

TRAIN ROBBERS DOWN EAST

MERE GOOD LUCK PREVENTED A BIG HAUL.

FOUR MEN BOARD A TRAIN AND STOP IT, BUT THE ENGINEER HAD NERVE TO PUSH AHEAD—RED TAPE LETS THE ROBBERS GET AWAY.

BANGOR, Me., May 26.—The train over the Maine Central Road, known as the St. John night express, which leaves this city each evening, consists of a sealed car loaded with through baggage for provincial points, this being next the engine, one postal car, baggage car, express car, Pullman sleeper, and three coaches being placed in the train in the order named. The mail and express matter is always of great value, and last night an attempt to rob one or more of these cars was frustrated only by a bad blunder of the road agents.

The train ran as usual the first two hours and then was at Enfield, a lonesome station situated one mile or more from the settlement. The night was intensely dark, and as the train pulled out from Enfield and the fireman threw open the furnace door to coal up, he saw in the glare from the fire the face of a man peering over the rear end of the tender, evidently standing upon the platform of the sealed car. He closed his door, and informed Engineer Speers that there was a tramp behind the coal. The train was now under full speed. As the fireman finished his remark and turned away, there came one stroke of the gong in the cab. This is not the usual signal to stop and the engineer did not shut off, thinking the cord had been accidentally pulled. Soon the bell rang again, this being followed by two loud reports as though torpedoes were exploding upon the rail.

The whistling of bullets made it plain that the tramp, madman, or whoever was back of the tender, was shooting to kill. At once the engineer shut off. Before the train had come to a stop there began rapid firing from the side of the track. Three men stood within the circle of light made by the train lamps discharging revolvers into the windows of the postal car, the bullets lodging in the racks overhead. A fourth man was climbing a snow fence beyond them. The gleam of his revolver showed his movements.

When the motion of the train had ceased the engineer dropped from the opposite side of the cab, intending to go back into the train. Just then came a sound of the gong to go ahead, and muffled cries from the car to "pull out." Jumping back and pulling open the throttle the engineer started the train, bullets flying about him and a command coming from out the darkness to "give them —, boys." The distance to Lincoln was six miles. Like the rest of the run between that town and Enfield it was through woods. Arriving at Lincoln an investigation was begun, which made plain the thieves' blunder.

One man had evidently been posted upon the forward end of the sealed car to shoot the engineer did the latter fail to stop on the signal, while two or more men had secreted themselves upon the rear end of the same car, all mistaking it for the express car. There being no occasion for the conductor to pass through the first four cars, they were not seen. The robbers forced enough of the rear door to see that the sealed car contained only baggage. Finding out their blunder, they undertook to force the front door of the mail car, but two tons of mail matter pressed against it. Here, again, they were frustrated. At this point they pulled the cord twice, when the man in front, taking the cue, brought his revolver into play. It would seem that rage at defeat caused the parting bombardment.

Half an hour or more after this four men appeared at Enfield station, where they found Station Master Craft and his baggage master. At sight the desperadoes opened fire upon the railroad men, who took refuge in the station, locking the door and putting out the lights. The road agents shot out the large depot lamps and the switch lights, and were preparing to fire the station when the rumble of the night through freight, which follows the express, was heard. The frightened men inside quickly lit a red-glass lantern, and, hanging it upon a broom, put it from a broken window, pulling the freight up at the station. The intense darkness prevented a search. The station agent gathered up his tickets and cash, and was escorted home by the trainmen, after which the freight proceeded along its run.

Word was wired to High Sheriff Reed, in this city, who gathered his men and announced to the railroad officials his readiness to go up the line and hunt down the road agents. But there is a rule of the road to the effect that no information in cases of detention of trains or accident shall be given out or made until orders are received from headquarters, which are at Portland, 137 miles away. It was midnight, and as no engine could be ordered out for transportation the disgusted Sheriff went home and staid there. To-day no visible movements have been made by the railroad men looking to the running down of the would-be plunderers, but the postal clerks are most emphatic in their protest against allowing the matter so to rest. Talk is heard of an appeal to the department asking for detective service which shall prevent them being shot at as though they were game birds.

The bullets dug from the postal car inside and out came from revolvers of forty-four calibre. Had not the postal clerks dropped to the floor and covered themselves with mail sacks well filled they might have been hit. This is the first experience of the kind on any Eastern road.