

THE LEGIONS  
OF  
PURGATORY and HELL

BEING

THE TRUE STORY

OF

MISSOURI'S PENITENTIARY

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—BY—

ONE OF ITS PRISONERS  
WALTER HAMILTON

ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

## CHAPTER III.

### SOME REMARKABLE PRISONERS.

We will next call your attention to some of the most noted prisoners at Jefferson City. We will present them to you as they were presented to us; and, in so doing, we will endeavor to adhere strictly to the truth in anything that we may say at any time in the future as we saw them and knew them, being constantly in contact with them through our entire confinement at the prison. So any statement we shall make here will be conscientiously exact and will give to you the truth as we saw it about any and all of these prisoners.

#### JACK KENNEDY, TRAIN ROBBER.

First among them, we will call your attention to Mr. J. F. Kennedy, one of Missouri's most noted guerrillas and train robbers. This prisoner is more commonly known as "Jack the Quail Hunter." Jack had charge of the heating and electric and steam plant that supplied the hospital, and we ate at the same table, sitting side by side all of my prison life, which was eighteen months. We can only say in justice to Jack, and with all

truthfulness, he is a man possessed with a great amount of honor, far superior to the average individual one meets in life; I care not as to how important or insignificant it may be, if he tells you and gives you his word, it is all you need, and we have oftentimes thought that this is a part of Jack's religious belief, and we feel safe in saying that all who know him look upon him in this way, and we do not believe there is a prisoner in the prison who has more friends than Jack. He is liked and trusted by the officials and almost all of the officers, and always has a good word for his friends.

We found in this man a friend, one who could be trusted and as good-hearted a fellow as one could wish to meet. If he liked you, there was nothing he would not do for you willingly, and it seemed to you that it gave him a pleasure to know that he was able to do you a favor, if it was to give you the last penny he had. We know of cases in the prison, and have positive proof, where Jack gave his last cent which was not the required amount. He went and borrowed money and gave to his cell mate who had been sick in the hospital, with but little hope of ever getting well; for, if kept in the prison, he had a long term in front of him. Jack would visit his cell mate every



evening in the hospital and cheer him up. So on one of those visits he told Jack if he had a certain amount of money he believed he would be able to get out of the prison, as his sister was making her home in Jefferson City and that some parties had told her, on a certain guarantee of so much, that possibly they would be able to get a pardon for her brother, as there was a certain amount of cost attached into looking into a matter of this kind, and he said to Jack, "I have not got near enough money, neither have I any way to get it."

Jack Kennedy is the man who walked up to the side of this fellow prisoner, who had been his former cell mate and friend, and said to him, "Here is every cent I have got, take it and by to-morrow night I will have the rest for you; I will go and borrow the rest," which he did and gave it to his fellow prisoner that he might be able to gain his liberty, and, not long after this he received a parole, and, upon leaving the prison accompanied by his sister, I could but think how few there are with such a noble and generous heart and how few people one meets that will do for you what Jack Kennedy did for this friend without a murmur and not expecting ever to get paid in any way and not asking one penny.

In the year of 1885, when seventeen years of

age, he left home and went to the state of Wyoming, where he got employment on a ranch of one of the wealthiest cattle men in the state. The year of 1886 was when Jack's troubles commenced, while still being employed by this same man. Jack had been told upon his first arrival at the ranch about the dangers of the country at this time and warned by his employer to go at all times heavily armed, the number of men who were being killed every day and the enmity that existed between the cattle men and the sheep men being fierce, to say the least of it, as they were murdering each other at rifle range and on sight of each other, all of them being deadly shots; and, when they met out on those plains, there was sure to be a shooting match and some one or more badly wounded; and not unlikely, when the smoke blew away, one could have seen on the battlefield one or more who had ceased to be, as the cattle men were trying to drive the sheep men out of the country, the cattle men claiming the sheep were killing all of the grazing land by pasturing upon it, which the cattle men claim kills the pasture.

The cattle men undertook to run the sheep men out of the state and did not stop at anything to accomplish their purpose at this time, murder

being committed every day, and a man in this country at this time did not know at what hour he would meet death from some deadly rifle ball while at home or riding over his ranch. Those happenings impressed Jack with the fact that, as he was employed by the cattle men, he, too, would be treated as all the rest of the cattle men, as he was always a constant companion of his employer around the ranch and over the country. As Jack was not very well equipped with the desired amount of artillery to meet the demands or the conditions, upon this point he was not long in informing his employer as to what he wished him to get for him in the way of guns and pistols. To this, his boss readily assented and bought for him all that Jack desired in the way of guns and ammunition, the best the market afforded, as he had learned at this time that Jack was an expert with a gun or pistol, having seen some of his wonderful feats in marksmanship under the most trying circumstances when most men's nerve would have been shattered with fear and they would have taken refuge in flight for safety, but not so with Jack Kennedy, always standing his ground and oftentimes against big odds, as he traveled over those plains.

In those days, murder was a common occur-



rence, and many were the times he stood in front of those big, deadly rifles while they were belching forth loads of fire and lead at no great distance from him. His presence of mind and nerves like steel never failed him, as the deadly missiles of lead would pass his head or cut furrows through his hat or clothing; in the midst of all of this his actions were at all times cool and collected. In the fall of 1886 Jack and his employer were riding over this man's ranch from their home when they met two of the leading sheep owners of the state. A fight started between the sheep owners and Jack's boss, whom they riddled with bullets, and there was no one left on the field of battle when the smoke blew away to tell the tale but Jack, as he was by this time considered by his employer a moving arsenal or Gatling gun when once put into action, with his unerring aim that always meant the center of his mark and death to the coyote or wolf that happened to be within his range.

This fact was known by a great many men of the plains and a large number of the ranchmen. He was promptly arrested for taking part in this battle, and two charges of murder placed against him; to those charges he pleaded "not guilty," and was placed under a \$50,000 bond, which the

sheep men did not think he had any chance to get. Upon this point, they made a great mistake, as the man who had so ably befriended Jack and who was his employer and who had been killed the first of the three in this battle, was a wealthy man; and, as soon as his wife learned of Jack's troubles and his arrest, she immediately came to his aid and furnished for him a cash bond for \$50,000.

The sheep men, on learning of this bond going to be furnished, were able in some way to have it withdrawn, the sheep men who were prosecuting the case claiming that the two sheep men who were killed in this battle died from Jack's unerring aim and deadly rifle, as he was known to be a terror with a gun, claiming for their two friends who were killed in this battle that they knew of no one but Jack Kennedy who would have any show in a gun fight with either of the two who were killed, as they were considered fierce and fine marksmen; and for one man, and him it might be said a mere boy, to come out of a battle like this victorious without a scratch against such odds and against men as they claimed their friends were seemed to be evidence sufficient to them that he was a wonder with a gun, and suspicion pointed to Jack as he being



the only survivor left after the battle. So this bond that the wife of Jack's employer who lost his life in this battle had offered was refused, on the ground that his case was not a bondable case, and he was taken to jail; and, after being there several months, he was visited by friends among whom were the wife and daughter of Jack's employer who had been killed in this fight.

After being in jail some months, the officers arrested and put in jail a half-breed Mexican for stealing cattle, the Mexican's partner being killed by the officers while they were trying to capture him. Those two half-breeds had stolen thirty-one head of cattle and were driving them out of that part of the country aiming to drive them over the line and sell them, when one of them was killed by the officer and the other placed in the Wyoming jail where Jack was confined at this time, to meditate over the many acts of stealing cattle, as it seemed this half-breed had a long and bad record as a cattle thief and had been stealing cattle from the cattle men and driving them off and selling them at the first and best opportunity, endeavoring to evade the law and the officials, but he had not been so lucky on this trick, and he knew it was going to be very hard with him, as he was aware that the laws of this

state at this time for stealing stock of any kind were very severe, and if the courts of justice did not hang him for the many cattle he had stolen that he would not be able to get out of the country, as some of the ranch men would either kill him or have him shot; so, urged by this fear that constantly seemed to hover over him by day and by night, he commenced to plan how he was to get out of this jail, and, after planning his mode of action, he proceeded to tell Jack as to how this could be done, how they both could gain their liberty; and, after the Mexican had told Kennedy as to his plan of getting out of the jail, which looked well and good to Jack, he and the Mexican got busy at once, planning to make their escape.

The Mexican said to Jack, "Now, this young lady that comes to see you here likes you, and I believe that you can trust her, as she is stuck on you as any one can see by her actions." He was then told by Jack who the young lady was—that she was the daughter of his former employer, who had been killed by the two sheep men, Jack telling the Mexican that this young lady was worthy of any and all confidence that he might see fit to place in her and that she would do anything to help him get out of his trouble or out of jail. Then the Mexican said to Jack, "Have

her get on the train and go to Cheyenne and get some saws;" so, on her next visit to the jail, Jack told her of his plans and what he wished her to do at once. Without saying a word to any one, she caught the first train to Cheyenne and there procured what was wanted by them, and on her next visit to see him at the jail she managed to give them to him unobserved by any one, returning quietly to her home to fix and make ready everything in the way of horses and saddles and rifles and revolvers, so if they made their escape from the jail they were to come directly to her home, as she would have all those things in readiness and there would be no time lost, as it was necessary for them to get out of the State of Wyoming as quickly as possible.

They were successful in making their escape from the jail on the following night, after they had received the saws given them by the ranchman's daughter, and walked and ran a distance of twelve miles to where the ranch owner's home was and there found everything in readiness for them. With horses and saddles and Winchester guns, they started on their way. On the following morning, at an early hour, the officials discovered their escape, and the whole country seemingly was in pursuit, every one lending all



assistance to the officials and a great many joining in the pursuit after the two fugitives, who were headed for Old Mexico, a distance of something like one thousand two hundred miles away. They at length reached Old Mexico, after undergoing many hardships. The first few days they were compelled to be in the saddle day and night. After reaching Old Mexico, Jack parted company with the half-breed Mexican and was not long in that region before he became employed on one of the leading railroads of that country as a fireman.

While employed as a fireman, he learned that all the cases pending against parties for that year had been dismissed for several reasons which we have not space to print at this time; and, as the prosecution had a weak case against Jack, his case was dismissed with the rest of the many other cases pending at this date, which implicated a large portion of the stockmen of the entire State of Wyoming, holding them responsible for many of the depredations and lawless acts that had been committed in the state at this time. The larger portion of the states men were taking part in this warfare, trying to preserve and control large bodies of land for grazing land to fatten their stock on. After all of those suits had been dis-

missed, Jack left Old Mexico and went to the State of Texas, where he received employment on the Southern Pacific Railroad as an engineer, on which road he worked for a long time. Jack Kennedy is known to be a man who never laid down on a friend in his life.

He is a sure standpatter on everything, regardless of his life or liberty. What he knew about others and what they had done, if it is never revealed until Jack Kennedy reveals it, the secret will never be known, as it is a sure thing that Jack will take all of those secrets of himself and friends to his grave with him; the world will never be any the wiser, for he has never told to any one anything, and all that people know as to his past life is from the court records and newspapers and people who knew him in 1896.

Jack returned to Kansas City on a visit, and here is where bad luck overtook him again, as there were two Chicago & Alton trains held up and robbed, and the trainmen in charge of both holdups claimed that one of the men who helped to hold up and rob the train was a railroad engineer, as he knew all about the handling of a railroad engine. This the engineers on both of the engines which were pulling the trains which were held up were very positive about;

and, as there was none of the party who was very familiar with the way of handling the engine which could only be required by long experience, Jack was accused of both of these holdups on the C. & A., the train men claiming that in both robberies the leader of the gang was a good engineer and understood all about railroading. On those two charges he was tried, and acquitted in both cases, and afterwards was arrested on several charges of train holdups, but the cases never came to trial, the state having no evidence to convict Jack of any crime. This was in the fall of 1896.

After this in the year of 1899, a train on the Frisco Railroad was held up in Wright County, Mo., and this holdup was laid at Jack's door, and a warrant was issued for his arrest with a reward of \$500. Being innocent, and seeing an account of the robbery in the newspapers, he went to a friend of his in Kansas City and told him that he wanted him to go and tell the officers where they would find him and for him to claim and collect the reward, which he did upon this charge. Jack was taken to Wright County, Mo., tried and convicted of what Jack, to this day, swears he knew nothing of until he saw the account in the newspapers. Jack was accused of robbing several trains in different states—the Southern Pacific



Railroad in California, the Texas Pacific in Texas, three trains on the Chicago & Alton, two on the Missouri Pacific Railroad, one on the Kansas City and Gulf Railroad and one on the Kansas City and Memphis Railroad, and now the Frisco Road was added to those other robberies which Jack and his gang were supposed to have done. It is a matter of grave doubt in the minds of many as to Jack Kennedy having had any part in the robbery that was committed in Wright County, Mo., as well as many more that he was accused of.

The prosecution in all other cases failed to find that he had any part in those robberies, so he was arrested and convicted for robbing the Frisco train in Wright County, Mo. At Springfield for holding up and robbing one of the trains he was sentenced to seventeen years in prison at Jefferson City, Mo. To the charge that caused his imprisonment, he declares by everything that is holy and sacred to man and a solemn vow to his God, that he had no part in this robbery at all, neither did he know about it in any way until after this robbery had been committed. Knowing this man as we do, we feel confident that he had no part in this train robbery in Wright County, Mo., which he is now serving a prison sentence for, and, as to our belief in this matter, we offer

to you as proof some incidents we hold to be facts.

We feel as if it will not be out of place here to show to you the injustice imposed upon a man who has ever been so unfortunate as to have at any time in life served a term in prison. On the fifth of January, 1911, at Jefferson City, Mo., while in the prison there, the above date being a pleasant day, I was out in the yard and was engaged in conversation with this noted guerrilla and bandit train robber, Jack Kennedy, when the warden came along and called to Jack, saying to him, "There is a warrant out for your arrest for a train robbery at Seattle, Wash." With this, he pulled out the message that he had received from some official at Seattle, who wanted to know of the warden here if he had any knowledge as to Kennedy's whereabouts, as he was supposed to be the man who had held up and robbed a train a few days ago. The warden being a jolly good fellow, joked Jack as to their wanting to gain information about where he was, so that they might place a charge of train robbery against him, though he was in prison, as the message seemed to indicate, as we heard it read by the warden, that Jack Kennedy was the man who robbed this train, and all they wished was to know where he

was to be found. After some little talk between the warden and Kennedy, the warden said to Jack, "This is a good one, I will have to show this to the governor." This same incident has occurred to Jack Kennedy, since being in the prison at Jefferson City, several times after some train robbery, asserting that he and his gang were the ones who robbed the train in different parts of the country, the officials placing rewards upon his head and the ones who had taken part in the robberies.

Our object in the above statement is to show to you how unjustly and unfairly, it seems to us, Jack Kennedy and many others have been treated. Had Jack Kennedy at the time of those robberies which were claimed to have been committed by him or in which they said he had a hand and was one of the gang, and in some cases was thought to be the leader of the gang, been at liberty and not in the prison at Jefferson City, there is no question in our mind, neither do we believe that Jack had any doubt in his mind, that he would have been arrested and convicted if possible, by some having neither principle nor honor, going so far as to even perjure themselves trying to obtain the large reward that had been offered for the one who had committed the crime, willing



to violate the most solemn vows that are known to man towards his God when they took their official oaths to perform their duties truthfully and faithfully, violating this solemn vow that they have taken in order to send some poor innocent fellow to the gallows or to serve the rest of his days behind prison bars so that they might be able to obtain the coveted reward.

Jack has thought no doubt, like many others at the time of those train robberies, if he had not been behind prison walls, the officials would have tried very hard to convict him of many of those crimes, as they had done before his coming to the prison. We will say in conclusion that it is our honest belief, and we would hate to think or feel otherwise, that Jack Kennedy possessed more sense of duty toward his fellow men than to commit any act of injustice in this way. We found in Jack Kennedy a well-balanced man, mentally and physically, exceedingly so for the amount of time that he had been kept in the prison, and at all times was possessed with a great amount of loyalty toward his friends, and we believe when his time expires in the prison, if left alone and unmolested and treated fairly by the outside world, he will yet make a good and useful citizen.

## THE STRIKE MURDERER.

Not long after I had entered the prison, I was in my little office at the hospital, and a trusty handed me a little slip of paper with a name and address on it and said to me, "A party wants to see you in a professional way and wants you to send after him next Sunday, as this is the only time that he will have." I inquired as to who this prisoner was and was told that he was one of the fellows who had been sentenced to the prison for taking part in a strike in Kansas City which had caused the death of some one. So, on the day specified, I sent for him and, while performing my duties toward him, had the opportunity to see and learn the true inward man of this prisoner. While we do not venture our opinion as to his guilt or innocence, we can but see this man in the same light that we met him, and in justice we must say on the many different occasions that we had cause to meet and converse together that his general appearance is very good; he has a good, open countenance, is gentlemanly and polite in his ways, having all the elements, it seemed to us, of a good and polite business man, making us wonder if it could be possible for such a man as this to be guilty of murder.

We are firm in the belief that if such a man be guilty of a crime like this, it must be more of an accident or under the impulse of the moment and not with intent to take human life. This reasoning may to many at first thought seem ridiculous; but upon proper consideration, we should remember that such subjects should be shown leniency and that they should be apprised of the fact that they are being considered thus, which has a great tendency in our opinion to lighten their burdens, it being an old saying that as long as there is life there is hope, and while there is a possibility of reformation a man should have some kind of a chance, not only a chance to reform, but a chance to enjoy his liberty.

It is a hard heart, indeed, which will place a man behind prison bars for life and not give him any chance for his liberty. We saw this prisoner's father on a visit to the prison to see his son and could but notice the two of them as they walked through the prison yard to the prison gate, the son having his father by the arm to steady his feeble and withered frame, and the thought came to me: If this son could only go home with the father what joy there would be in that home and what comfort he would be to this old man in his declining years! We trust



the time is not far distant when the officials can see their way clear to restore to this father this son, by releasing him from bondage, that he may be a source of comfort to the father; and we feel that, if shown this leniency, he will never give cause for any regret, and we surely feel the one causing the release will be doing a righteous and godly act.

#### KILLED AN OFFICER.

Among the many statements that I have heard from prisoners about the crimes which they had committed, I call to mind one in particular of a young man who was taken into the hospital. I had several talks with this prisoner on different occasions, especially one day. He seemed to be in a talkative mood and to place considerable confidence in me, as he thought he had lost his health and, equally as bad, had a sentence for life to prison, hanging over him. He seemed as if he wished to have some one to talk to and tell his troubles to, as he got very confiding with me and told me of a great many of his doings and how his disregard for the law had got him into prison for life.

The crime that he was sent here to the prison