

McNeel heard the bell rope drop and called to West: "We are cut off; we are all alone in this fight, the other fellows are left behind." "Impossible" said West. Groping, McNeel found the cord, he was certain, and his suspicions were verified in a few moments, that the mail car and engine had been cut off from the balance of the train at Harwood. The engine gathered speed and the lights of Harwood dwindled into blackness. About three miles to the east in the direction of Houston the car came to a sudden stop. At the point where the robbery was planned a bright fire blazed high from split ties and around this were eight or ten men. A voice from the fire called "Jim, is everything all right?"

"Yes, come ahead," came the reply from the engine.

As Sarano had seen, two men, after the mail car had been cut from the balance of the train, climbed aboard the engine and covered the engineer and fireman, keeping them prisoners until they saw the fire. The train was stopped directly between piles of cross ties on either side of the track. The stop was made directly opposite the fire which was immediately kicked out and in the darkness the men advanced. This was 10:30 o'clock. The track was on an embankment with shallow gulleys on either side.

The main car was divided into two compartments, a wooden partition being run from side to side. In the rear compartment West sat in the southeast corner watching the south door, the two having made up their minds the robbers would attack on both sides. The attacking was made on the north side only. The front compartment of the car was empty and the doors locked. Outside a few shots were fired and a voice, high-pitched, almost shrieking, shouted insistently "Open up." No one responded. The men gathered a cross tie and battered the north door down in the forward compartment. Almost simultaneously, it was discovered that the doors in the compartment occupied by West and McNeel and Sarano were open. They had been tied back to keep them from closing by the vibration of the train. There was a parley and the men made Engineer Dan Toomey descend from the cab, keep-

ing the fireman still under guard, and placing the engineer in front of them, endeavored to rush into the car. In the noise neither West nor McNeel knew what the men were doing so as the mass of men pushed toward the door they shot. The engineer received the load from a shotgun, taking away one side of the face and shattering a shoulder. He fell at the door. At that time the occupants of the mail car were in ignorance they had shot one of the trainmen. They did not know the trainmen from the robbers and the only instructions they received were to keep everyone, no matter who, out of the mail car.

McNeel, in order to do shooting, had to leave the position where he was sitting and go to the door. He shot promiscuously into the crowd. West shouted at him to get out of the door, that he was making himself a target and he would be shot all to pieces. McNeel had not realized what he was doing, and jumped back to the side of the wall and reloaded. One of the robbers groaned that he was shot. He had been left behind in the rush following the shooting, but his companions, braving the fire from the car, came running to him and took him to the rear of the car, placing him on the track. For awhile the night was punctured by some loudly expressed regrets and bitterness over the shooting of their comrade. There was much grumbling but after a few moments another rush was made, the robbers shooting and yelling. Only the roar of the breechloading number ten shotguns of the two men in the car was the reply. The robbers halted to one side of the door and the leader, in that high unmistakable, almost shrieking voice, called:

"Come out of that car you— — — we are going to get you and you just as well get out. If you fellows will surrender all right, we won't hurt you; if you don't we are going to kill you. You just as well come out."

McNeel stepped close to West and said: "These gents are mighty familiar on short acquaintance," which caused both of the men to laugh.

There was no reply from West or McNeel. The men, apparently, took a position behind the two piles of cross ties which had been piled up on either side

of the track to the height of about four feet for use as breastworks. Most all the shooting was hereafter done behind these ties. But as the men lay flat on the floor the bullets passed safely above them. Finally, the robbers brought up the fireman and endeavored to gain the car by rushing it, holding the fireman in front, but the fireman, knowing that the engineer had been shot in exactly the same tactics, shouted: "Boys, I am the fireman. Don't shoot." However, the men in the car did not know whether this was a ruse, so they shot. The fireman, however, dodged and only a few shots struck him. He was not injured seriously. Dropping him, several other attempts were made to rush the car but each time after the shotguns had burst forth, West and McNeel drew their Colts sixshooters and in the face of a fusillade, the men retired.

The fireman was told to fetch the oil can from the engine, that they would burn the car up. The fireman was a hero. He faced death himself and was bleeding from his wounds but he climbed on the engine, procured the can and hurled it into the darkness, telling the men there was no oil there. Again, threats were made to kill him if he did not get the oil. Some time was lost in searching but the oil was not forthcoming. A box of matches was produced and the entire box was burned up endeavoring to set the mail car afire. The rain, the fact that everything was damp, no doubt saved the two men.

West and McNeel heard one of the robbers pleading that the car not be burned. This robber said: "Boys, in there are innocent parties. Boys, there is no use in murdering them because they are trying to do their duty." This, however, had no effect until the box of matches had been consumed. After it was seen that it was impossible to set the car afire, several crept along the track until they reached the sill of the door. This sill was a piece of steel a foot and one-half high. They put their pistols over the sill and, keeping their heads down, emptied them in the direction where they believed the defenders were. It was this metal elevation above the floor that no doubt saved West and McNeel. After this last volley the

men in the car heard the hint given the fireman that he could pull out. The robbers had met with a warmer reception than they expected and they gave vent to their disappointment by continued profanity and taunts at the men in the car. The fireman asked if the robbers would help him to put the still breathing engineer on the engine. He then asked if there was any objection to which way he went and was told none whatever. In a moment the clop-clop of horses' hoofs were heard on the sandy road. When the wounded engineer had been placed in the engine cab, the fireman, not as familiar as he might have been with the engine, threw open the throttle and the iron master literally leaped ahead in such a way that McNeel and West believed, since they could not hear nor see what was happening, that the robbers were taking their revenge by sending them with a wild engine down the track to destruction. When the engine began slowing up at the first section house it was McNeel's suspicion that the robbers, or at least some of them, were aboard and had run down the track to procure oil or material for fire balls, which, tossed into the car would not only expose the two defenders to the fire of the robbers, but would serve to burn the inflammable dry timber of the interior of the car. It was with relief that can better be imagined than described that they heard the fireman alone asking the section man to help him remove the wounded engineer, Toomey. The engineer was left at the section house and then, as rapidly as possible, the engine and mail car were run back to Harwood, where stood the rest of the train and the curious passengers. For one hour and twenty minutes the battle was in progress, yet not a shot had been heard at Harwood and Marshal Rankin thought it the better part of discretion to remain with the express car, as there was no other means of determining how far the engine and mail car had proceeded.

Word was sent to Gonzales for the Sheriff of Gonzales County, Captain Bill Jones, who had blood-hounds. He arrived at Harwood at 2 o'clock in the morning. After trailing until the sun was high, the blood-hounds lost the

scent and the pursuit was temporarily abandoned. That morning, Sunday, the return was made to San Antonio.

Captain McNeel went to Eagle Pass where he obtained the services of John Weiseger, inspector of customs, and with that Federal officer, went down the Rio Grande under the belief the robbers would probably cross into Mexico. In the meantime United States Marshal Rankin received information that Bill Whiteley, the leader of the gang, was hiding out in Floresville and if he would come down, said his informant, he would be taken to the house where Whiteley could be found. Marshal Rankin, with Duval West, Eugene Iglesias and Bill Van Riper went to Floresville, and, as their informant had said, found Whiteley in the house designated. As soon as the officers opened the door Whiteley opened fire on them and they on him. He was killed instantly.

Later on, Sheriff Cunningham of Mills County, arrested a man and brought him to San Antonio on suspicion that he was connected with this attempted train robbery. McNeel went to the Bexar County jail, through curiosity, to see this man. He did not dream he was the man with the strained, shrieking voice, the one giving the orders and cursing. There was not another voice like it in a thousand. McNeel and West knew that Whiteley was the leader, but as soon as they heard the prisoner speak they had no doubt it was the one who had given the orders and identified him by his voice. The man was tried in the Federal Court, was convicted and sent to the United States penitentiary, where he served his term and returned to Texas.

Marshal Rankin, among others, had with him in the express car Detective Long of the Southern Pacific Railway, Bill Van Riper and Alfred Allee. It was afterwards determined that when the stop was made at Harwood the train was rapidly uncoupled from the engine and mail-car, the bell rope was cut and two men boarded the engine cab just as the signal was given to pull out. Under their guns, Engineer Dan Toomey and the fireman had to do as they were bid. Engineer Toomey recovered and for years served the Southern Pacific as master mechanic at San Antonio. The

reward, which was a large one in money was given to the secret service man who had tipped off the robbery.

West and McNeel were armed, each with a number ten breech-loading shotgun which was loaded with buckshot and each carried a Colts 45-caliber sixshooter. They were well armed with ammunition, but at the end of the fight had barely a dozen cartridges left. No blame whatever was attached or could be to West or McNeel for shooting the railroad men, for as stated before, neither had ever seen either Toomey or the fireman or had any instructions other than to keep everybody out of the mail car. The intention of the men when the train was held up was to jump out among the robbers and shoot them down. It was never known exactly who was the wounded robber but neither Mr. West nor Mr. McNeel believed that he died. When daylight came large pools of blood told where he had fallen and where he had been placed behind the car.

McNeel frequently, in telling of that night, describes his feelings when imprisoned in the car which was like a trap. The men heard the striking of matches, knowing that it was the idea of the robbers to burn them up, but their feelings during the shooting were nothing compared to their belief—for they did not know of the splendid act of the fireman in throwing away the oil can—that oil was to be scattered over the woodwork, momentarily expecting that the car would prove their funeral pyre. Preceding the rush and when the robbers were firing rapidly, both lay flat in the car. As soon as the firing ceased and the rush began, shots from their guns followed by fire from their heavy Colts were delivered at the door where the attack was being made. When the fight was over, although he was not aware of it at the time, McNeel found the coat of his fall suit winking with water. He had perspired from every pore and he frequently had to wipe one hand and then another on his trousers, each wet. As he says, he could have wrung a pail of water from his coat. And yet there was no fear in either of them, it was simply the strain under which, for nearly an hour and a half, they fought and sometimes the bullets came shattering

dangerously near. They were fighting for their life. Mr. McNeel, who later on entered the Ranger service and was a captain, states that he was afterwards told there were no registered packages or valuables of great amount in the mail car but the men were placed there with definite instructions to do their duty. Both regarded it as a post of honor and they did not know whether a million dollars was carried or just plain mail. This is the tribute that Captain McNeel pays Duval West, his companion that momentous night, and as he speaks the words his eyes kindle and enthusiastic approval vibrates his voice:

"The President of the United States can make no wiser selection than Duval West for a dangerous or delicate mission, any work that requires nerve, faithfulness and brains. I have been associated with him for thirty years and he is the soul of honor. Duval West's honor is above reproach. He is the merriest and, at the same time, bravest and sanest man I know. He will go wherever duty calls him and he is the same to friend or foe. I know him as well as I know any man living, and I want to say again that the President could not have selected a better man in all these United States. He will bring back to Washington correct data, absolutely dependable information. With him there will be no white-washing, no favor shown. I repeat, he is the bravest man I know."

Historical Relic.

The cartridge belt worn by Sam Bass in his last fight with the Texas Rangers at Round Rock in 1878 is a historical relic in the possession of the University of Texas of much interest, according to Mrs. M. A. Hatcher, archivist. The belt was presented by Sam A. Arnett of Lubbock. Examination of the belt reveals the fact that there are exactly thirteen cartridges in it. It is of medium size with places for 45 cartridges, and plainly shows the signs of hard wear. The cartridges in the belt are of 44 caliber. Two of the leather loops holding the bullets are broken, and it is said they were cut by flying bullets in the fight at Round Rock where Bass was killed. Additional material concern-

ing the life of the noted Texas bandit has been obtained by the University library.

Valuable Contribution to History.

"My Experience With Indians" is the title to a new book just issued by Gammel's, of Austin, of which John James, of Alvarado, Texas, is the author, and which is a valuable and interesting contribution to the early day history of Texas and the Texas frontier. This author has succeeded in throwing new light on the manners and customs of the Indians who inhabited Texas and the country West of the Mississippi, during the period when pioneers were wending their way through the wilderness to the frontier settlements. The book is written in an entertaining style and details actual experiences of the author among the Indians of the period covered by his writings. It is quite evident that actual notes were made by the author at the time and that he has a faithful portrayal of what actually occurred within his own observation.

We glean from the work that the author taught school on the frontier and among the Indians of what was then the Indian Territory, and he has preserved through all the years actual photographs and pictures of the scenes and personages with whom he came in contact, with which the book is profusely and attractively illustrated. Such characters as the famous Belle Starr and others equally well known, furnish interesting chapters that all who are interested in the early-day history of Texas and the Southwest will greatly relish. The book is well bound and printed and will make an interesting addition to any library. It is for sale by Gammel's Book Store, Austin, Texas, for \$2.00 per copy, postage paid.

Mrs. S. H. Weaver, London, Texas, writes: "I enjoy reading Frontier Times so much. I think it is educational and good for children to read, for they can learn for themselves at what a cost the old settlers saved this country for them to live in and enjoy."

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Origin of the Alamo Inscription

"Thermopylae had her messenger of defeat—the Alamo had none."

Who first issued that famous phrase has been a question discussed for many years. Attorney General W. A. Keeling of Austin has been delving into the archives as result of an inquiry on the subject from Senator W. E. Doyle of Teague, who said that in his section of the State a controversy had arisen as to the identity of the person who originated the phrase. Research by General Keeling leads him to believe the words were first uttered by General Thomas Jefferson Green. In replying to senator Doyle's inquiry, General Keeling wrote: "The Hon. W. E. Doyle, Teague, Texas.—Dear Senator: "Thermopylae had her messenger of defeat—the Alamo had none."

"This immortal inscription was found on the Alamo monument which was ten feet high and cut from the stone taken from the ruins of the Alamo in 1841 by a sculptor named Nangle, formerly of Philadelphia, assisted by Joseph Cox, a stone cutter, who were at that time engaged in the manufacturing of curious and mementoes such as vases and small stones, etc., the Sculptor Nangle doing the fine work, assisted by Cox, who did the rough work for his companion. Nangle died soon after he finished the monument. It then fell into the hands of his co-worker, who, failing to sell it to the Republic of Texas, carried it around over the country for exhibition. It was exhibited by him in 1843 in the city of Houston and on account of stringency of the times the price of admission was reduced to 25c. The monument was also exhibited at Galveston and other places in the Republic, usually transported on an ox cart or wagon. It was next heard of in New Orleans in March, 1851. The exhibition did not prove remunerative, and the monument was sold to pay charges of some sort, and had for several years been lying among the rubbish of a marble yard. In 1851 Col. Reuben M. Potter in writing to the Crescent, a newspaper published at that time in New Orleans, used this language:

"Let me, however, express the

earnest wish that steps be taken by those interested to restore this monument to the locality where it properly belongs and which alone can invest it with the interest to which it is entitled by the names and events it commemorates. Though the government of Texas was too poor to purchase it in 1841, I have no doubt the needful amount could now be raised, among the people of that State by subscription, if the matter were properly brought to their attention."

"Four years later this monument turned up in Texas again. The Texas State Times of December, 1855, chronicles its arrival in Austin thus:

"This work of art executed in commemoration of the fall of the Alamo is now standing in the vestibule of the new Capitol. This monument should belong to Texas. It should stand in her Capitol to remind all future generations of the services these patriots rendered their country in the dark hour of peril."

Patriotic sentiment was quickened among the people and the Legislature in February 1858, passed an act appropriating \$2,500 for the purpose of purchasing the monument for the State—\$1,500 for the then owners, and the balance to his widow and children of Nangle, the sculptor of the work. Then followed a period of sixteen years covering the Civil War and reconstruction during which time the monument remained unnoticed. In 1874, however, Democracy regained control of Texas and the Legislature among many other beneficent acts, appropriated \$200 for the inscription of the names of those who fell in the Alamo on bronze tablets or other durable material to be inserted for preservation in the Alamo monument in the portico of the Capitol. In 1881 the Capitol building perished in the flames of Nov. 9 and with it the precious little Alamo monument, excepting the small fragment or base containing the sublime inscription first quoted above. This little blackened and scarred remnant is now in the archives of the historic division of the State Capitol.

In 1874 the Adjutant General Steel at Austin wrote Colonel Potter praising him