they were of his force. Carl, himself, looked very confident.

"This was a bold undertaking of yours, Jesse James," he added, "but you forget that I meant to be with you. Throw down your weapons!"

Jesse flashed a glance at Frank James. It was to see if the second bandit was ready, and the mute telegraphy of glances told enough. Instead of obeying the order the bandit king suddenly flung up his hands with a revolver in each.

Crack!

Crack!

There were two reports almost as one, and the double lumps at the roof of the car went out with a great rattling of glass.

The place became totally dark.

"Now!"

Sharply the word passed Jesse's lips and Frank knew what it meant. Almost in the same breath other shots sounded, and the car became

a place of wild tumult. Both bandits were bound to clear their way and get to where they could have the aid of their comrades—a vitally necessary thing, for if they did not, it was plain that Carl had them in his grasp fully.

One of the bullets struck Carl in the neck and stung him to fury.

"Fire!" he yelled. "Will you be butchered? Return the work to the same sort. Fire!"

The bandits dropped flat.

Crack!  
Crack!  
Crack!

and flew through the air and a loud voice shouted:

"I am hit!"

It was one of the car guardians who spoke, and Jesse and Frank lunged lightly.

"Try again, Carl!" cried Frank.

"Riddle them if need be!" thundered the detective, maddened by the harm done his own men.

Again the volley, again the hail of bullets.

"If they want light give it to them!" added Carl, stubbornly.

It was an order which pleased his followers, for they had rather shoot than be shot, and they bided away until the revolvers were empty.

"Stop, now," directed the detective. "We must have cleaned them out."

He listened. There were groans in the car, but he could not say that any were from his hated foes.

"Jesse James, do you live?" he asked.

There was no answer.

"Speak, unless you want more firing your way!"

Still he was not accommodated with a reply.

"Can we have wiped them out?" he wondered.

"I hear nothing near where they were," said one of his followers.

"Nor I!"

"I reckon they are down."

"Advance that way and see."

"Perhaps some one else had better."

"Go, Allen," added Carl, to another follower.

"I'll be hanged if I want the job," was the frank answer. "My hide would not sell well in market with a hole through it."

"Are you all cowards?" cried the detective, angrily.

"You yourself," suggested Allen, tartly.

"Carl, there is a light on the platform," reminded another man.

"Why did you not think of it before? Go and get it."

The order was obeyed.

"Now be ready to shoot if they are alive," ordered Carl.

Back with the light came the assistant, and the beams thereof made all parts of the car distinctly visible. The detective force looked eagerly to solve the question, were the bandits dead or alive? They looked, but—the point was not settled.

Jesse and Frank were not to be seen.

"Thunder!" cried Carl, "they have escaped us."

"Sneaked out on the sly!" added a disgusted follower.

"Cunning fiends!" almost groaned Carl.

"Anyhow, we have them on the run. I'll bet they were the most frightened men in Missouri. Ha—ha—ha!"

The laugh was echoed behind the confident speaker, and the party turned to see who was doing it. When they looked they knew all about this. By the door stood the James Boys and several of their men, and every detective warrior was covered with a revolver.

"Ha, ha!" added Jesse, mockingly.

Blankly the dismayed officers stared.

"No doubt we are quite as much scared as you suggest," pursued the bandit king, grimly, "but you will see we are still in the swim. Men," and there was a sudden great change in Jesse's voice, "you are our prisoners! If you resist you are dead men!"

He had no answer.

"I demand the surrender of all here."

Jesse James, spoke Carl, huskily, "do you know what you are trying to do?"

"I think I do."

"Are you so mad as to think you can run this train?"

"Just as mad as that."

"We can summon all the passengers to our aid."

"What then?"

"Why, we can sweep you out of the world."

"Better leave all sweeping to the old women of the land, for I assure you that you would not

be a success at it. Now, I am going to turn the tables on you, Carl. You have long hunted us, and it's our turn now. We are going to give you a lesson. Throw down your arms."

"Throw them down!"

"So I said."

"Your audacity is unbounded!" cried the detective, flushing with indignation. "I'll show you how we obey outlaws. Men, blaze away and light 'em out right here."

The detective threw up his revolver with the intention of making a quick shot, but some one else was quicker. Cole Younger had been on the alert, and a moment sooner than the detective he pressed the trigger of his own weapon.

Straight at the heart of Carl Greene he had aimed, and at a distance where he could not miss. Carl reeled back into the arms of one of his men.

"He is down!" yelled Jack Keene. "Now for the rest of them!"

Each man of the rival parties appeared to regard the shot as the signal for a general outbreak, and the old division of mutual firing began. Deadly that firing would have been had not the man who held the lantern been the first to get hit. He fell, crashing the lantern under him, and there was once more darkness.

Crack!  
Crack!  
Crack!

It was a fierce fusillade in the deepest gloom, and everybody was working by chance, but the bandits had more of a definite object than their

They had come there with this order from Jesse.

"If the safe is still open, fight your way to that point at all hazards, and then stand by it."

Thus directed, the trained fighters worked with system, and steadily they forced their way forward. They reached the safe, and Jesse made haste to see if it was open. It was, but he found a man fumbling at it, and readily saw that it must be the messenger.

He flung the man aside, and, with the help of Frank, secured a part of the contents, including the banker's box.

The firing was still going on, and the bandit king determined to stop it.

"Boys," he shouted, "sweep the car!"

They knew what that meant, and a wild cheer rose.

"Hurrah for the James Boys!"

"Down with Carl Greene!"

A headlong rush followed.

There was a fierce struggle, and then the detective's men were driven out of the car wholly.

They took to that next at hand, and they were allowed to go for the time.

"I wish we had a light now," said Jesse.

"Perhaps something is left of the lamps above us," suggested Cole Younger. "Jack Keene, give us a light," he said.

Jack bent his back, and Cole soon found that the principal part of one of the lamps was still intact. It was lighted anew, and the bandits looked around.

"That's it, Carl Greene?"

All had seen the detective stagger, but though several of the foe were yet there, too badly hurt to retreat, Carl was not of the number. He had escaped a death-wound after all.

"Never mind," said Jesse; "let us get what the safe will yield us, and then we will take possession of the whole train. Carl will spread the alarm, everybody will know we are here, and the conductor will pull up at some station before we are scolded out. Go for the plunder!"

It was duly heeded out and divided among the bandits so they could carry it easily, and then they were ready for further labor.

"Invade the train," ordered Jesse next.

They invaded every car and compel the passengers to submit. We may as well make a sure thing of it and a complete thing."

This pleased the bandits, who usually managed to have considerable sport with passengers under such circumstances, and they started.

It was not forgotten that Carl Greene's men would have to be encountered, but when the pilgrimage was begun it was found that they were for the time humbled and quieted.

Carl's life had been saved by a book he chanced to have in his pocket, but he had a wound serious enough to demand attention, and this it was receiving when the bandit round was made.

Entirely through the train the band passed, and they were very serious trouble from any one.

"We shall not get back so safely," remarked Jesse.

"Why not?"

"Do you think all these people are cowed?"

"It does not seem likely."

"Then we may expect a rally."

"What are we to do?"

"Fight!"

"Nothing will suit us better!" declared Jack Keene, and the others echoed the assertion.

"We do not want unnecessary trouble," Jesse replied, "but of course we must keep our grip on the train. We have the bell-cord, and the engineer cannot be signaled to, and our precautions in setting a guard will prevent any one from going forward to see the engineer in person. This ought to make sure the probability of going ahead until we reach the regular stop, but we must keep our eyes open and see that no trick is played on us."

"Let us get to the front of the train," suggested Frank.

They started. For a time there was no opposition to their progress, but though the detective and his followers managed to keep out of sight for awhile, they were not sleeping, and a rash member of that command finally started trouble.

Just as Jesse reached the front door of one of the cars midway in the train, there was the report of a revolver, and a bullet passed close to his head.

Frank James wheeled quickly.

It took him but a moment to locate the marksman, and he fired promptly.

The would-be slayer fell, and then from various points up and down the car, evidently, had a desire to figure in the strife.

There was a general drawing of weapons among the valiant, while all others took to the cover of seats.

Bang!  
Bang!  
Bang!

The light was on and the rival parties did their best to make it fatal. She followed shot, and amid the reports the cracking of glass and a confused mingling of yells of defiance and rage add the shrieks of women the tint went on.

Unduly precipitated though it was it was made little pleasing for a stubborn stand by Carl Greene and his men. Carl came to the front and did his part, and though several shots were fired directly at him he seemed to be gifted with a charmed life.

Confident and jubilant were the bandits.

"Hurrah for the James Boys!"

"Down with Carl Greene!"

"Clear out the car!"

"Death to all who oppose us!"

These and other cries sounded, and their high spirits did as much as their shots to convince the detective force that the outlaws were indeed masters of the situation.

Despite the loud shouts of their leader Carl's men broke and fled to the rear car. Jesse laughed lightly.

"Let them have possession there," he said, quietly.

So the rear car was given up to the forces of law, while the bandits ruled elsewhere. Presently Jim Cummins came to Jesse.

"Something is wrong," he remarked.

"What?"

"Looking back I saw Carl throw something out of the car as we passed the last station, and the telegraph agent picked it up."

"Thinker! Has he made arrangements for a telegram to be sent ahead?"

#### CHAPTER XXV.

WHERE QUICK WIT IS NEEDED.

JESSE JAMES spoke in a startled voice, and Jim Cummins said emphatically:

"Just the question in my mind," he replied.

"What did this thing that Carl Greene threw out look like?" added the bandit king.

"It was some heavy object—possibly used as a mallet or hammer, but the object truly distinguished the color of something white, like a paper."

"Then your suspicion was correct."

"And Carl has determined to have a message sent ahead."

"Yes."

"By doing this he can have us side-tracked before we get to the next stop."

"Just so."

"What are we to do?"

Jesse mused awhile before answering this question. They were approaching a region where they could count on many sympathizers among the people, but it was not possible to count on them for aid or help. There was still need of fighting Carl with his own weapons.

The bandit chief looked to his watch. The short summer night was drawing to a close, and

a few hours would see daylight again with them.

"First of all, we must part company from Carl," finally replied Jesse.

"How?"

"By uncoupling."

"You would drop the rear of the train?"

"Yes."

"It ought to be done."

"It shall."

The wisdom of the step was very apparent to all, and arrangements were duly made. They were not sure of the way now, but they wished to leave their foes in the most desolate place possible, and they kept watch for that place.

With men ready to uncouple they watched sharply.

"There's a wood ahead, Jesse," said Jim.

"It seems large, too."

"So it does."

"Tell the boys to be prepared."

The wood was entered. Tall trees grew on each side, and it had just the appearance to suit them. The couplings grew slack under the pressure of the train and the time had come. Jesse gave the word and the disconnection was made.

The train parted, and, while the bandits had the locomotive, tender and one car, the rest of the train would be left behind as soon as the grade allowed it to impetus to the rear. "Soon came a slight up-grade and there was an open space about equal to the length of a car between the two sections.

Immediately men appeared on the other platform, and it was clear that the foe was still wide awake. Angry cries were sent after the robbers.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Jesse. "They don't like that. No doubt they were hatching some scheme and this knocks them out."

"They will soon be out of it wholly," added Jim.

Crack!

There was a rifle shot from the enemy, but the bullet went wild. Derisive yells floated back from the bandits.

"We will see you some other year!" shouted Jack Keene.

"Give your engine more steam!" advised Jim, sarcastically.

Crack!

Other shots came, and it was plain that mischief was intended. The detective had placed all the men who could work to advantage at the windows, and they began a hot fire.

"Give them our own medicine!" ordered Jesse, and he was quickly obeyed.

Again it was down grade, and the severed part of the train was holding its own in the race.

On rushed the two halves, while the firing was kept up with vim.

"Jesse," said Frank, "this rifle practice will surely be heard by the engineer."

"That is true."

"What if he should pull up?"

"He is not likely to do it, but we must take steps to prevent it. Do you, Dick Little and Bob Younger go forward and capture the engineer, and then make him and the fireman do their work properly."

The men named hastened away.

"We don't gain an inch on the rear part of this train!" exclaimed Jim, suddenly.

"That is true. This sharp down grade enables the cars to run of their own weight, and they are getting up great speed. Then, too, I do not think the engineer is giving us all the speed he might."

"Where's the other half come?"

"It was a fact that the severed half was getting under tremendous headway for the motive power it had. It rushed down the grade with unexpected speed. Cheers rose from Carl's men and the firing was renewed with zeal. The bandits sheltered themselves, and the shots died thickly.

"Now and then, during a lull, they could hear Carl's voice.

"Standfast as the Rock of Ages!" muttered Jesse, admiring the pertinacity of the man.

On, on, came the pursuers, and Jim Cummins was led to mutter:

"I do believe they will crash into us!"

"If they do, look out for the hottest light you have had yet. Carl will rally his men for a last struggle and it will be lively."

On—on!

"They gain!"

"They are going to overtake us!"

Such were the exclamations behind Jesse, and though he was puzzled to account for the gain, he could not deny that it was being made. The same fact was clear to another, and out on the air floated a shout from the tireless leader of the opposition.

"I will have you yet, Jesse James!"

Carl Greene would never give up while life remained.

On—on! and still the gain.

"We are in for it," decided Cole Younger.

"Ha! do you see?"

"We have struck an up-grade!"

"So we have, and I can see quite a rise ahead of us. This settles Carl Greene, and we need worry no more about him.

"The main statement was correct, and, while the front part of the train went climbing gallantly up the ascent, the rear gradually faltered and lost speed until it was plain they must soon stop altogether.

"This thing off was hailed with joy by the bandits, who cheered again and again, but when it was evident that all was over, and the distance increased more fully, Carl Greene came out on the rear platform of the foremost of the detached cars and shook his clinched fist at the victors in the chase—a demonstration of impotent fury which made the fugitives laugh loudly.

"Their half is halting wholly!" cried Cole Younger.

"Yes, they are done."

"It's the last we shall see of Carl."

"We leave him just where I could most wish it," said Jesse. "It appears to be a wide-forer, and it will take them some time to get out. Good-bye to Carl."

Over the hill went the locomotive and its now slender train, and the increase of speed told of the influence of Frank James and his companions on the engineer.

"Safely out," said Cole.

"What is beyond?" asked Jesse, seriously.

"We shall soon see."

"We have not the slightest notion of what we may encounter, but we can do no more than ride on and trust to luck—ride until day, when we must desert the car and trust to other means. Then, somehow, we must get horses."

"I reckon we can do it."

"Our first step must be to cut the wires, and I'll go forward to the locomotive and see what the chances are there.

"I'll go toward the engineer and fireman thoroughly under control of Frank, Dick and Bob, and ready to obey all orders. The first order from Jesse was to pull up and allow of cutting the wires—this was done—and then to hasten to the engine."

They went on at full speed.

Time passed, and, as the gray dawn began to make itself visible, the fact also dawned upon the fugitives that they were nearing a crisis.

"And," said Jesse to Frank, "I cannot get rid of the idea that we are to have trouble from some source. How do we know that the paper which was thrown to the platform by Carl Greene was not an order to the operator to telegraph ahead? I think we have ground for fear, and that, too, of the most emphatic kind."

"What can we do?"

"We ought to have more of an outlook than can be kept from the cab, and I am going to the top of the car. From there I can see well in advance, where the track is anywhere near straight."

"A good plan."

"It is a matter of life and death, and have the boys prepared to leave at a moment's warning."

"It shall be done."

Accompanied by Cole Younger, Jesse climbed to the top of the car. The sun was not yet up, but day had fully dawned, and the view was all they could wish for. At times they could see far in advance.

"Here is a small station," said Cole, presently.

"Yes."

They went by at full speed.

"Those old farmers stare as if we were some new species of animal."

"It is the cut-off train that calls their attention to us," said Jesse. "It suggests a new danger, too. Will not our appearance cause some of these wayside operators to send a message ahead?"

"Thunder! I'm afraid so."

"We can't stop to cut the wires between all such stations."

"That is true."

"Cole, we are risking too much, and at the first good chance we will desert the train and take to the hills."

"I reckon it will be best so."

They dashed up a slight hill, and then sped around a curve with woods on one side.

"I think there is a town just beyond."

Jesse rode to his feet and Cole followed his example. They stood together on the top of the car as it rounded the curve fully. Then the bandit king suddenly grasped his follower's arm.

"Look!"

"Jupiter! We are in for it."

"An obstruction on the track!"

"Yes."

"It will be death to us if we strike it."

"It was surely."

"Tell Frank to pull the bell for the engine to be reversed."

Cole dropped on his knees and shouted the command, and then he and Jesse hastened down. The whistle of the engine told that the order was heard, and then the bandits hurried to be ready for the crash. By that time the obstruction must have been visible from the cab if those there were using their eyes, and they would know the vital need of obedience. Yes, and the order was obeyed. All felt the effects of the carrying out of the direction.

"Shall we pull up in time?"

"We are now down grade, and no quick stop can be made."

"By my life! we are going to crash into it!"

The bandits gazed at the pile of rocks and logs on the track, and it became sure that they would hit it at considerable speed. Just beyond it, too, they could see men armed with rifles and clubs waiting for the collision and the subsequent chance to fall upon the bandits.

"Boys! stand still! We must jump for it. By doing that we shall escape the crash, and be on this side of the men, too. Together, now! All jump!"

To the side of the car crowded the bandits. It would not do to hesitate, and though the engine was still under great speed they made the leap. Others followed as fast as the steps were cleared and the whole lot went rolling down the bank.

Then came a terrific crash, and the train plunged into the obstruction and fell over a wreck.

And they who had jumped!

Jesse was jarred and bruised, but he struggled to his feet and was again with joy when he saw all others rise, even to the trainmen. Lamed and hurt they were, but not seriously.

"See!" cried Frank, "those fellows come rushing this way."

He spoke of the men by the barricade, and the peril of the bandits seemed of the direst kind. What could they do? That was the thought of all, and it suddenly called out something at once.

"Look!" was heard they said Jesse. "There are horses there. This new foe is made up of farmers who have gathered with their steeds. Let us seize the horses and flee."

The animals mentioned were but a few rods away, and nearer to them than to the enemy, and they ran toward them at full speed. There were enough for all, and all were ready to go. The bandits leaped to their backs and were off in the same moment.

Loud and angry yells came from the farmers.

"Shoot them!" was the shout from one of them.

Crack!

But they went on the way, but with such wretched aim that not a bandit was hit. That escape gave them courage, and they turned and sent back their defiance in clear and thrilling tones.

"Ride hard, boys and we are all right!" exclaimed Jesse. "I see nothing they can pursue with."

"There was nothing, or nothing that could be brought into use at that time, and though a few more vain shots were fired, none hit their mark. The yells of the farmers were so angry as to suggest the danger of a popshy.

Out of the town dashed the fugitives. They found they had had a very good foretold their own, and their hopes rose high.

"Those fellows will never catch us," asserted Frank.

"We have left both them and Carl Greene."

"Yes, and we are now in a part of the country where we can defy all efforts to capture us."

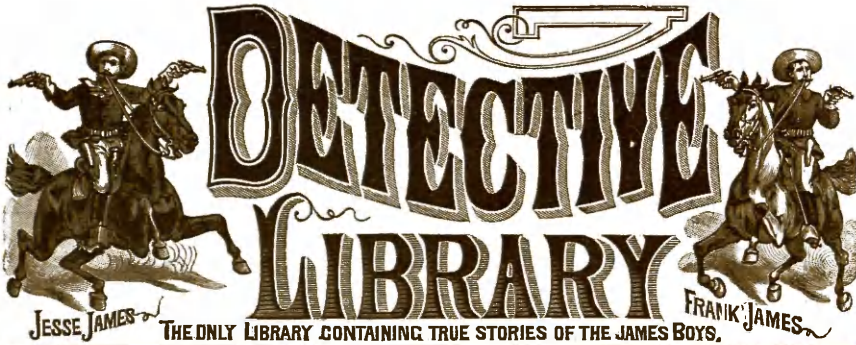
"Boys," added Jesse James, "sound three cheers for our deliverance!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

It was the cry of triumph—the happy exultation at having escaped the barricade-builders and Carl Greene, and it was not out of place. They did some rapid riding, but it was done in safety. They were not overtaken, and in due time they were in a resort of the kind and done with the long, hard flight from pursuers.

[THE END.]





Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1896, by FRANK TOWSEY, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C. Entered at U. S. Post Office, at New York, N. Y., as Second Class Matter. The subscription price of Detective Library by the year is \$3.00; \$1.50 per six months, post-paid.

NO. 714. {COMPLETE} FRANK TOWSEY, PUBLISHER, 34 & 38 NORTH MOORE STREET, N. Y. {PRICE} 10 CENTS. { Vol. I.  
NEW YORK, JULY 31, 1896. ISSUED EVERY FRIDAY.

# The James Boys' Dead-Shot Legion; OR, THE RUNNING FIGHT ON THE BORDER.

By D. W. STEVENS.

Author of "The James Boys in a Trap," "The James Boys' Ride for Life," "The James Boys and the Dwarf," etc.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE BANDITS RIDE FOR LIFE.

A DOZEN men were encamped in a grove near one of Missouri's rivers. Athletic, hardy-looking fellows they were, with the bronzed faces which much of life in the open air will give, the confident manner of those who feel able to take care of themselves in any emergency.

One of the party approached another who was standing by a tree, looking thoughtfully out across the visible country.

"Any news, Jesse?" he asked.

"Nothing, thus far."

"I, too, have used my eyes to the utmost, and fail to see any sign that the people suspect that the James Boys and their band are riding across the land."

"Our extreme caution deserves some reward, and I think we have it. Why, when I last stopped in a store to make purchases some of the persons present discussed Jesse James and his misdeeds as coolly as you please, and then one of the strangers sought to give me, thinking me a total stranger to Missouri, points in regard to the man they mentioned."

"Ha—ha! I'll wager something you did not tell them you were Jesse James himself."

"Hardly!"

"Jesse, you have not as yet told me your object in taking us on this ride."

"Are you impatient to know?"

"The boys feel they ought to know, and I think they are right. As long as they share our danger, and are so faithful to us, they should not be kept in any doubt as to our intentions."

"I have not intentionally made a mystery of the matter, but the notion struck me to see how they would follow on a blind hunt. I don't care how soon they know."

"Then perhaps you don't object to telling me?"

"Not in the least. We are to make prey of railroad interests."

"Wreck a train?"

"No."

"What then?"

"Rob a paymaster's car. We do this at Windmore. The payments there are to be unusually heavy this time. Besides the regular amounts, there is to be a big crowd of track-layers to pay off, and some other extras, which bring the sum total which the paymaster will carry up to a good round sum."

"Is this your only object?"

"Isn't it enough?"

"I think you are keeping something back, Jesse."

"Nonsense!"

"All right; I have no wish to pry into your secrets. I suppose I shall know in due time. Cole Younger advances in some haste. What's the matter with him?"

One of the party who had been outside the camp and just returned, hurried to the side of the previous speakers.

"Say, mischief is afoot!" he cried.

"What is wrong?"

"We are being spotted by some force of men," Jesse James started.

"Where are they?"

"All around us. They have surrounded the camp, and are literally hemmed in."

"We have seen nobody."

"It has been secretly done, no doubt," answered Cole Younger, "but so it is. They are all around us, and it is safe to say they know the James Boys and their band are in this grove."

"You astonish me. Show me these fellows."

"Not unless you want to upset all. They think nobody knows of their proximity, and while they think that they will not be dangerous until night fully falls."

"How did you get on to this?"

By chance; I saw two of them as I was returning to the camp, and, when their manner had given away the fact that they were doing the spy act on us, I reconnoitered a bit. The result was that I learned there were such foes on each and all sides of us."

"Is it Timberlake or Carl Greene?" demanded Frank James, instinctively thinking of the two men who had made so much trouble for them during their own career as bandits.

"Possibly neither."

"As his brother-outlaws we are likely to have all of Missouri after us," remarked Cole Younger, with a self-satisfied smile.

"Depend upon it, 'tis Carl Greene or Timberlake," persisted Frank.

"Probably you are right."

"Well, what is to be done?"

"There is only one thing to be done," replied Jesse. "We are never in the habit of sitting still to let the foe seize upon us, and this will prove no exception to the rule. Later on, we will make a dash to get away."

"They doubtless think us settled down for the night, and we might be able to depart secretly, anon

"And perhaps meet their own attack before we could get away. No, we will wait but a little while after dark."

"It will be a very dark night."

"We are going to have a severe shower," observed Jesse, looking at the sky.

"It does seem so."

"Cole, did you decide which was the better way for us to break through?"

"To the north, I think."

"Just my theory."

Other members of the band now returned, and all who were with the James Boys on the present ride were thus gathered. Besides Jesse and Frank James the party was composed of Cole, Bob, Jim and John Younger, Jim Cummins, Jack Keene, Dick Little, Ed McMillan, Bill Chadwell, Clell Miller, Wood Hiss, Hobbs Berry, George and Oli Sheppard.

This was the formidable gang which had made their name famous under the leadership of the James Boys and one which had lorded it well over Missouri.

The men were told of the danger which now menaced them, but they were so sure that no attack would be made before a later hour that they did not waste much time in watching, except in a general way. Who and what was opposed to them they did not know, and an observer would have said they did not care. They were as careless and happy-go-lucky as ever, but it was because that was their nature.

No one failed to see the danger.

It was a danger, too, which was all the more striking because its magnitude was not known.

Who led the envying force?

What was their number?

All this was unknown, and the wild riders kept their places with the consciousness that at any moment a foe might spring upon them that would be so strong in men as to render their own downfall certain. In the face of all this they played cards, told stories, and laughed with all the carelessness of such peculiar natures.

As night settled down the black clouds grew blacker and thicker, and it was plain there was to be a severe outburst of the elements.

Jesse did not lose much time after it was dark enough to hide their movements from possible watchers. He called to the band to get their horses and prepare for a dash for life and liberty, and they responded promptly.

The horses were soon prepared, and the riders swung themselves into the saddle. At the edge

of the grove they sat—a grim and ominous collection of dead-shots.

"They did not expect to go through without trouble, but they knew their own capabilities at such a time."

"Ready?" asked Jesse.

"All ready."

"Have your revolvers drawn."

"We have."

"Remember we are to cut through at all hazards."

"Ay—ay!"

"Our course is an near north as we can go for a time. If we hold in that direction long enough the river will be in the way, and it is not easy to ford in all places; but I trust we shall have no great trouble in shaking off the foe ere we get that far. That's what we want to do, for we should surely have trouble if driven to the river."

Again Jesse looked toward the frowning sky with some apprehension.

"A little line of lightning flashed along the black border.

"Once more—ready!" he commanded.

"A murmur of assent.

"Go!"

From the cover of the grove broke the band. It would have suited them to go with a wild yell of assertion, but their orders were strict.

The start was made with a dash, but in utter silence.

Down the hill they sped, and several rods were made before there was any sign of trouble. Then there was a sound of voices.

"We are seen!" exclaimed Frank James.

"Hallo—hallo!"

The hail rose in a loud, clear tone, but no one replied to it. All around them there was a stir, however, which told how fully the foe was becoming aroused.

"Ho, there—halt!"

There was not a word from the bandits.

"Halt, or we fire!"

It was a plain warning, but the wild riders did not give the least outward sign that they heard the call. Straight onward they rode, and the hill top was fast being left behind. They were not to go so cheaply, however.

Crack!

Crack!

Here and there flashed a rifle, and the reports sounded with whizz-like velocity. It was a matter intended to carry death in its train, but accurate shooting in such darkness was not easy.

Close flew the bullets, but none of the band was hit.

"On, boys, on!"

"Low and cheerful" was the command from Jesse James, but it had hardly been given when there was more shooting. How the bullets flew! The air seemed to be full of them, and they sang a song of death, which did not, however, connect thus far.

Down the slope went the bandits, and, though the firing was kept up while there was any hope, it soon became clear that they had broken through the surrounding lines.

The opposing force had rested secure in their position, believing their presence unsuspected, until it was too late to do damage. But the struggle was not over. They got to their own horses much quicker than was to be expected, and then they came rushing along in pursuit.

For the time being the James Boys had a clear field before them.

They could not make the speed they could on a hard road, but it was safe and sure riding, and they improved it to the utmost. As a compact whole they sped forward, while in the rear came the eager pursuers.

Evidently, the latter did not intend to let any chance slip, and a steady fire was kept up.

"Hollo! that was a piece of my ear!" laughed Jack Keene, recklessly, as one piece of lead came too near for comfort.

"There's a hole in my shirt big enough for the Missouri river to run through!" added Bob Younger in the same spirit.

"Jesse, would it not be well to give these fellows a specimen of our own style?" asked Ed McMillan.

"Don't be in haste. We may ample them later on in a close contest. This is only fun."

It may have been for them, but other men, thus situated, would not have found it anything else.

If the foe could not seem to shoot with accuracy they were shooting under circumstances where a chance shot might bring death at any moment.

The horses of the band were of the best. As usual, Jesse rode the famous Sroc, and Frank had Jim Malone under his knees, and the other men had the steeds tried in many a wild race

with detectives. And now these animals were along their duty well.

On, on!

Proudly the feet of the horses spurned the ground, and the fugitives dashed into the darkness like phantom horsemen. Well must be ride who would overtake the bandits of Missouri.

As they went the threatening storm gained force. The lightning flashed oftener and more vividly, the thunder rolled with deeper tone, and the clouds closed in more ominously.

"This thing will break in a few minutes," remarked Frank.

"Yes."

"And it will be a rustler."

"We are used to it."

"Sure, but you will remember the river is near. It's a stream hard to ford, and we do not know it. What if we get caught at the pinch? Hemmed in by the foe, we should go down like ripe fruit."

"Can we turn?"

"I see no way, I confess."

"Then we must go on as we are," Jesse decided.

Again the lightning flashed. As it happened, nearly every man was looking toward the west. They would have been glad to go in that direction, but there were the hills, with their cliffs—a fact as they well knew, where progress was next to impossible for horses. They would have been glad to go there, but it was out of the question.

They must go on, though it drove them into some trap at the river.

Crash!

It was a mighty peal of thunder, following an unusually sharp exhibition of lightning, and then in its train came the rain. With a mighty sigh of the wind the watery flood broke upon them, and even the hardy bandits turned their faces away for the moment.

"This is a deluge!" cried Cole Younger, raising his voice to a shout, to make it heard above the uproar.

"Nothing but pleasure," added Hobbs Kerry. Jesse James shook his head. He did not hold the same opinion. He was thinking of the river. As they went on the open land by the way decreased in width, and the hills drew closer, and the fact that these hills were so near and so steep was proof enough that it would be the worst lot a few minutes for them to send their suddenly-formed streams down to swell the regular river. If the ford was always difficult, what would it be with the addition?

Crack!

The pursuers did not let the fact die out that they were still in the fight. The vividness of the lightning now encouraged them to try and utilize its flashes as means of making aim certain. As they went on the open land by the way decreased in width, and the hills drew closer, and the fact that these hills were so near and so steep was proof enough that it would be the worst lot a few minutes for them to send their suddenly-formed streams down to swell the regular river. If the ford was always difficult, what would it be with the addition?

On, on!

"Frank," called Jesse, "we are nearing the river."

"Yes."

"Can we hope to cross?"

"What else can we do?"

"It would not do to turn and fight?"

"We will let fate force against us."

"You are right. We must depend on our heels."

"The river?" cried Jim Cummins, suddenly.

The river it was, rolling before them in a white seething flood, like the foam of an angry ocean.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE DEADLY FORD.

INSTINCTIVELY the bandits pulled up their horses. They were adventurous to the point of utter recklessness, but for the moment that billow of foam dismayed them.

The rain had done its work. It had added to the heavy supply of a swift stream, and the waters were rushing by at speed which made it seem impossible to enter the flood and live to come out.

"Jesse, can we make it?" shouted Frank James.

The bandit king looked back at the on-coming pursuers.

"We must."

"Can any horse defy that force of nature?"

"No, there is no horse that can do it."

"Nothing."

"Then our way is plain."

"The foe draws near," cautioned Jim Cummins.

"Forward!" called Jesse, loudly.

Suiting the action to the word, he urged Sroc into the river. The gallant animal shrunk from

the contact, but he was accustomed to obedience. On brief, mute remonstrance, and he went as directed.

"Three cheers, boys!" cried Jack Keene.

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

Loud on the air rang the shout; but it was not one of confidence—was simply the defiance of men who saw a great danger and would not shrink from it.

A moment more and all the party were struggling with the current.

It was the hour of triumph for the river. As if it had received prey for which it had been waiting, it seized upon the horses and lashed them with pitiless force. No animal could defy that onslaught of Nature, and all were borne down stream, despite the efforts of the riders to preserve a direct course, and the equally desperate attempts of the steeds.

And while they were thus doing but little more than to drift at right angles, the human foe came nearer rapidly until they were on the very bank.

If they had aimed to strike a little lower down they would have had the bandits at their mercy, but this they thought to do. Now they rode down to get the desired chance.

Desperate was the battle with the waters, and the riders were dazed by the peril. Situated as they were they could return no fire, and the misthmen on the bank would have an overwhelming advantage.

"Jesse, is this our last ride?" shouted Jim Cummins.

"No, no!"

"We gain nothing."

"While we live we have hope."

"So have the foe."

"Keep your grip on the rein and all will be well."

"What about the grip of the water?"

It was not in weakness that Jim spoke, for no one there was cooler than he, but he could not be blind to the danger. It threatened from a double source, and death rode with the band that night, indeed.

"They are going to fire!" shouted Cole Younger.

"Bend low, boys!" ordered Jesse.

As they bent his head close to the neck of his horse,

"Anybody hit?"

It would have been hard to get an answer. The rough water had carried the men well apart, and, excepting that the flash of the lightning, they could see but little of each other. "Nobody" was observed to fall, however. It had been a narrow escape all around.

Jesse was watching the other bank almost ceaselessly. If they could gain it the situation would be reversed, and they would be able to pay off the score, but it was a hard push.

They were past the regular ford, unless they had originally struck the river too high up, and he knew not what would be the chances of effecting a landing, if they could get out of the worst of the torrent.

Despite all their troubles they were gradually nearing the desired point, for they kept their horses headed in that direction, and they still hoped on.

So did the enemy.

Crack!

There was no hesitation in that direction. The missile went on, and bullets did not cease to fly.

Frank James had a slight wound, but he disregarded it and never wavered. It was no time for weakness.

Suddenly a shout rose. Ed McMillan had succeeded in making a foothold on the other side. His loud shouts of encouragement came at just the right time, and the bandits made fresh efforts to aid their almost discouraged horses to get to the point of safety. Bob Younger, too, made the bank, and Jim Cummins was not long behind him.

All this the lightning revealed to the men on the southern bank, and they renewed their efforts to drop some of the band. Now they did not have it all to themselves.

Ed, Bob and Jim opened fire from their own location, and with telling accuracy. The followers of Jesse James knew how to use rifles, and it was proven now.

"Drive them back!" shouted Jim.

"Make every shot tell!" added Ed.

"Take those who try to shoot," suggested Bob Younger.

Jesse, Frank and Clell landed, and close after them came all the rest. Then the situation was changed. No longer exposed to the wild flood and the hostile fire of the dead-shot band, flogged for satisfaction, and proceeded to secure it.

"Get your revenge!" shouted Jesse.

THE JAMES BOYS' DEAD SHOT' LEGION.

"Even it up with the cowards who took us in the water."  
 "Watch for the next flash."  
 "Now!"  
 "Fire!"

It was the first thing like a volley which the bandits had been able to give, and it went with telling directness. Confusion followed among the law, and some of them fell from the opposite bank to a place of safety.

Those who remained did not seem anxious to rush forward.

"They are afraid of the ford," said Jim Cammin, scornfully.

"How about the influence of the rifles?" demanded Jack Keene, with his reckless laugh.

"Anyhow, they are stopped right where they are."

"Pay off the score!"

So ordered Jesse, and they did it as far as possible. They were angry at the advantage which had been taken of them, and their rifles were used with effect until the foe concluded they had seen enough of it and withdrew.

"Another round now," remarked Frank.

"What are we to do now?" asked Cole Younger.

"The storm is not letting up any."

"No."

"Confound me if I like to travel in this tumult."

"What are the chances of our pursuers passing the ford to-night?" demanded Jesse, suddenly.

"Not a man of them will do it."

In this opinion Jim Cammin's all the party coincided, and the leader then said:

"We will act on this belief, then. We must ride somewhat further, of course, but as soon as seems prudent we will halt in some secluded place and see if we can rest until the rain is over. It would be disagreeable riding in such weather, and if there is no need, we will not do it."

"Your idea is good."

"Of course we will get an early start, and be out of the way ere your gang can cross and overtake us."

Heading north, the command rode on. Their way was through a hilly district, where they often had considerable difficulty in moving at all, and were glad when Jesse James announced that, in his opinion, they could afford to halt until morning.

This they did in a sheltered place, and then they camped down and listened to the howling of the storm.

"Jesse!" spoke Frank.

"What?"

"Who leads those fellows we have run up against?"

"Either Carl Greene or Timberlake."

"Sure?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"The whole thing is like them. No foray of the citizens was it, but a neat little plot which would have gone well, perhaps, but for Cole Younger's sharp eyes."

"I believe you are right."

"Possibly we shall see more of them, and I would not object to a brush. Unless we want to risk being followed on our trip, we may as well fight it out with their right here."

"Still, I may be up and off at daybreak."

"So do I, but if it's one of our old foes, he may have something to say about it."

The remainder of the night passed in quiet. They gradually subsided, and though the night was wet and disagreeable, they were no longer exposed to the beating of the elements. They had taken the risk of all seeking sleep together, anxious to be in good condition on the morrow, and this left the camp without any guard after they once succumbed to slumber.

If they had but known it, this was more reckless than they dreamed.

The gray dawn was just struggling into existence, when something aroused Jesse James, who was at the extreme edge of the camp. He sat up with the feeling that something was wrong—a feeling not new to him since he took to a life of crime.

What he saw did not decrease his fears.

He was face to face with a man who was a stranger to the band.

This person stood some four feet distant, and looked almost as much surprised as was the bandit king. Quickly the stranger moved to draw a revolver, but Jesse was ahead of him.

"Stop!"

The stranger found himself looking into the muzzle of a six-shooter.

"Hands up!" Jesse ordered.

The unknown turned several different colors in succession.

"What do you mean?" he asked, uneasily.

"I mean that if you don't stand there quietly I will blow your brains out! Is that plain enough?"

If the trembling of the stranger was any criterion, it did seem clear and emphatic.

"What do you mean?" he muttered.

"What are you doing here?"

"Looking—looking for my cattle."

"Two-legged ones?"

"Don't understand, sir."

"Now don't act the fool, for it will do you no good. You are here as a spy, and I know it. Persist in your plea of ignorance and you will be dead spy in short order. Make a clean breast of it, and you may live to tell lies to your great-grandchildren possibly."

"Sir, I don't see why you act so roughly—"

Jesse sprang forward and placed the revolver to the head of the suspected spy.

"Do you want to die?" he demanded.

All of the band were now gathered about, and the line of grim, scowling faces unerved the intruder wholly.

"Save me! spare me!" he gasped.

"Will you tell the truth?"

"Yes."

"Why are you here?"

"I was looking for the James Boys."

"You have found them. What now?"

"Now I realize that I am a fool," was the candid reply.

"Truth is a jewel. Who sent you here?"

"The officers who chased you last night?"

"Where are they?"

"They are dead along these hills. They think you are likely in camp, and I am one of many searchers. It was my misfortune to be the one to find you."

"Was it not known that we were in this grove?"

"No."

"How far away are the others?"

"I don't know. They may be some distance, or close at hand. I only know that three or four are still on now."

"Do you intend to call?"

"No, no, sir!"

"Who leads this force?"

"I don't know."

"Carefully, sir!"

"I speak the truth. I am not a regular member of the party, but I live near here, and am one of twenty men they enlisted from the farmers around here. When I was a boy my father always said I was a fool, and now I know it."

"Your father had horse-sense, anyhow. Describe the leader of that party."

"There were five or six very run things, and I did not see which was chief. Very likely I did not see him, for those I do see seemed equal in authority. We thought them all detectives, and obeyed whoever gave an order."

"Then they are all the while creeping on us?"

"I think so."

"Such being the case, we will give them work to do. Boys, to horse!"

The bandit barked to prepare their charges.

Thus far there was nothing to be seen of any one else, but the wild rider knew of old that their best way was to go at once. They would not be safe in the grove, and the only way to get out was to make a dash and trust to luck. Quietly and quickly they got their horses ready and swung into the saddle. Jesse looked over the farmers. They could not take him. What was to be done?"

"Mister, I suppose as soon as we start you will yell for the detective force," he observed.

"No!" declared the farmer.

"Why not?"

"I was a fool to monkey with the James Boys, anyhow, and I am done."

"Sure?"

"I am."

"You may change your mind."

"I shall not."

"Do you know what will happen if you do?"

"No."

"I shall return and kill you."

"You are a fool enough to invite your hostility, I hope you will kill me. Small thanks! I'll ever get from the detective, and if I get your ill will, you can ride along here any day and do me up. Depend upon it, I shall make you no trouble."

"We will take your word and let you live, but remember that if you sound the alarm you die," Jesse turned to his men. With a wave of his hand he started them, and the band swept from the grove. They struck a rapid pace from the

start, and went shooting away towards the north like centaurs.

Another ride for life was on.

CHAPTER III.

WAR, LOVE AND FIFE.

For a few minutes there was nothing to disturb the fight on either hand, but they were soon shown that they were not to go without a manifestation from their foes.

A shout arose from the trees to one side.

"He are seen!" Frank exclaimed.

Crank!

A bullet flouted past them, narrowly missing its aim, and then there was a flutter all along the valley. The searchers were very much alerted—too much so for combined action, but not for the use of their rifles.

Crank!

Crank!

He was hidden into the the very worst of it!" cried Jesse. "This is bad luck."

Their course was along a lowland, and on either side were the pursuers. They had an admirable chance, and it was improved to the utmost. From both banks came the leaden salute.

"The dog!" muttered Jim Cammin, as they do not fight like men. Here they are at their ease, and they shoot as if we were but turkeys ready for the killing."

"What do you expect?"

"Lead," was the reply, with a reckless laugh.

"We are getting it."

"Are we going to make a passage?"

It was a timely question. The valley narrowed almost to a point. If there were riflemen there, they could shoot with almost a certainty of success, and there would be nothing to prevent their doing this but the rifles of the bandits.

"But I see no one just there," added Jesse, when this fact was presented to his attention by Frank.

"It may be the most dangerous point of all."

"On, and try it!"

A few minutes more and they were near the solution of the question. Then the reply came promptly. The bushes stirred, and there were men visible here and there. Plainly, there had been organized gathering to cut them off.

"Whew! that looks hot!" admitted Cole Younger.

"Let the first shot they fire be a signal for us to shoot," said Jesse, quickly. "Shoot, and be sure you are not out of business. Overcome them will kill every one of us in that narrow gap!"

Nearer to the crisis.

Crank!

Crank!

The storm burst, and bullets cut the clothing of the wild riders. They did not wait to allow more accurate work. Jesse's orders were remembered, and up went the rifles of the banditti.

Dead-shots were they, and this time they had

life at stake in the encounter. True to the mark sped the lead, and some of those who had been the most zealous to do them damage, dropped by the way.

It was, however, a duel to the death, for many of the assassins were left, and they were just as dangerous as ever. Down from the banks rained the eagle hail, while up to the ridge fell the return compliments of the outlaw band.

It was a terrible war.

Shot answered shot.

"Can we pass?"

Frank shouted the question as they neared the narrowest part of the valley, and Jesse replied, with glittering eyes:

"We pass or through the gap with a detective graveyard around us. Shoot it hot!"

Unwavering as the riders were, it could not be denied that victory seemed most likely to perch on the side of the opposition. Partially sheltered as they were, they had a great advantage. A little bold, firm work and it would go hard with the outlaws.

But the latter had been shooting with deadly accuracy, and some of their comrades fell, the assassins grew fainter of heart.

They had not come there to throw life away. They wavered, hesitated, broke and fled.

A man leaped upon a rock and raised his voice to decry which little made it distinct far away, as he shouted:

"Back—back to your posts! Cowards, will you run when you are most needed! Back, and fight like men!"

The party was not checked, but the sight was a revelation to the banditti. Often had they seen this man who stood on the rock, and their own faces lighted up as they now looked.

"Carl Greene!"

It was, indeed, the tireless detective who had been their Nemesis for years.

Jack Keene threw up his rifle and took a shot at the hold office. Evidently he came close to the target, for Carl turned quickly and looked hard at the band, but he leaped down from the rock, apparently unharmed. He was not to die thus.

A few yards more and the party swept through the neck of land and were safe on the other side. A mocking laugh went back to the detective.

"One more triumph for us," remarked Frank.

"But Carl Greene is on our track."

"Do we fear him?"

"Yes."

"Nonsense, Jesse."

"Remember the work we have in hand. It is a most unlimely meeting with Carl. The knave may knock us out of getting what the paymaster has in his car."

"We will shake him off."

"Do you remember how hard it is to drop Carl Greene?"

"Well, we will try."

Acting on this plan they rode hard. Evidently the enemy found it hard to get in motion after the summary lesson administered to them, and they were so slow that by the time the bandits had gone ten miles they could look back and see a clear file. If the pursuit was to be it was being conducted with stealth and cunning, rather than haste.

Not until noon did the bandits pass. By that time they had a need which was not to be denied. All were hungry, and they had not the means of satisfying their hunger as they were. None of them was disposed to let this want remain a source of trouble, and, as they had ridden hard and gone many miles since the last sign from the pursuers, it was decided that they should stop at some farm-house and see if a good meal could be had for all.

At just the right time they entered land which proved to be that of a large plantation. In all directions stretched the premises, and it had evidently once been a place where prosperity reigned, but something appeared to have gone wrong with it.

Decay was visible everywhere, and the want of care and of labor had turned the fields into luscious wastes.

Still, they saw smoke rising from the chimney of the house, and they rode forward. Nobody was to be seen outside the premises, but when Jesse alighted and knocked at the door it was opened by a very old colored woman.

"Aunty," he said, "can we buy a good dinner here?"

She looked at him doubtfully.

"I don't know."

"We are strangers here. We belong on the plantation of Mr. Coles Duntion, in Clay county, and are out to find some valuable horses which have strayed away from his home. If you will give us something to eat we will pay you well and then go our way."

"I will see."

She closed the door and disappeared.

"Not a warm welcome," remarked Frank.

"It's not the welcome we want warm, but the dinner."

"If the rest of the gang are like her we shall find ourselves in with veritable mummies."

"Never mind if they can cook."

The old woman was back much sooner than they expected.

"You can have what you wish," she announced, but there was that in her manner which told she was not in love with the idea.

"Good?"

"A table will be set for you on the piazza, all but the leaders here. They will eat inside."

Jesse was about to ask the meaning of this plan, but he thought better of it and said nothing. On the whole it would just suit them, for those on the piazza could watch the horses and, also, make sure that no enemy stole upon them unawares.

There was ample chance for the horses to graze, and when they had been turned loose the bandits sat down on the piazza. No one had come out to greet them, and the old woman might have been the sole occupant of the house so far as they could see.

Later, she brought out a table and set it near them, and in due time the meal was ready. Good things were piled thereon, and she announced in a most amiable voice:

"You can all sit by and eat but those who go inside. Who are your leaders?"

Of course it was the James Boys who filled this want, and they followed the guide to the interior. There, as outside, the signs of decay appeared to be seen. Once this had been a

grand place. The passage of years had changed all. The house was big and the furniture was all in place, but it was almost ready to fall to pieces with age, and an unwholesome air pervaded everything, such as will come to a house long shut up.

The negro led the way to a room on the second floor, and left them before a well-laden table.

"My mistress will soon be here," she announced, and went out.

"Jesse, this was a grand and rich room fifty years ago," remarked Frank, looking around.

"What has made it go to seed thus?"

"Perhaps we can learn when the mistress comes."

"She mentioned no master."

"No."

"Will she be like her house?"

"Hush! Some one comes!"

The door opened and a lady appeared. One glance was enough to answer the questions which was in their minds. She was like her house—a monument of the past.

She seemed to be about sixty years old, and far from being in good looks. She had weathered under the hand of time, and bade fair to dry up wholly if she was given time enough.

Her dress was of an antique pattern, and once had been very rich and expensive. But time had made it all except for a savor, and it gave the bandits a start when this figure of antiquity walked in. It was as if a graveyard had yielded its burden to help them get a dinner.

There was a shadow of melancholy on her face and they thought its customary expression might have been sad in the extreme, but now it bore a sager look.

She advanced and gave each her hand in turn. "Gentlemen," she said, "you are very welcome to my home."

"Thank you, madam," replied Jesse.

"All I can do for you shall be done gladly."

"We hope we are not making you too much trouble?"

"Trouble, when I have waited for you so long! How can that be?"

"Have you waited for us?"

"I have waited for you!" replied the lady, with emphasis.

"Then you expected us?"

"For twenty long years!"

No more explanation was needed. The James Boys did not, for their reason was unbalanced, and they were disposed to deal with her carefully and make sure of the dinner.

"How was that?" Jesse inquired.

"It was long ago told to me by a wandering gypsy that some day a gallant knight would come along accompanied by his squire and his archers. As soon as I saw you I knew you were come."

"That is true," answered Jesse, with a look at the dinner.

"The darkness falls away and the light is glorious," noted the poor old wreck, gaily. "Sit by the festive board, sir knight, and let us eat, drink and be merry. Ho, slave!"

She raised her voice and the old colored woman entered.

"Bring in the feast, and let come with it the oldest and richest wines in my cellar. Behold, the bridegroom has come, and now joy shall be unconfined! Ho, the good things of life! Marry, but we will make merry over the glad day!"

A flush rose to the cheeks of the worn-out woman, and she seemed to be as happy as she asserted. Jesse and Frank did not like the situation. Reckless outlaws though they were, the condition of one mentally afflicted appealed to all the best in their nature, and they wished the dinner was eaten, and they went out of the house of decay.

Food and wine were soon at hand, and the feast began.

"Fritz! Fritz! Sir Knight, hadst had a pleasant journey?" asked the hostess.

"Dist experience any trouble with the robber barons of the Rhine?"

"We did," replied Jesse, "but we clove the head of the baron from chin to hip, and we passed by with dry feet."

"Marry! but thou hast the valor I was told would be in the gallant knight who would come to me on the summer's day!"

"What next, now he is come?" demanded Frank, bluntly.

"St. Catherine! but do we not wed on this eve, Sir Knight?" and she gave Jesse a telling glance.

"Wed?"

"Ay, thou and me."

Frank could not restrain his laughter, but he

managed to disguise it by pretending to choke with his food.

"Is it to-day?" asked Jesse, somewhat sheepishly.

"Ay, this very day. Art ready?"

"He art," replied Frank, mischievously.

"Pray, Sir Knight, forget not your faithful retainers in this, the hour of your married happiness."

"Be silent!"

"Ay, curb the covetous desires of your squire, Sir Knight! Surely, mere gain of monies ought not to vex this bridal day. Peace, squire, and be satisfied because you have that to eat at the table of your mistres. Thou hast not deep intelligence or beauty; thou shouldst keep silent in a presence."

It was Jesse's turn, and he kicked Frank under the table.

"Peace, sirrah!" he ordered.

"I'm as mum as an oyster!"

It was not just the language which an esquire of the days of chivalry would use, but Frank was really to admit he was squealed.

All this while the two bandits were eating with haste which no knight on his bridal day would think of using, and they were fast satisfying their hunger.

Suddenly the lady grew more serious.

"Dost know, Sir Knight, that there is one test thou mayst undergo before thou canst hope to call me thine?"

"No."

"There is."

"Name it," said Jesse, piling the food in rapidly.

"Thou shalt know within the half-hour. Pray excuse me, and the riddle shall soon be solved."

"She left the room. Frank began to shake with laughter."

"So the band will lose its leader!" he murmured.

"Hush!"

"Jesse James as a married man and a knight is good."

"We ought to have the robber baron here, too." Of course that is Carl Greene.

"He may come sooner than you wish. Hasten your reading, for Frank for want to be up and doing. This crazy woman may take some notion not to our liking."

"She is to be pitied, Jesse."

"She is, surely."

"Well, we will eat, pay her well and get out like decent men."

"This room is hot."

"She closed the door."

"And the windows are all closed, too."

"Open them."

"Oh! she will soon return, and then we can get more air. Besides, I am done eating, and we will frame some excuse and get off on the road. I had rather get robber barons than this poor wreck of womanhood."

"What is that odor?"

"Smoke."

"Probably outside somewhere."

"But it is not. It's drifting into the room through some crevice. Where is the woman? If her house gets on fire it will go like tinder."

"See! the flames show through the walls!"

Jesse and Frank, beyond the door, and tried to open it. It was fastened—they were shut in, and the house was on fire!

## CHAPTER IV.

### DEADLY FOES IN A DEN OF FIRE.

Jesse pounded on the door.

"Hallo! he shouted, 'we are on fire here!'"

Somebody beyond the door a laugh sounded wildly.

"Break down the door, Jesse!" cried Frank.

Jesse threw himself against it, but found it like iron, so heavy and well-seasoned was the timber.

"Smash the window!" he directed, "and call the men. They will hear if they are on the other side of the house, and from the opposite side of this door it can be opened easily."

Frank started for the windows, but, as he did so, there were two deep clangs and the room became very dark. The windows had been shut in somehow. He raised one of the sashes and found an iron shutter beyond it, firmly secured. Investigation proved the second one to be the same. There was no passing there, and no chance to sound an alarm.

"Can it be that we are trapped by Carl Greene?" cried Frank.

The continuation and conclusion of this story can be found in DETECTIVE LIBRARY No. 714.





37. HOW TO KEEP HOUSE.

It contains information for the man and woman; it will teach you how to manage a household...

38. HOW TO BECOME YOUR OWN DOCTOR.

A wonderful book, containing useful and practical information in the treatment of various diseases...

39. How to Raise Dogs, Poultry, Pigeons and Rabbits.

A useful and instructive book. Handsomely illustrated. In 12 chapters...

40. HOW TO MAKE AND SET TRAPS.

Illustrating traps to make to catch Hares, Weasels, Otters, Beavers...

41. The Boys of New York End Men's Joke Book.

Containing a great variety of the latest jokes used by the boys...

42. The Boys of New York Stump Speaker.

Containing a vast assortment of Stump Speeches, Sentences, Quizzes and Jokes...

43. HOW TO BECOME A MAGICIAN.

Containing the grandest assortment of magical illusions ever placed before the public...

44. HOW TO WRITE IN AN ALBION.

Containing Selected Verse suitable for any time or occasion...

45. THE BOYS OF NEW YORK MINSTREL GUIDE AND JOKE BOOK!

Containing new and very instructive. It may be about the most complete...

46. How to Make and Use Electricity.

A description of the wonderful uses of electricity, and simple experiments...

47. HOW TO BREAK, BIDE, AND DRIVE A HORSE.

A complete treatise on the horse. Describes the most perfect process for breaking...

48. HOW TO BUILD AND SAIL CANOES.

A handy book for boys, containing full directions for constructing canoes...

49. HOW TO DEBATE.

Giving rules for conducting debates, outlines for debates, questions for discussion...

50. HOW TO STUFF BIRDS AND ANIMALS.

A reliable book giving instructions in collecting, preparing, mounting and preserving birds, animals, and insects...

51. HOW TO DO TRICKS WITH CARDS.

Containing explanations of the general principles of trick playing, and giving the most complete...

52. HOW TO PLAY CARDS.

A complete and handy little book, giving the rules for all the most popular card games...

53. HOW TO WRITE LETTERS.

A wonderful little book, telling you how to write to great advantage in the business, social, and domestic...

54. HOW TO KEEP AND MANAGE PETS.

Contains valuable information on the management and care of all kinds of domestic animals...

55. HOW TO COLLECT STAMPS AND COINS.

Containing valuable information regarding the collecting and management of stamps and coins...

56. HOW TO BECOME AN ENGINEER.

Illustrating the various methods for becoming an engineer, and the duties of an engineer...

57. HOW TO MAKE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

Full directions how to make and play the following instruments: Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano...

58. HOW TO BE A DETECTIVE.

By Old King Brady, the world known detective. In which he gives down with valuable and amusing notes...

59. HOW TO MAKE A MAGIC LANTERN.

Containing a description of all lanterns, together with the history and progress of the full directions...

60. HOW TO BECOME A PHOTOGRAPHER.

Containing useful information regarding the camera and the various processes of photography...

61. HOW TO BECOME A BOWLER.

A complete manual of bowling. Explaining full instructions for bowling, and the various rules...

62. How to Become a West Point Military Cadet.

Containing full explanations how to gain admission to the course of study, regulations, duties, and honors...

63. HOW TO BECOME A NAVAL CADET.

Complete instructions of how to gain admission to the Annapolis Naval Academy, and the course of study...

64. How to Make Electrical Machines.

Containing full directions for making electrical machines and apparatus, such as dynamos, telegraph...

65. MULDOON'S JOKE.

The best copy of the most original joke books ever published, and it is bristling with good humor...

66. HOW TO DO PUZZLES.

Containing over 100 interesting puzzles and conundrums with key to each. A complete book...

67. HOW TO DO ELECTRICAL TRICKS.

Containing a complete set of electrical apparatus and highly amusing electrical tricks, together with illustrations...

68. How to Do Chemical Tricks.

Containing over one hundred of the best appearing and interesting chemical tricks, together with illustrations...

69. How to Do Sleight of Hand.

Containing over fifty of the latest and best sleight of hand articles, and containing the secrets of some of the most famous sleight of hand artists...

70. How to Make Magic Toys.

Containing full directions for making the following toys: Magic Balls, Magic Rings, Magic Wands...

71. How to Do Mechanical Tricks.

Containing complete instructions for performing the most interesting mechanical tricks, together with illustrations...

72. How to Do Sixty Tricks With Cards.

Containing all of the latest and most deceiving card tricks, with illustrations. By A. Anderson...

73. How to Do Tricks With Numbers.

Containing over one hundred of the best appearing and most interesting number tricks, together with illustrations...

74. How to Write Letters Correctly.

Containing full instructions for writing letters in the most correct and elegant style, together with illustrations...

75. How to become a Conjuror.

Containing full instructions for becoming a conjuror, and the various secrets of the art, together with illustrations...

76. How to Tell Fortunes by the Hand.

Containing rules for telling fortunes by the lines of the hand, and the various secrets of the art, together with illustrations...

# THE LITTLE BRADY

This is the Only Library That Contains the True and Original James Boys Stories. Every Number Consists of a Complete Story.

READ THE FOLLOWING LIST OF LATEST ISSUES:

- 579 The James Boys in Canada; or, Old King Brady and Carl Greene Chasing the Rauid King Around the World. Detective. . . . .
- 580 The James Boys' Fight for \$100,000; or, Carl Greene's Hesperate Struggle Against Big Odds. . . . .
- 581 The James Boys and the Dummy Train; or, Carl Greene's Greatest Ride. . . . .
- 582 The James Boys and the Stolen Treasure; or, Carl Greene, the Detective. After Two Crooks. . . . .
- 583 The James Boys' Trap; or, Their Bold Scheme to Capture Carl Greene. . . . .
- 584 The James Boys Among the Mormons; or, Old King Brady and Carl Greene and the Danites' Gold. . . . .
- 585 The James Boys and the Man From the Tomb; or, Carl Greene, the Detective's Most Mysterious Case. . . . .
- 586 The James Boys and the Cockney; or, Carl Greene as the Man from England. . . . .
- 587 The James Boys in the Ozark Mountains; or, Old King Brady and Carl Greene Chase the Diamonds of the Lake. by A. N. Y. Detective
- 588 The James Boys and the Life Hunters; or, Carl Greene's Fight with the Bandits. . . . .
- 589 The James Boys and the Red Lander; or, Old King Brady and Carl Greene Guarding Government Gold. . . . .
- 590 Jerry Green and the Old Landlady; or, the Signal Flares of the Williams Robbery. . . . .
- 591 The James Boys' Fight for the Great Fair; or, Carl Greene, the Detective, and the Young Australian. . . . .
- 592 The James Boys and the Genit From California. . . . .
- 593 The James Boys Down the Mississippi; or, Tracked to Memphis by Old King Brady and Carl Greene. . . . .
- 594 The James Boys' Fight to a Finish; or, Carl Greene's Campaign of Bullfighting. . . . .
- 595 The James Boys and the Train Robbers; or, Old King Brady and Carl Greene Working a Double Trail. . . . .
- 596 The James Boys and the Lost Hair; or, Carl Greene, the Detective's Many Runs. . . . .
- 597 Hunted For Ten Years; or, The James Boys' Right Against Fate. . . . .
- 598 The James Boys and the Horse; or, Old King Brady and Carl Greene From Independence to Indianapolis. . . . .
- 599 The James Boys and the Cattle King; or, Carl Greene as a Herder. . . . .
- 600 At Midnight; or, The Old King Brady and the Mystery of Pier A. . . . .
- 601 The James Boys and the Banker; or, Carl Greene, the Detective's Great Game. . . . .
- 602 The James Boys and One Shot; or, Carl Greene, the Detective, in a New Character. . . . .
- 603 The James Boys and the Ko-Koo; or, Chased Through Kentucky by Old King Brady and Carl Greene. . . . .
- 604 The James Boys in the Wilderness; or, Carl Greene's Search for the Outlaws' Home. . . . .
- 605 The James Boys in California; or, Old King Brady and Carl Greene Chased to the Land of Gold by Old King Brady and Carl Greene. . . . .
- 606 The James Boys After a Fortune; or, Carl Greene's Fight For a Stolen Will. . . . .
- 607 The James Boys and the Cripple; or, Carl Greene as the Wooden Leg Hero. . . . .
- 608 The James Boys at Cracker Neck and at Highways. . . . .
- 609 The James Boys and the Night Hawks; or, Chased by Old King Brady and Carl Greene from Missouri to the Rocky Mountains. . . . .
- 610 The James Boys' Rival Band; or, Carl Greene's Double Fight. . . . .
- 611 The James Boys and the Great Railroad Case. . . . .
- 612 James Boys' Mascot; or, Carl Greene Plays a Great Card. . . . .
- 613 The James Boys' Missouri Raid; or, Carl Greene and Timbarkle's Fight Against Outlaws. . . . .
- 614 The James Boys' Fate and the James Boys' Brides. . . . .
- 615 Last Days of the James Boys; or, a Noted Band. . . . .
- 616 The James Boys and Old King Brady Fighting Carl Greene on the Rocky Mountains. . . . .
- 617 The James Boys' Battle of the Mountains; or, Hard Luck. . . . .
- 618 The James Boys' Three Weeks' Fight Along the Border; or, Chased by Old King Brady and Carl Greene. . . . .
- 619 The James Boys as Bank Robbers; or, The "James Boys' Band." . . . .
- 620 The James Boys in the West; or, the Quantrell's Black Flag. . . . .
- 621 The James Boys' Secret Struggle of the "Mysterious Light in the Deserted Mine." . . . .
- 622 The James Boys' First Capture; or, The Beginning of a Terrible Career. . . . .
- 623 The James Boys and Old King Brady in the Great North Woods. . . . .
- 624 The James Boys' Day's Work. . . . .
- 625 The James Boys and Fox Williams; or, Carl Greene's Fugitive in Peril. . . . .
- 626 The James Boys' Waterloo; or, the Fate of the Bandits. . . . .
- 627 The James Boys' Road to Victory; or, Carl Greene's Hot Chase with Bandits. . . . .
- 628 The James Boys at the Great Fair; or, Working in Kansas City. . . . .
- 629 The James Boys Working for Old King Brady; or, Carl Greene and the Road Agent of the Kaw. . . . .
- 630 The James Boys and the Bandit King; or, Carl Greene as the Wild Rider of Missouri. . . . .
- 631 Quantrell's Last Ride; or, The Fall of the Flag. . . . .
- 632 The James Boys and Old King Brady; or, Robbery; or, the Red Light on the Bridge. . . . .
- 633 The James Boys and Old King Brady; or, Great St. Genevieve Bank Robbery; or, Chased Across the State by Carl Greene. . . . .
- 634 The James Boys' Flight to Deadwood; or, Carl Greene's Chase from Missouri to the West. . . . .
- 635 The James Boys and the St. Louis Express; or, The Train Robbery at Geniality. . . . .
- 636 The James Boys' Wild Ride; or, Their Way to Lafayette. . . . .
- 637 The James Boys and the Train Robbers; or, a Great Case. . . . .
- 638 The James Boys; or, The Bandit King's Last Shot. . . . .
- 639 Sam Skinkler; or, the Cheapest of New York's Most Dangerous Game. . . . .
- 640 Chasing the James Boys; or, a Dangerous Game. . . . .
- 641 The James Boys and His Band of Sixty. . . . .
- 642 The Man From Nowhere and His Adventure with the James Boys. . . . .
- 643 The James Boys and Pinkerton; or, Frank and his Sons as Detectives. . . . .
- 644 The Double Showup; or, The James Boys' Battle. . . . .
- 645 The James Boys and the Texas Express; or, The Plug Station on the Iron Mountain. . . . .
- 646 Jesse James and Steve; or, A Detective's Chase for a Horse. . . . .
- 647 Thirty Days with the James Boys; or, Detective's Wild Chase in Kentucky. . . . .
- 648 Jesse James' Last Shot; or, Tracked by the Ford Boys. . . . .
- 649 The James Boys and the Little Rock Stage Robbery; or, Fighting for a Stage. . . . .
- 650 The James Boys on the Road; or, Tracked by a New Field. . . . .
- 651 The James Boys Jailed; or, A Detective's Chase. . . . .
- 652 The James Boys' Longest Ride; or, The Detective's Chase. . . . .
- 653 The James Boys and the Russellville Bank Robbery; or, The Bandits at Work in Kentucky. . . . .
- 654 The James Boys in the Saddle; or, The Highwaymen and the Hunted Mill. . . . .
- 655 Quantrell's Old Guard; or, The James Boys in Missouri. . . . .
- 656 The James Boys' Longest Ride; or, Buried by a Keen Detective. . . . .
- 657 The James Boys' Secret Struggle; or, The Plot Against the Bandit King. . . . .
- 658 The James Boys' Knights of the Road; or, The Masked Men of Missouri. . . . .
- 659 The James Boys' Mistake; or, Carl Greene's Detective's Chase. . . . .
- 660 Jesse James' (the) Mysterious Horseman; or, the Silent Rider of the Ozark. . . . .
- 661 The James Boys' Secret Struggle; or, The Great Robbery on the Rock Island. . . . .
- 662 The James Boys' Signal Light; or, the Capture of a Mystery. . . . .
- 663 The James Boys' Bold Ride; or, a Brave Detective. . . . .
- 664 The James Boys in Danger; or, Carl Greene's Detective's Cunning Scheme. . . . .
- 665 The James Boys' \$100,000 Hand; or, The Hobnob and the Spree. . . . .
- 666 The James Boys' Island; or, Hotted by James Detective. . . . .
- 667 James' Dangerous; or, the Hunt for Ford. . . . .
- 668 The James Boys Jailed; or, Carl Greene the Detective's Chase. . . . .
- 669 The James Boys and Cole Younger; or, Fighting Under the Black Flag. . . . .
- 670 The James Boys in Arkansas; or, After Confederate Gold. . . . .
- 671 The Moonlight Riders; or, Carl Greene, the Detective, Working in Three States. . . . .
- 672 The James Boys in New York; or, Fighting Old King Brady. . . . .
- 673 Old Sledge Bags the Train Detective; or, The James Boys in a Fix. . . . .
- 674 The James Boys and the Missouri Raid on the Stillwater Penitentiary. . . . .
- 675 The Last of the Band; or, The Stranger of Frank James. . . . .
- 676 The James Boys at Bay; or, Sheriff Timberlake's James Preider; or, The Bandit King's Last Ride. . . . .
- 677 The James Boys and the Red Horse; or, The Great Kansas Raid. . . . .
- 678 The James Boys' Band of Ten; or, The Red Light on the Hill. . . . .
- 679 The James Boys' Shadows; or, The Nemesis of Jesse James Preider; or, The Bandit King's Last Ride. . . . .
- 680 The James Boys' Blunder; or, The Fatal Mistake at Northfield. . . . .
- 681 The James Boys and the Railroad; or, Held for Ransom by Train Robbers. . . . .
- 682 The James Boys in Deadwood; or, The Pair of Yakota. . . . .
- 683 The Man on the Black Horse; or, The James Boys' Chase. . . . .
- 684 The James Boys in New Orleans; or, Wild Adventures. . . . .
- 685 The James Boys and Hob Ford; or, The Last Days of the Bandit King. . . . .
- 686 The James Boys' Hostage; or, The Silence of the Border. . . . .
- 687 Old King Brady and the Car of Gold. . . . .
- 688 The James Boys in Texas; or, A Detective's Thrilling Adventure in the Lone Star State. . . . .
- 689 The James Boys and the Matt and John; or, The Sec of League of Thirteen. . . . .
- 690 The Ford Boys' Vengeance; or, From Bandit to Detectives. . . . .
- 691 Mysterious Ike; or, The Masked Kidnapper. . . . .
- 692 Jim Cummins and the Detectives; or, Wild Adventures on the Missouri. . . . .
- 693 The James Boys' Hostage; or, Sheriff Timberlake's Great Texas Trail. . . . .
- 694 The James Boys' Longest Run; or, Chased a Thousand Miles. . . . .
- 695 The James Boys' Hostage; or, The Thirty Days' Race With Detectives. . . . .
- 696 The James Boys' Last Flight; or, Carl Greene's Greatest Victory. . . . .
- 697 The James Boys' Secret Den; or, the Fate of the Ford Boys. . . . .
- 698 The James Boys Run to Earth; or, A Detective's Chase. . . . .
- 699 The James Boys' Reckless Raid; or, Sheriff Timberlake's Blind Trap. . . . .
- 700 The James Boys and the Bank Robbery; or, The Mystery of the Missing Train. . . . .
- 701 The James Boys as Brigands; or, the Capture of the Blue Bluff. . . . .
- 702 The James Boys' Fight For Millions; or, Carl Greene the Detective's Furious Chase. . . . .
- 703 The James Boys' Ride For Life; or, Chased by a Keen Detective. . . . .
- 704 The James Boys' Hostage; or, The Hold-Up of the Denver Treasure Train. . . . .
- 705 The James Boys' Bold Move; or, the Game That Was Hocked by a Keen Detective. . . . .
- 706 The James Boys' Dash for Life or Death; or, The Mystery of the Missing Train. . . . .
- 707 The James Boys' Death-Shot Legion; or, The Running Fight on the Border. . . . .

For sale by all newsmen in the United States and Canada, or sent to your address post-paid, on receipt of price, 10 cents. Address

P. O. Box 2730.

FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher, 34 and 36 North Moore Street, New York.