

# Some Thrilling Adventures.

By DAVID A. PIATT.

*How an Indiana officer put down an epidemic of crimes of violence in a chain of railway construction camps, brought order out of lawlessness, and defied even the emissaries of the dreaded "Black Hand" Society.*

A MODERN American railway construction camp presents many of the problems which had to be met in the early days by the intrepid men who assumed the hazardous task of evolving order out of chaos in the cattle towns and mining camps of the Far Western frontier of the United States. Inhabited mainly by low-caste foreigners, negroes and whites, many of whom are fugitives from justice; and practically all of whom are lawless and intractable, it requires a man of superior courage, daring and tact to successfully keep down the disorder which otherwise is almost certain to manifest itself.

Such a man is Sheriff Ora M. Slater, of Lawrenceburg, Indiana, who, apparently, has never known the meaning of fear. During many years of active service as a law officer, Slater has made countless arrests of desperate characters, fearlessly faced death in several forms, and successfully defied even the dreaded "Black Hand" Society.

It was several years ago, when the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis Railway Company was improving its right-of-way between Lawrenceburg Junction and Summans, Indiana, that Slater first won signal distinction as a brave and resourceful officer.

The score of camps established along the line of communication by the Shutt Improvement Company and various sub-contractors were inhabited by Greeks, Hungarians, Italians, negroes, and whites. Sanguinary encounters were of almost daily occurrence, highway robbery was common, riots were not unusual, and murders became so frequent that the vicinity where the tent-villages stood he said to be a veritable cemetery people by victims of violence. Much of the lawlessness that prevailed was due to the illicit sale of liquor, and upon Constable Slater devolved the task of eliminating this evil.

Chief among the "boot-leggers" (as the men engaged in the unlawful traffic are called) operating in that section was a desperado named Allen. Allen, owing to a personally disseminated report that he had been identified with a noted faction of Kentucky feudists, enjoyed the reputation of being a "bad man." Therefore, when he passed arrogantly through the camps, bearing huge gasoline cans filled with what he facetiously termed "liquid disturbance," no effort was made to arrest him.

Acting in conjunction with Colonel Z. W. Drake, claim agent and special officer of the Shutt Improvement Company, Slater speedily accumulated sufficient evidence to justify the issue of a warrant for Allen's arrest, which he speedily set about effecting.

The "boot-legger" and his wife, a large, rawboned, and sinister-looking woman, occupied an old log-cabin amid the Dearborn County hills, and there Allen kept his stock of contraband liquor. This antiquated abode had been rendered practically impregnable, and the fact that both the desperado and his wife were at all times heavily armed offered an additional obstacle to taking either of them by surprise. However, one afternoon Slater and Colonel Drake concealed themselves between the pair and their stronghold, and, getting the "drop," placed both under arrest. The officers also confiscated a quantity of whisky which the "boot-legger" was conveying by degree to the nearest camps.

Allen was adjudged guilty, and served sixty-five days in the Dearborn County Jail. When released he vowed vengeance. On Samuel Jones, a coloured labourer, who had been the chief prosecuting witness in his case. Early on the following morning Jones' headless body was found on the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis tracks near Harmon's Sta-

tion, several miles from Lawrenceburg Junction.

It was believed at first that the negro had been killed by a passing train, but several blacks who worked on the improvements stoutly maintained that he had been murdered, and an autopsy revealed a bullet in the dead man's heart. Suspicion pointed to Allen, who had mysteriously disappeared.

The desperado was known to have gone to the camp immediately after his release from gaol, and investigation disclosed the fact that he had made guarded inquiries there as to the whereabouts of the man whose life he had threatened.

Slater soon ascertained that the "boot-legger" had been seen to board a west-bound freight-train on the morning of the alleged murder. However, the officer believed him to be lurking somewhere

Lawrenceburg, where he was incarcerated. He escaped punishment through a legal technicality.

What Slater considers the most thrilling experience of his life was signalled by a clever stroke of diplomacy on his part.

On this occasion the pay-roll of the Shutt Improvement Company was delayed, arousing violent dissatisfaction among the labourers.

Unable to obtain a satisfactory explanation of the delay, fifty statwart labourers, under an interpreter named Shannon, inaugurated a strike. The foreigners surrounded Roadmaster A. C. Rupp, menacing his life and threatening to destroy the railway property unless the wages were immediately forthcoming.

The local paymaster was unable to accede to this demand, and the work of demolition began. Rupp at once telegraphed the state of affairs to Slater, who arrived soon after receiving the message.

A number of strikers were engaged in destroying a signal tower near the station, while Rupp and a handful of men were fleeing to the hills before another band of the rioters. All the strikers were armed. Slater recognised the futility of physical opposition. On the impulse of the moment he essayed a ruse which was successful far beyond his expectations.

Commanding Shannon to call his men together, he stated that he would see to it that all differences were speedily adjusted. The interpreter immediately complied, and in a moment the shrieking, gesticulating mob was massed about the leader, through whom the officer ex-

ceeded in capturing his man without difficulty. As Slater was boarding a train with his prisoner he was summoned to the telephone, where he received a message from some unknown person, requesting him to come to Camp No. 3, and investigate the theft of a diamond ring. Turning his prisoner over to a local deputy, the officer unseasonably boarded a hand-car and set out alone for the scene of the alleged robbery.

When about a mile from his destination Slater was overtaken by an engine having as a passenger the surgeon of the Shutt Improvement Company, hastening to warn him that the message had been merely a ruse to decoy him into a secluded spot, where several men lay in wait to murder him.

Angered by this plot, Slater hurried by a circuitous route to the place of ambush, where he found five villainous looking foreigners in hiding. A few shots from the officer's revolver put the miscreants to flight, and after a long chase Jay Colain, a Dane, was taken into custody. Colain was punished, but the sharp sentence meted out to him failed to effect a cessation of the attempts upon Slater's life.

A few days after the arrest of Colain the officer was walking along the railroad tracks near Manchester Station, Indiana, accompanied by John Gluck, an engineer, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, when a deafening explosion rent the air immediately above them. Both men were thrown violently to the ground and buried beneath an avalanche of rocky debris. Gluck was instantly killed, but Slater miraculously escaped.

The responsibility for this deed was never fixed, but the explosion is believed to have been a direct attempt upon the officer's life by the Black Hand Society.

Some days later, when the officer appeared upon the platform of a passenger-train at one of the smaller railway stations, a Greek opened fire with a revolver, several bullets from which passed in uncomfortable proximity to Slater's head.

Slater promptly sprang from the car and grappled with his assailant, who, having emptied his weapon, had turned to flee. Evading a series of wicked knife-thrusts, he made the Greek prisoner. The man was given the "Third Degree" in an effort to elicit something concerning the Black Hand plot against Slater, but would not admit his connection with that organisation. However, with his apprehension, attempts upon the officer's life ceased.

On another occasion a huge negro, armed with two revolvers and reinforced by two women, also armed and as vicious as himself, terrorized the passengers of a Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis train, and, but for the timely intervention of Slater, would undoubtedly have killed or injured several passengers. Peter Hiddinger, the conductor, unable to placate the trio, wired Slater to meet his train at Lawrenceburg Junction. When this station was reached the negro was engaged in the diverting occupation of ascertaining how close he could shoot to passengers without hitting them. The latter were huddled in a frightened group in the rear of one of the coaches.

Unmindful of the bullets rattling through the car, the officer attacked the negro, knocking him senseless, and disarmed the women before they recovered from the surprise of his onslaught. The prisoners proved to be three of the worst characters on the railway works.

Among the most notorious and dangerous of the desperados who terrorized the construction camps was one Dave Campbell, alias "Gold-Tooth Red," who was a mixture of Indian and negro.

Campbell kept the public in abject fear, robbing men and women with the greatest audacity and without respect for time or place. So high-handed did his operations become that men were afraid to labour on the improvements, and work came to a standstill.

Messrs. W. J. Oliver and Company, sub-contractors, offered a large reward for Campbell's apprehension and conviction, and by special request Slater undertook the task of arresting the man.

One afternoon the half-breed walked down the tracks, accompanied by a giant negro known as "Law-breaker," and a negro who was believed to be responsible for several mysterious disappearances from the Oliver camps.

Slater, aware of every move made by the wanted man, secreted himself in the commissary house of a camp near Peles Station. He sent from there a lad, who had previously proven himself a valuable ally, to a sand-house near by, where



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in the neighbourhood awaiting a propitious time for return to his former haunts.

After causing a report to be circulated that he had returned to Lawrenceburg, the officer concealed himself amid a clump of undergrowth near the cabin in which the desperado had lived.

About midnight Allen came skulking along the path leading to his home. In order to reach this rendezvous it was necessary for him to pass under an overhanging bluff, at the summit of which Slater lay concealed.

As the "boot-legger" reached a point directly beneath him the officer sprang astride of his shoulders and bore him to earth. When he recovered from the shock and surprise of this unexpected attack, Allen found himself ironed.

It being impracticable to detain him in that immediate vicinity, when friends might at any moment endeavour to rescue him, Slater determined to convey him to gaol without delay. Unshackling Allen's feet and placing the muzzle of a revolver at his back, he marched him down the seven miles of railway-track to

plained that if they would accompany him to Lawrenceburg he would guarantee justice to them all.

The men agreed to this proposition, and the next east-bound train bore Shannon and thirty-two of his men to the county seat.

In Lawrenceburg Slater made good his promise; but the justice meted out to the interpreter and his followers was in the form of heavy fines.

A few days after the wholesale arrests the officer received a letter attributed to the Black Hand Society, threatening his life unless he ceased his operations against the lawless element of the camps. His next appearance on the construction works, the letter stated, was to be the signal for his death.

Almost simultaneously with this threatening advice, Slater received orders to proceed to Camp No. 1 of the Shutt Improvement Company and arrest a man who had attempted to take the life of a camp boss.

Despite the warning he had received, the officer obeyed instructions and