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The K. and L.  
EXPRESS  
ROBBERY

By W. BERT FOSTER

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One of the most peculiar cases that ever came under my notice, said Captain Spink, was the K. and L. express robbery, which occurred when I was a member of the old steamboat squad.

My work consisted mostly in investigating river pirates and keeping a sharp eye upon that small but exceedingly active fraternity of smugglers who operate in New York harbor.

The K. and L. Express company had an office on Long wharf, at the foot of Jones street, and, doing a foreign business only, as they did, their storage rooms were on the wharf too.

The storage shed was a two-story building of brick. The office, which adjoined it, was at the extreme end of the wharf. It was built of wood and corrugated iron.

Craft were passing the end of the wharf all night long. There was a ferry slip near by. Every vessel at the dock had its key, and the property of the company itself was watched by an old and trusted watchman.

Besides the gates of the wharf were locked at 7 o'clock in the evening, and if a lighter had left the place it would have been spied by one of the police patrol boats which ply up and down the river all night long.

Yet that shanty was broken into, and out of it was removed a safe weighing a couple of tons and containing money packets and valuables to an amount that made the entire downtown police department wake up with a decided shock.

The K. and L. people were wild, and well they might be. The chief took hold of the matter himself, and I was one of the men selected to go down to the scene of the robbery with him.

And I tell you frankly I was sorry to be put on the job, for as soon as I heard the circumstances surrounding this break it looked to me like a blank wall that would be mighty hard either to climb over or dig through.

The first report we got was that the two-story office had been blown half to pieces by the force of the charge of dynamite which the robbers had used to try to force the safe. And yet nobody along the water front had heard the explosion.

That was bad enough for a beginning. And when we got to the wharf we learned that, despite the wreck of the building, the burglars had evidently been unable to force the safe and had finally carried it away with them.

The corner of the structure was torn away, and as soon as the chief learned that the safe in question had stood right there where the floor was gaping and the walls blown out he declared it to be his belief that the force of the charge used to open the safe had blown the iron box clean through the wall and that it was at the bottom of the river. He was so sure of this that he sent over to the Navigation company's office for a diver to go down and poke about in the mud near the dock.

It was between 7 and 8 o'clock in the morning when we had first been informed of the mystery, so the job was not many hours old. The company's watchman was already in custody and was wearing blue. It seemed that he had been sitting up daytimes with his sick child for the better part of a week, and he had just keeled over on this night and slept like a log in the storage building—was sleeping, in fact, when the longshoremen came to work.

He swore the robbery could not have been committed before midnight. He had made his regular rounds until after that hour.

Then I made the discovery by talking to the first clerk who had arrived on the scene that the door of the office building had been locked the same as usual, nor had there been a window unfastened. Therefore, added to the rest of the mystery, was the question: How had the robbers entered the office and mounted to the second floor, where the safe was kept? But the chief was so confident that the safe really had not been stolen, only blown through the wall and had fallen into the water, that he would do nothing to nullify his report of the diver.

But I looked over the wreck again. The force which had carried the safe away must have been irresistible. Chairs were smashed; one desk was a mass of wreckage. I picked up in a corner a piece of what I supposed to be a part of a picture frame and found it was too old to be overlooked. I set my mind at work upon that broken piece of wood.

As it was not a picture frame and there had been nothing in the office that was gilded, I could not understand how it got there. As I stood in the wreckage room and looked through the ragged hole in the wall which gave me a clear view of the river my eyes rested upon a big vessel being towed in to her dock.

It was a clear day, and the sun flashed from her brass work and trimmings and glittered upon her massive figurehead. And the sight sent an illuminating ray into the fog of my mind.

The diver had arrived with a truck load of paraphernalia, but I took a trip along the docks, going aboard each vessel in the neighborhood and interview-

ing as many of the watchmen or sailors who had been in the vicinity during the night as I could find.

I started several things. First, there had been a heavy fog during the evening and for at least two hours after midnight. Then the wind changed and the sun had risen clearly.

It was quite true that nobody seemed to have heard such an explosion as must have occurred when the safe of the K. and L. company was blown through the office wall. But one watchman on a cattle ship two slips from the express dock had heard a noise between 2 and 3 o'clock which he had not attributed to the mystery of the lost safe, however.

"Two or no explosion, officer," he told me. "That'll be willing to swear to me."

"What did it sound like?" I asked.

"Sure, 'twas more like a heap o' lumber fallin' down. I thought 'twas in the lumber yard on the next block."

"Was anything going on out in the river at the time?"

"Sure, if the time was quiet. I'd gone below to light the pipe at the cook's lantern when the noise came to me."

I telephoned the ship news office down on the Battery, and soon I had jotted down the list of the vessels that had gone to sea since 6 o'clock the previous evening. Among them was the Rotterdam of the Bremen and New York line, and although she should have sailed earlier, I learned by calling up the office of the company that, owing to the fog, she had not started for the Narrows in charge of the tug Charles B. Goodwin until after midnight.

By this time it was midforenoon, and the early editions of the afternoon papers were being cried on the street with elaborate accounts of the robbery of the K. and L. safe. One enterprising sheet had even "faked" a picture of the diver going over the edge of the dock into the river to hunt for the lost safe.

Nevertheless I believed that that bit of gilded wood I carried around with me was the key to the true explanation, so I called up the towing company that owned the Charles B. Goodwin and discovered where the tug would be likely to land upon her return from her trip outside with the Rotterdam. I was on the wharf when the tug came in.

"Mister," I said, "I've come to hear about it. Have you got the safe?"

"What safe?" asked he, looking wise.

"The one your tow happened to carry away from the K. and L. dock this morning," I said.

Then he laughed and showed me the safe and several bits of broken furniture, which he had covered with a tarpaulin up forward. And his story was interesting, as I supposed it would be.

When the fog showed promise of lifting and the wind changed the tug had pulled the big steamship clear of her dock and started down stream. But they kept inshore, and just off the K. and L. Express company's dock a forty-foot ran out and got in the way of the Goodwin.

"We had to slack our engines," said the captain of the tug, "and of course the towline dropped. The tide swung the bow of the Rotterdam plumb into the end of the dock."

"By hooky, you should have seen it! Her bowsprit punched a hole in one of the express company's buildings like a spear into a fat hog. We steamed ahead quick, and that yanked the ship's bow out before it did more damage. But the corner of the shanty came with it, and I reckon a good deal of what was in the office clattered down on the old Rotterdam's forecastle. The Bremen and New York line will have to pay a nice little sum for damages, I suppose. But it wasn't our fault."

"When we got down the harbor the captain of the Rotterdam told me that he had seen the safe fall on the deck of his vessel, and I took it aboard before I left her outside."

"Thought they'd been burglarized, did they? Well, I reckon it was about as queer a case of piracy as ever happened along this river front."

"The safe was in the office, wasn't it? Everything never happened under my notice, nor did I ever evolve a theory from a more unimpressive clue than that bit of gilded wood which, as I suspected, had been broken off the figurehead of the outgoing vessel."

Not Hester Men.

One of the characters of the old navy was Captain Percival, familiarly called "Mad Jack," whose wagish and irascible sayings amused his contemporaries. At one time the son of one of his old friends was appointed a midshipman.

As there was no Naval academy in those days at Annapolis, the lad was drafted to Captain Percival's ship. The father was in the habit of announcing the fact that his son was on shipboard, and after the usual parental recommendations to mercy be closed the letter with:

My son has entered upon a profession where he will go down to his grave with honor and sung or unwept, unheeded and unung.

The young midshipman had not been on board long before he aroused the wrath of his commander, who at one sat down and wrote to the lad's father:

My Dear Sir—Your son is going to the grave unwept and unheeded.

At another time, when Captain Percival was a member of the board for the examination of candidates for midshipmen's warrants, a son of another friend came before the board. After the examination Percival, wishing to announce the result to the boy's father, wrote with delightful implication:

Dear Old Momma—Your boy has passed.

Do you recollect our taking the Columbus out of dock? She just passed.

GENTRY,  
GAMBLER

By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

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"Pass," said Dugan laconically, laying down his cards.

"That puts me out," remarked the lean Yankee from the Cross Triangle outfit. The third man, Davies, as he called himself, rapped the table with his knuckles indifferently. He was ahead of the game and could afford to lose the pot.

There remained old man Lorry. To him Gentry looked with surprising indifference. Having dealt the cards, the gambler was disturbed by no doubts as to Lorry's action. He would raise and promptly. Lorry had cut before the deal, it is true, but Gentry had reversed the cut adroitly, unobtrusively.

Nevertheless, to the gambler's surprise, Lorry was unconsciously slow. He vacillated mentally between caution and cupidity; his weak, red-rimmed eyes shone feverishly behind the iron bound glasses, and he chewed nervously upon one end of his ragged, tobacco stained mustache. Finally he slammed his hand upon the table. Gentry arched his brows inquiringly.

"Out?" he asked, motioning toward the discard.

Old man Lorry swore abandonedly. "Naw," he replied. "See yer twenty an' go yer a hundred better."

From the interior of his shirt he produced a roll of bills which the gambler appraised with amazement. He had not thought to find such rich prey. Lorry, conscious that he was creating a sensation, threw two bills upon the table with an air.

"Steady, pop," cautioned Healy, proprietor of the saloon.

"Mind yer own business," responded old man Lorry sharply.

"And five hundred better," Gentry remarked softly.

"An' yer hundred."

"Again."

Lorry glanced defiantly about the table. Healy had turned his back. As for the rest, startled out of their composure by this abrupt change in the complexion of the game, they watched breathlessly.

"Call yer!" exclaimed the old man, depositing the remainder of his fortune in the pot.

"Aces up an' queens," he added, with an oath, as Gentry displayed his cards. "Better 'n' my kings up an' jacks!" He broke off, staring blankly at the gambler as he calmly raked in his spoils and passed the cards to Dugan. The latter shook his head, with an air of finality.

"None," he said. "No more for me."

"None in mine," agreed the lean Yankee briefly, and Davies nodded assent to the judgment of the others.

Lorry shambled dispiritedly toward the bar. "Gimme some 'skt, Billy," he demanded.

Gentry arose and placed a fifty in the bartender's hands. "You can pay for the drinks out of that. I'm going to take a little walk to cool off. See you later, gentlemen." He paused on the threshold, but none answered him, and he passed on into the infinite silent peace of the mountain night.

He walked a few steps along the apology for a road which formed the main street of the half-deserted mining village, then halted suddenly.

"Old fool," he muttered impatiently, comforting himself against the thought of the wrong he had done old man Lorry. "He should have known better. Well, what's his loss is my gain. If I hadn't got it some other fellow would."

Gentry lighted a cigar, stuck his hands in his trousers pockets jauntily and retraced his steps toward Healy's. But he did not stop there. Through its open windows fragments of an argument floated to his ears, punctuated with old man Lorry's voice, bleating that he had been shorn. That was quite true, but the gambler did not want to discuss the question with him in the search for knowledge, asked, "What was it?"

He stepped quickly past the fan of light which the doorway threw across the road and began an ascent of the mountain trail. He would return ere long, when things were quieted, saddle his horse and ride on to the next camp.

The night air was warm and soothing with the balm of the pine scent. The gambler strolled beneath a high, broad arched, brilliant sky, fretted with bright stars. But from these he kept his face. His thoughts were too near to the earth for contemplation of the firmament. As he left the straggling village behind him he entered upon a great sweet solitude whose essence was in the mystery of night upon the mountains. The road wound temptingly on, a forest aisle empty, dusty, now white in the glare of the heavens, now blackly shadowed by massed pines, through whose interstices the starlight fell.

Presently the gambler came upon a little clearing in which, set at a distance back from the road and surrounded by a dilapidated picket fence, was a small cabin, vine clad. Its windows shone dimly with yellow lamp-light, this although the hour was past midnight. As he stopped, puffing speculatively upon his cigar, a voice hailed him—a feminine voice, singularly rich in intonation and clear—and at that he made out a slender figure swinging upon the gate of the fence. He tossed away his smoke, removed his slouch hat and approached.

"Good evening," he said courteously.

"Howdy, stranger. Be you from Hammeis, down yonder?"

Gentry failed to repress a start. The uncouthness of the words, the strong touch of dialect, was so distinctly out-

of keeping with what the beauty of the girl's voice had led him to expect. And now that he could see her, there was positive refinement of feature in the face, wholly charming, upturned to him.

"Yes," he answered her.

The girl regarded him with unconcealed curiosity. "An' what might be yer name, stranger?"

"Mason," he lied without wondering why he should lie, lacking a reason.

"Oh," she sighed, with evident relief. "I didn't know—from yer style, yer know—but what yer might be Gentry."

"Who's Gentry?"

"Aw—a gambler what I heard had come to town. Pappy went down early tonight to get in the game with him. Say, Mr. Mason, did yer see my pappy down there?"

"I don't know, really. Who?"

"Lorry," she interrupted. "Old man Lorry telly calls him, mostly. Did yer see him around?"

"Come to think of it, I did." He smiled blandly upon her to conceal a rising uneasiness.

"Was he drunk?" she continued frankly.

"No. I didn't notice that he was."

"He wasn't gamblin' with that old Gentry, was he?"

"No," said the blond heartily. "Gentry left town today, I hear."

"That's good!" She smiled at the gambler, shading her beautiful eyes with a deep fringe of upturned lashes. "He'll only come home drunk, then," she added pensively. "I don't mind that. Never had to manage a man, did yer, stranger?"

"Only myself," he laughed.

"Then yer don't know nothin' about it—the trouble, I mean. Pappy's an ole fool. He don't know no more about playin' poker 'n' a tenderfoot, an' he thinks he knows it. He—he—" She hesitated.

"Well," he encouraged her.

"Aw—nothin', only he made a strike a little while ago. It warn't much of a strike, only a couple of thousand, an' he promised to send me back east—to the home folks, you know—next week."

"And?" said Gentry softly.

"That was the money he took to gamble with," she laughed, a trifle harshly. "Said he'd send me back in style—with his winnin's. Well, so long's Gentry ain't there I reckon I may get a chance to get some book learnin', after all. If I can keep him home till next week, Gentry's already, stranger?"

"Yes! I must hit the trail early to-morrow, Miss Lorry."

"How so long? If yer see the ole man start him along home, will yer? Thanks, an' good night to yer, Mr. Mason."

Some distance down the trail the gambler stumbled over the prostrate form of a man. With something of a strong presentiment Gentry turned the body over and lit a match to see the face.

It was old man Lorry, hopelessly intoxicated, sleeping the dead sleep of alcohol.

"There's most of my fifty," remarked the gambler grimly. "It's like throwing good money after bad. I'm a darned fool."

To prove his assertion he took from his wallet a bill of which he had robbed the minor and stuffed them in the latter's pockets. Then he helped him to his feet, meaning to see him home. To his wonder Gentry found that the man, once afoot, was able to walk after a fashion. He lurched along unsteadily, but made progress toward his cabin.

The gambler followed him to the clearing, stepping noiselessly, then turned and went back for his horse and his last glimpse of Healy's.

Bright Benny.

"What a fine boy Benny is getting to be!" remarked Mr. Bloombumper's mother-in-law, who was taking dinner with Bloombumper.

"Yes, indeed," replied Bloombumper proudly. "He's a regular logician too. He'll ask questions and deduct conclusions in a masterly manner. He's inherited his father's brain power," added Bloombumper modestly.

A few moments later the conversation turned upon Mormonism, and Benny, in his search for knowledge, asked, "Papa, what is a Mormon?"

"A Mormon, Benny, is a man who marries more than one wife."

"Then you are a Mormon, an't you, papa?" asked Benny, anxious to display the deductive powers which his father had commended.

"I am, Benny. Why? How in the world did you get such an idea in your head as that?"

"Why, I heard you tell Mr. Spratts yesterday that you had married all your wife's family."

"Mrs. Bloombumper," said that gentleman, turning to his wife, "I think Benny had better be sent to bed. He's been up quite late enough."

Reverend.

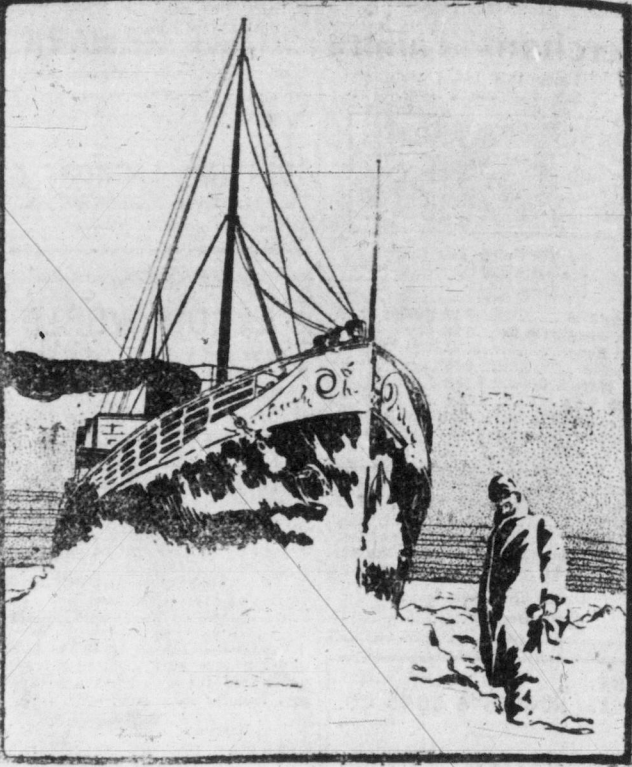
He was asking the old man for his daughter in marriage. He was talking tremulously, hesitatingly, as you read in story books. Now came the old man's turn to speak, and as he began his face was white with passion and his voice shook with excitement.

"You want to marry my daughter?" he said. "Ah! Twenty years ago your father crippled me in a business deal, and I swore to be revenged, and now my time has come."

He paused for breath, and the aspirant for the maiden's hand was about to beat a hasty retreat in the face of supposed defeat, when the father broke forth again:

"Yes, sir; I swore to be revenged and I'll now strike the father through the son. Now my daughter, eh? Well, take her, and she may prove as expensive to you as she has to me."

The old man dropped into his chair, worn out with the excitement of his plot, and the young man faltered.



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ONTARIO

By an Act passed at the 1901 session of the Ontario Legislature a Bureau of Labour has been established for the purpose of collecting, ascertaining and publishing information relating to Employment, Wages, Hours of Labor throughout the Province, Co-operation, Strikes, or other labor difficulties; Trades Unions, Labor Organizations, the relations between Labor and Capital, and other subjects of interest to workingmen, together with such information relating to the commercial, industrial, and maritime conditions of wage workers, and the permanent prosperity of the industries of the Province, as the Bureau may be able to gather.

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F. R. LATOURET, Commissioner of Public Works

B. CROCKFORD, Secretary, The Labour Bureau

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