# THE GREAT K&A TRAIN ROBBERY

*By PAUL LEICESTER FORD, Author of "The Honorable Peter Stirling," Etc.*

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## CHAPTER I

**The Party on Special No. 218.**

**Any one who hopes to find in what is here written a work of literature had better lay it aside unread. At Yale I should have gotten the scale in rhetoric and English composition, but alone other studies, had it not been for the fact that I played baseball on the team, and so the professors marked me easy and gave me where I ought to have ranked. That was twelve years ago, but my literary style since I left my parchment has hardly been of a kind to improve me in either style or grammar. It is true that one woman tells me I write well, and my directors seem to find fault with my compositions, but I know that she likes my letters because, whatever else they may say to her, they always say to me nothing. I love you," which, my board approve my annual reports because thus far I have been able to end each with the recommendation and declaration of a dividend of — per centum from the earnings of current year." I should therefore prefer to reserve my writings for such friendly critics. If it did not seem necessary to make public a plain statement concerning an affair over which there appears to be much confusion. I have heard in the last five years not less than twenty renderings of what is commonly called "the great K & A train robbery,"—some so twisted and distorted that they were in fact the stories I should never have recognized as my own, so far from an accurate the series of events in which I played a somewhat prominent part. I have read or heard that, unassisted by my pseudonym captured a dozen desperadoes; that he was one of the original agents himself; that he was saved from lynching only by the timely arrival of cavalry; that the action of the United States government in rewarding him was "the first authorized was a most high handed interference with state rights, that he received his reward from a grateful railroad by being promoted; that a lovely woman as recompense for his villainy —but hushed! It is my business to tell what really occurred, and not what the world chooses to invent. And if any man thinks I have been too modest otherwise in my position, I can only say that he is a better or a wiser man than Dick Gordon.**

**Primarily, I am a baseball** which shaped my out. Owing to my skill in the game, I took a postgraduate at the Sheffield Scientific school, and the team might have my services for an extra year if they had to my knowing a little about mechanical engineering and where the "ball" lies for good I went into the Albion rail road shops. It wasn't long before I was foreman of a section, and then became division superintendent, and after I had served out for a trial year I was appointed superintendent of the Kansas & Arizona branch of the road extending from Trinidad in Kansas to The Needles in Arizona, tapping the Missouri Western system at the first place, and the Great Southern at the other. I mention these two most important traffic agreements, as well as the closest association, which sometimes were a little difficult, as the two roads were anything but friendly, and we had directors of each on the K. & A. board, in which they fared like cats. Indeed, it could only be a question of time when one would eat the other and take the whole road. My headquarters were at Albuquerque, in New Mexico, and it was there, in October, 1890, that I received the communication which was the beginning of all that followed.**

**This initial letter was a letter from the president of the Missouri Western, telling me that their first vice-president, Mr. Collins (who was also a director of my road), was coming out to attend the annual meeting of the K. & A., which under our charter had to be held in Arizona. Arizona. A second paragraph told me that Mr. Collins's family accompanied him and that they all wished to visit the Grand Canon of the Colorado on their way. Finally the president wrote, the party traveled in his own private car, and asked me to meet them as many generally useful to them. Having become quite familiar with the Eastern demands, at the proper date I ordered my superintendent's car on to No. 2, and the next morning it was dropped off at Trinidad.**

**The moment No. 2 arrived, I climbed into the private coach, which has the last car on the train, and introduced myself to the Collins, whom, though an official of my road, I had never met. They seemed surprised at my presence, but greeted me with pleasantly a little more than usual, that the Missouri Western office had asked me to do what I could for him. I said that I was there for that purpose. His party was about to sit down to breakfast, and he asked me to join them, so we passed into the dining-room at the forward end of the car, where I was introduced to "Mr. Ashland," "Lord Ralfe," "Captain Ackland." The son was a junior copy of his father, tall and fine looking, but, in place of the frank and easy manner of his sire, he was so very English that most people would have sworn falsely as to his native land. Lord Ralfe was a little older than, but half so English as Ackland. Both were in mourning, and I learned later that Lord Ralfe was the eldest son of the Marquis of Gordon to you? My how was made to a girl of about twenty, with light brown hair, the blood of Scotland's Fresh skin and fine name, dressed so nattily as to be to my mind, after my four years of life a sight for tired eyes. She grew to be my ideal woman. I make no apology for having kept on waiting and then we all sat down.**

**We had a very good breakfast table Mr. Collins and his son being capital fellows, and Lord Ralfe being so quiet and civil that I forgot that he was a lord while Miss Collins was quick and civil to remind him that he was. Before the meal was over I came to the conclusion that Lord Ralfes was in love with Miss Collins. The poor fellow was less a little pang that a little was gone to his wife, and I felt sorry for him, as I felt sorry for every man who is a lover in spite of himself. One of the first things I learned of was train robbery, and Miss Collins, the most Experienced woman, was a great interest in it, and had any quantity of questions to ask me.**

**"I've left all my jewelry behind as I kept my watch," she said, "and that's lucky, for I'm sure I'd be robbed, and I'll be hold up, it would be such an exciting story.**

**"There isn't any chance of it, Miss Collins," I told her, and if we were you probably wouldn't mind, for that it was happening, but would rather like it, I added.**

**"Wouldn't that try to get our men out of our way?" she demanded.**

**I told her no, and explained that the express and mail cars were the only ones to which the robbers would pay any attention. She wanted to know why, and I had to explain it described to her how sometimes the train was flagged by a danger signal and when I had chased the brakeman back to himself covered by armed men, or by a gang would lead the engineer one by one, at was stations and then down the road, where they would secure the express agent and postal clerk, climb over the car and compel the runner to stop the train in some lonely spot on the road. She thought that we had had a little of such robberies as I knew about, and thought I had a very exciting story to say. I was able to describe several, which, as they were commonplace, silke. I confess I colored up a bit here and there in an attempt to make them interesting to her. I succeeded, for she kept the subject up for the rest of the meal, and Lord Ralfe and Ackland were smoking our cigars in the observation saloon. Lord Ralfe had a lot to say about the American lack of courtesy to women, and I contained twenty and thirty men be held up by half a dozen robbers.**

**"Why," he ejaculated, "my brother and I each have a double express and a gun, and do you think I'd let it still in our seats? No. Hang me if I would!" he added, fiercely.**

**"You might," I laughed, a little nervous, I confess, in his speech. "I'm afraid it would be your duty."**

**"Law, you fancy resistance impossible, drawled Ackland.**

**"It has been tried," I answered, "and without success. Law is law, and like all surprises. One side is prepared and one before the other, and there is danger. Without regard to relative numbers the odds are all in favor of the road carrier."**

**"But I wouldn't sit still, whatever the odds," asserted his lordship. "And so Englishman would.**

**"Well, Lord Ralfe," I said, "I hope for your sake, then, that you'll never be in a hold-up. I'd hate to think about you as the runner of a locomotive when the old lady asked him if it wasn't very pleasant to him to run your people. 'Yes, madam,' he aidly replied; 'there is nothing manner as pleasant as it.'**

**I don't think Miss Collins liked Lord Ralfe's comments on American courage any better than I did, nor she said**

**"Can't you take Lord Ralfes and Captain Ackland into the service of the K. & A., Mr. Gordon, as a special guard?"**

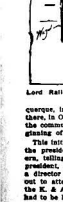
**"The K. & A. has never had a train robbery yet, Miss Collen," I replied. "And I don't think that it ever will have."**

**"Why not?" she asked.**

**I explained to her that since the Canon of the Colorado to the north, and the Estacado of the Southeastern border to the south, made escape so almost defiant that the road agents preferred to devote their attentions to other roads. "If we were settled, Miss Collen," I said, "your jewelry would be as safe as it is in Chicago, for the road that's gone through the express and mail cars, but if they should, as I have first their manners as to take your trinkets, I'd agree, to return them to you inside of one week."**

**"That makes it all right," she cried, eagerly. "We could have the fun of the adventure, and yet not lose anything. Do you, Lord Ralfe, do, Mr. Gordon?**

**"I do indeed, Miss Collen," said, "and I'd like to give Lord**



**My bow was made to a girl of about twenty**

**Ralfes a chance to show as how to be a gentleman, and I'd like to see it done. I really should have been glad to have the road agents put up a job.**

**We spent that day pulling up the Rocky Mountains and on our over the Colorado pass down to Lamy, where as the train was to stay a half hour, I had our two cars dropped off the river and, and we ran up the branch line to Santa Fe, where I had a room warm ground to me, but I enjoyed Philosophy with the ladies Collen for the time. I had come to the conclusion that I had never met a more or jollier girl. Her beauty, too, wasn't of a kind that grew growing on one and before I had known her twenty-four hours without quite be-ing in love with her, I was ready to hire Lord Ralfes, which was about the limit of my income. I, too, have convinced me that the two un-lucky lovers, I had discovered to be the little antics and coalitions they kept scrutinizing, but even more so my right to be jealous of Lord Ralfes his lordship down occasionally. Yet, I was a little sorry for him, for my first disappointed the more I found myself in love with Miss Collen. I had the runners of Miss Collen's mouth and Lord Ralfes, and I, I, I,