



STORIES OF THE SECRET SERVICE

BY Capt. Patrick D. Tyrrell

STORY No. 1 THE LINCOLN TOMB ROBBERS

Being an Account of the Attempted Desecration of the Grave of the Martyr President at Springfield in 1876, and the Capture and Conviction of a Gang of Counterfeiters That Preceded It.

By CAPTAIN PATRICK D. TYRRELL

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PART I.

In October, 1876, the United States and Europe were startled by the attempt of a band of Illinois criminals to steal the body of Abraham Lincoln, bury it in the shifting sand dunes of northern Indiana and have its recovery effected through the agency of a convict then in the Joliet penitentiary. The plot had two purposes—the release of the convict through the agency of a public grateful for his aid in recovering the sacred remains of the great emancipator, and the securing of \$200,000 in the form of ransom, either from the federal government or from a fund which the conspirators believed would be quickly raised to recover the body. This plot—the most ghoulish and daring of its kind in history—is but a faint memory to the present generation. To the men of those days the flashing over the world of the news that ghouls had marked the Lincoln tomb for desecration came as a shock, the memory of which will ever remain with them. North and south alike, as well as Europe, shared the deep indignation and heaped unspeakable anathemas on the members of the band that conceived and sought to carry the plot to its base end. But even at that time, while the country was at the white heat of indignation and details of the affair were eagerly sought by the public, the long and tangled chain of criminal events that had its culmination in the attempted "body-snatching" was comparatively unknown to the public at large.

In a general way it was known that a band of criminals had attempted to use the theft of the Lincoln body to secure the release of a "pal" and, incidentally, to make money. It was known that the plot had been frustrated and the body of the beloved Lincoln rendered secure from any future attempt of the same kind. This satisfied the public and the whirl of workaday life swept the incident from



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popular attention. I now propose to tell, after nearly 30 years, the criminal operations, plots and counterplots that led to the great "Lincoln body-snatching case."

It was on the 5th day of February, 1875, that a quiet mannered man appeared at the Palmer house in Chicago and registered as "E. Washburn, Washington, D. C." While having a wide acquaintance in Chicago the guest, on this occasion, kept much to himself. Almost immediately on his arrival I received from him an urgent message to meet him at his hotel, and I promptly responded, as the call came from the chief of the United States secret service. No time was wasted by Chief Washburn in getting to the meat of what he had to say, and, after nearly a third of a century, I recollect his words as follows:

"Tyrrell, there are two men the government must get. They are Nelson Driggs and Ben Boyd by name, although between them they have dozens of aliases. Boyd is the most expert cutter of counterfeit plates in

the United States and Driggs is the most extensive dealer in 'coney' money in the country. Benson of this department has spent \$5,000 in trying to locate them, but has not succeeded so far. If you can get them dead to rights you will break the backbone of counterfeiting in the United States."

"Are they as important as that?" I asked. "Yes," answered Chief Washburn, "they are the most important 'coney' men in existence to-day. We know nothing about them except that Boyd and Driggs are their right names. The rest is for you."

My chief gave me such information as had been gathered—practically nothing, as he himself had said—and returned to Washington. There may be men who still remember the flood of counterfeit money that had been poured over the west and middle west in the early '70s. In those days scrip in denominations of 10, 25 and 50 cents was in use extensively, and this scrip had been counterfeited till the owner of this fractional money never knew whether his money was good or bad. In addition to this a five-dollar note of the Traders' national bank of Chicago had been counterfeited most cleverly, and these notes were as thick in the middle west as falling leaves in autumn.

Further, to add to the troubles of the treasury department and the secret service, a treasury note of the denomination of \$100 had been "shoved" a short time before. This bore the head of Abraham Lincoln, and was as nearly perfect a counterfeit as human skill and patience could have evolved. A \$50 treasury note was also gaining circulation. From expert examination of these counterfeit scrip and notes we found that the work had been done by men of the highest skill. In detail, material and workmanship, the notes, from the viewpoint of the "coney" men, were masterpieces. The geometrical lathe work on the treasury notes was fully as perfect as on the original notes issued by the government. There was one conclusion, therefore, to be drawn—that the work was that of highly skilled men, working months and, perhaps, years on the plates by hand or with the crudest machinery.

In the engraving, or cutting, of plates for paper money the workmen



NELSON DRIGGS.

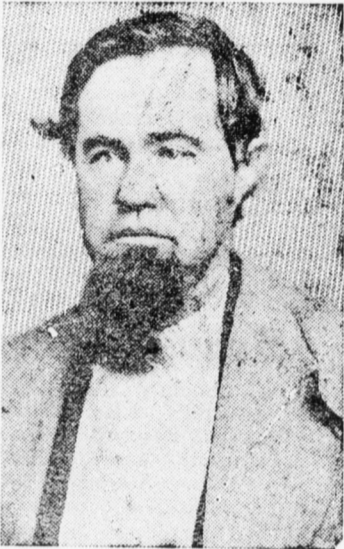
in the employ of the government employ the most elaborate and expensive machinery and other paraphernalia that the counterfeiter could not employ without laying himself open to innumerable chances of detection. Our quarry, then, undoubtedly consisted of men who had spent years under efficient tutors in the art of engraving. We also knew that but one of them was doing the actual engraving, this lesson having been learned from experience.

Before counterfeit money finds its way into the pockets of unsuspecting men and women three, and oftentimes four, groups of men, each with their specialty, have to do with it. The engraver of a counterfeit plate does the cutting and nothing else, making the plates, and sells them for a specified sum to the dealer. Here the cutter's connection with the business ends, and that of the dealer commences. The latter sometimes does his own printing, but oftener has it done by confederates, who do nothing else, turning the finished product over to the dealer, together with the plates. Then begins the work of the "shovers." In this part of the business two men always work as a team, one of them being the "shover" proper and the other the "boodle-carrier." In a town in which a team is working the two men are supposed to be strangers, and never allow themselves to be seen together.

One note at a time is given to the "shover," who makes a trifling purchase, gets his change in good money, meets the "boodle-carrier" secretly, gives him the good change and is given another bill. It is not my purpose, in this narrative, to deal with the methods of counterfeiters in plying their trade, but the foregoing digression into some of the "tricks of the trade" will be found to illuminate various points in the story to follow.

In the spring of 1875, then, after Chief Washburn had returned to Washington, I found myself confronted with the problem of running to earth two, and probably more, men of great cunning, with practically no clues to work on but the names of the suspects. My task was set and my future depended on my unraveling the problem. In addition to this job I was working on information concerning the operations of bands at Basebel, Wis., and St. Paul, Minn., and with the three my hands were full.

I am free to say that for a time in the Boyd-Driggs case I was groping in the dark. A single crime confined to one spot, as a murder, always furnishes clues of some kind on which to work; the location of two men of vague description who are supposed to have been parties to the circulation of counterfeit money which has made its appearance in scores of places widely scattered at practically one time, is another matter. At that time John Peter McCartney, a particularly cunning and dangerous counterfeiter, was at large. McCartney was born in 1824 in Shelby county, Ill., and adopted the career of a counterfeiter early in life. In 1864 he had settled in Nauvoo, Ill., and while there engraved the plates from which were printed the counterfeit of the ten-dollar United States treasury note of the



BENJAMIN BOYD.

greenback variety, issue of March 10, 1862, which notes had had wide circulation, thanks to the energy of the men with whom McCartney was in league.

But this is another digression except as to the settlement of McCartney in Nauvoo, this act having resulted in the establishment in Nauvoo of headquarters for a prolific gang of "coney" men and women. "Pete" McCartney in 1864 had married Martha Ann Ackerman, whom he had first met in Cincinnati several years before. She was the daughter of an old German counterfeiter whose widow with her two daughters had lived in Cincinnati for several years. Martha was pretty and extremely skillful in the printing of counterfeits, her father having employed her in that work when she was as young as 11 years of age.

The McCartney band at Nauvoo had gained gradually in numbers and the extent of their operations since "Pete" had settled there, and among his confederates was Dr. Milton Parker, who, at the time I was detailed to the Boyd-Driggs case, was in an eastern penitentiary for counterfeiting. But Mrs. Parker continued to live in Nauvoo and was a handsome and intelligent woman. There also lived at Nauvoo a counterfeiter named Louis Sleight and his partner, John Frisbie, known to the secret service as the leaders of the "Sleight and Frisbie" gang. Knowing full well that nearly all the western counterfeiters of note at one time or another visited Nauvoo, I determined, in the absence of better or more definite clues, to go to Nauvoo and look around. It did not take long to discover that Driggs had been making visits to Nauvoo, but, so far as could be learned, the magnet that had drawn him thither was the beauty and charm of Mrs. Parker rather than any business plans he might have been working out in connection with Sleight or the other members of the counterfeiting band that flourished in the historic Mormon settlement.

This was the first tangible clue that had been uncovered in weeks of search through three states, and I determined that it was from the residence of Mrs. Parker in Nauvoo that Driggs should be followed.

From further cautious inquiry at Nauvoo I found that Driggs had recently made a visit to Mrs. Parker and on leaving had gone ostensibly to Clinton, Ia. Familiar as I was with the manner in which such criminals as Driggs bought tickets for unintended destinations, doubted on their tracks and went to great pains otherwise to throw the secret service men off their trail, I decided to go to Clinton.

In the latter part of June, 1875, an elderly man and his wife, a good-looking woman many years younger than her husband, made their appearance in Clinton and rented two houses. The man gave the name of J. K. Watson and told the men with whom he negotiated for the houses that he was a retired cattle raiser. He was a Scotchman, dark-skinned, of rather heavy physical mold, and wore a full beard. He dressed as well as or slightly better than a man in his alleged vocation would be expected to dress. His general demeanor tended toward the sanctimonious. He often attended church and was fluent at prayer and in religious discourse. Funds he had in plenty, and he gave substantial evidence of his business solidity by depositing \$22,000 in the Clinton bank.

[To Be Continued.]

Married Life.

Nordy—Hello, old man, you look sad.

Butts—Yes; my wife's away for the summer.

Nordy—Lucky dog! Mine isn't—Journal.

GLUTTONOUS SIOUX.

INDIANS SAID TO BE EATING THEMSELVES TO DEATH.

The Once Great Tribe Reduced to a Remnant and Very Largely Through Inordinate Appetite.

If Thomas A. Edison referred to the American Indians when he said that people were eating themselves to death, he could find plenty of corroboration of his theory on the reservations. Overeating is doing more to bring about the extinction of the Sioux and Yankton Indian; than race suicide, fire water and all the diseases which haunt the wigwam of the red man.

The great tribe of Sioux Indians is disappearing. The members, it is declared, are literally eating themselves to death on account of the plenty about them.

With the new railroad being built through the White river valley the Indians will be enabled to secure supplies with greater ease. They are likely to become greater feeders than they are now, and thus to hasten the time of their disappearance from the reservations in South Dakota.

If corroborative evidence was not easily obtained, it would scarcely be accepted as true that in the course of a night of feasting, dancing and story telling the average Indian will consume from 10 to 15 pounds of meat, and if he has an abundance of food and can make his own selection of the parts to be eaten, he will swallow without inconvenience not less than 20 pounds of meat in a single night.

Carloads of canned meats are consumed by the overfed Sioux Indians, and some canned goods have become almost as sacred a dish with the red men as the fat dog stew of old, for which the Sioux tribe is famous. Among the varieties of canned goods eaten to excess, the oyster holds first place. A hungry Indian will eat half a dozen cans and drink the liquor.

Besides the harm done by eating excessive amounts of food, the fact that it is not properly prepared makes it the more injurious. There is no variety or style about Sioux Indian cookery, no French methods, no necessity for titillating appetites already over keen.

A pot full of meat and water is put on the fire by the squaw and allowed to heat, but there is no definite time for the meal to cook and no point in the cooking process when it is done. The dinner is ready whenever her lord comes in and grunts about being hungry.

If the Indian is especially hungry he may begin on the contents of the kettle by the time the meat is fairly warm. There is never any fault-finding about the way in which the food is prepared, and whether it is half raw or done to rags, no objection is made by the head of the family.

The Indians know the choicest tidbits of every animal, and how to cook them. The hunt at this time of the year gives the Sioux Indian the fullest enjoyment of his appetite, and during the next three months the average buck will devour enough meat to satisfy four ordinary men.

Condiments are in great demand by the Indians, and the Sioux Indians probably consume more black and red pepper per capita than any other people in the United States. Their former favorite condiment was the gall of an elk.

The Sioux Indians are responsible for the reputation which nearly all tribes have of eating dog meat, but there are few other tribes which ever served dog meat, even at the feast of important ceremonies. The Cheyennes, Shoshones and Arapahoes, for touch dog meat.

Black Hair Strongest.

Black hair is stronger than golden tresses, and will sustain almost double the weight. Recently a German scientist has been experimenting, and has found that it is possible to suspend a weight of four ounces by a single hair, provided the hair be black. Blond hair will give way at varying weights dependent upon the exact tint. A yellow hair will scarcely support two ounces, a brown will hold up three without breaking, while a very dark brown will sustain an additional half ounce. The greater vitality of the black hair is declared to be the reason for the preponderance of blond bald heads, and according to this experimenter, a person with jet black hair will still enjoy a full growth, while the blond will have been bald for seven and a half years.

From Nebraska Epicure.

The bosom of the mallard duck, stewed down until there are no juices going to waste, a baked potato about the size of a goose egg, two slices of Boston brown bread, right out of the oven, and spread with butter that has no athletic reputation, a spoonful of raspberry jelly, a cup of Young Hyson, of moderate strength, a piece of pumpkin pie, man's size, and you have a dinner that ought to keep you in a good humor until curfew rings.—Nebraska State Journal.

Mountains Lowered.

All the mountains in Switzerland have suddenly been reduced in height by about ten feet! In 1820 the tip of a certain rock in the Lake of Geneva was calculated to be 376.86 meters above ocean level, and on this basis all the summits in the country were calculated. Recently the discovery was made that an error had been made in fixing the height of that rock, and that it is 2.59 meters lower than it was marked.

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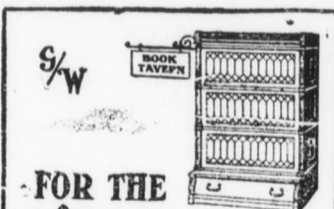
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