



STORIES OF THE SECRET SERVICE

BY Capt. Patrick D. Tyrrell

STORY No. 4

The Biebush Band

Being an Account of the Capture and Conviction of That Notorious Band of Counterfeiters of Which Fred Biebush Was the Leader.

By CAPTAIN PATRICK D. TYRRELL

[Copyright, 1906, by Marion G. Scheitlin.] Bridges said that soon after his first became acquainted with Biebush he met him on a Sunday while the latter was on his way to Sunday school, the old fellow always maintaining an attitude of much apparent respectability in these matters. Biebush said to him: "Up to this time I have taken you at your word; have you any references?"

"Plenty of them," answered "Bill." "Do you know Joe Butts and John O'Brien?" asked Biebush. Both of these were notorious criminal characters.

"Sure," said Bridges, and then proceeded to convince Biebush that he had such a wide and close acquaintance with noted criminals as to render him fit for initiation into the Biebush ring. Biebush thereupon turned him over to Sullivan, showing the great confidence he had in the colored man. From Sullivan "Hoosier Bill" got several packages of half dollars, 40 in a package, and three rolls of bills of \$100 representative money each. These he "shoved," turning over the proper proportion of the good money received to Sullivan. Thielen, Sullivan and Hargate, however, were not the only members of the Biebush ring about whom "Hoosier Bill" gave me information. There were William Whalen and Harry Wood, shovers, and John Evans and Mrs. Annie Welch, also shovers, but on a smaller scale.

Bridges was willing to go to St. Louis to serve as a witness against Biebush if the latter were tried; but in this he seemed to be cut off squarely by the Missouri statute previously referred to as one of Biebush's chief sources of security, prohibiting convicts or ex-convicts from testifying.

"Hoosier Bill's" information concerning Whalen and Woods merely confirmed what we knew. This pair made headquarters at Bosse's saloon, as did Thielen and Sullivan. Gallagher, Kennoch and I had placed ourselves on more or less friendly terms with Whalen and Woods while we were trying to buy "oney" from Biebush. They had told Gallagher in so many words that "Old Fred" was dealing extensively in counterfeit money and seemed anxious to initiate Gallagher into the secret ring, a plan which had been checked by Biebush himself.

While the information I received from Bridges was of great value as indicating the personnel of the band and the respective functions of each member, it had not given us any positive proof, and legal proof was all we wanted. It still remained for us to find a way to prove what we knew. In the face of our failure to "rope" Biebush up to that time it seemed like we would have to start farther back and get some of his subordinates in such a tight place that they would allow themselves to be used as witnesses against their chief in order to save themselves. Informers in criminal cases are of two kinds—voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary informers are usually prompted by motives of revenge or pecuniary gain—more often the former. Involuntary informers are usually the smaller fry in a criminal band who are willing to furnish evidence against the leading criminals under promise they will be leniently dealt with as a reward, but they must first be caught in the toils themselves. Because such principals in big criminal conspiracies at Fred Biebush, for their own safety, turn over to subordinates the performance of the tangible acts, the subordinates in an extensive plot like a counterfeiting job may be caught and convicted and their places always filled, the execution of the plot not being materially interfered with. When it is recalled that the paramount function of the United States secret service is to protect the currency and bonds of the government, it will be seen how eminently proper it is to compromise with petty crime by a subordinate, if by so doing the authorities can catch the big fellows and stop the perpetration of the one big crime. Therefore an informer who was close enough to Biebush to be able to furnish convin-

cing evidence against him was what we sadly needed.

And let me say now that most effective detective work consists in being able to find the right kind of informers. I know full well that detectives generally are prone to throw a veil of mystery over their work, leaving the impression that some sort of supernatural vision has been brought to bear on the unravelling of the case in point, whereas, when the full truth is known, the solution of the mysterious case is made possible by the most commonplace information secured from voluntary or involuntary informers. That eminent creature of fiction, "Sherlock Holmes," never had to make his case good in a United States court, and if he had he would have needed a great deal of corroborative evidence that only could have come from ordinary, unromantic informers.

In this predicament I fixed on Whalen and Woods as the two men who most easily could be forced into a tight corner and who, once cornered, would be the most likely to sacrifice their superiors in crime to save themselves. So all my energies were bent in this direction. The men were communicative to those they trusted, fond of drink and of not overmuch intelligence. Woods was known as the husband of a woman who ran a boarding house of questionable character in Venice, Ill., just across the river from St. Louis. Whalen was engaged to be married to a young St. Louis woman whom he afterward married. I mention these details merely to show that these men were approachable at more points than the other members of the band.

It required some time to accomplish my purpose, but the time came when I felt safe in revealing my true identity to these men and in showing them the trap into which they had walked. They found themselves face to face with imprisonment on one hand and turning against Biebush on the other. They chose the latter alternative. These negotiations were conducted, of course, with the utmost secrecy and it was stipulated that they in no wise were to change front toward any member of the Biebush crowd. Mrs. Woods, through her alleged husband, was also enlisted on the government side and produced one bit of information which later proved of much value—that in the Chester, Ill., penitentiary was one John Mitchell, alias Jacobs, a former intimate of Biebush, who probably would be able to give the authorities desired information.

Mitchell, it seemed, was in Chester for the cure of the same habit that had brought "Hoosier Bill" to Joliet—that of getting his own horse confused with those of other people. He had boarded with Mrs. Woods and had revealed to her his association with Fred Biebush in handling counterfeit money. I considered the lead a promising one and went to Chester. I was amply repaid. I have told how Biebush escaped from the court when confronted by William Shelley, the counterfeit engraver, in 1879. I found it had been Mitchell who had met him at the foot of Perry street with a skiff, in which the "Great South-west Koniacker" made his escape to Cabaret Island, and that Mitchell had been arrested for stealing the horse and buggy with which to further aid his chief to escape the law. He had passed counterfeit money for Biebush in 1877 and 1878, recently enough to make the offense punishable at that time.

Of course, I secured from Mitchell all the information I could, and among it was this fact: While serving a previous term in the Joliet penitentiary



AUSTIN J. THOMAS.

Mitchell had formed the acquaintance of a fellow convict named Thomas, who was doing time for the theft of harness. Thomas had told Mitchell that he combined preaching with larceny and mixed the duties of singing revivalist with those of "koniacker." Subsequently Mitchell had carried written communications from Biebush to Thomas, and the latter, Mitchell said, was then in St. Louis following his incongruous occupations of saving souls and passing bad money.

But little time was required to locate Thomas. A man answering our description of him was found to be preaching at the Methodist church at Morgan and Twenty-fourth streets. To all appearances Rev. Andrew Jackson Thomas (sometimes known as Austin J. Thomas) was a sincere preacher and was doing good work in the vineyard. It was found that he was living with his wife in Finney avenue, west of Grand avenue. The couple had no children, and so far as I could learn, they lived much to themselves, so far as their neighborhood was concerned. A "shadow" was placed on the house and its occupants. The police beat on which the Thomas residence was located was patrolled by Officer Weigman of the St. Louis force, a most competent officer. From him it was learned

that some time before a peddler had complained to him that the minister's wife had given him counterfeit coins for vegetables. This had happened often enough to convince even the thick-witted peddler it was not a coincidence, and he told his troubles to the policeman.

The "shadow" carried on his investigation in the stores in which Mrs. Thomas traded, and several instances of the passage of bogus silver pieces were found. I therefore decided some one should be selected to gain the minister's confidence, and almost as quickly decided that the one should be Woods. Before long the two were doing business together, Sullivan having been the intermediary. Woods and Sullivan planned to go to his house on one occasion for counterfeit money, but the preacher objected to the place of transfer. He also objected to the plan of meeting Woods in Bosse's saloon, because the church of which he was pastor was so close to the saloon that members of his congregation might see him entering or leaving the drinking place. It was arranged, therefore, that Woods should attend night services at the Morgan street church whenever he wished to make an engagement with the minister, and they could select a meeting place while the preacher ostensibly was exhorting the sinner Woods to repent of his evil ways and become a Christian. It was one of these occasions I described in beginning this narrative.

Woods reported to me that he was on such terms with Thomas that he could secure "oney" from him without delay at any place appointed. It was still necessary for us to place ourselves in position to corroborate the statements of Woods, and in order to do this there must be a witness to one of these transactions. Woods was instructed to make an engagement with the preacher to deliver to him a package of counterfeit money at the customary meeting place near the "Rock" church, and a few nights after the meeting I have described in Grand avenue between the preacher and "Harry" I became a witness to one of these deliveries, being stationed so that their every move might be observed.

The operations of the secret service related up to this point had covered months. I was determined to do the work so thoroughly there would be no chance of its coming to naught in the courts, as so many efforts to "settle Old Fred Biebush" had done. Thielen, Sullivan, Hargate, Evans, Mrs. Welch and the others were shadowed or "piped," in the vernacular of the department, with some good results. A continued watch was kept on Bosse's place. This surveillance, for one thing, resulted in our catching Evans and the Welch woman passing counterfeit money in small amounts. I was thoroughly satisfied this money came from dies made by Hargate, and, for the purpose of proving it, caused the arrest of Evans and Mrs. Welch and tried hard to get them to tell where they got their supply of money. Although they were the smallest ducks in the Biebush puddle, they stubbornly refused to give any information whatever as to where their supplies came from. The system of "piping" also revealed the fact that Hargate was handling 25 and 50-cent pieces only.

So far as the minor members of the ring were concerned, the net was being drawn around them in a satisfactory way, but Biebush was still well outside of it. The solution of this great difficulty at last came through Whalen, who, after being enlisted on our side, one day met in Bosse's saloon a stranger from southeast Missouri. The two became well acquainted, the stranger confiding his criminal history and desire to handle "oney." It is unnecessary here to relate the details of the deal which was consummated between Whalen and the stranger, whereby the latter was to "rope" Biebush. Suffice it to say that this deal was carried to a successful close, the wary Biebush at last being drawn into the net he had sedulously avoided for so long.

The facts as here related, with many circumstantial and corroborative details I believed justified the making of arrests. Fred Biebush had moved from his Stoddard street residence to a place acquired by him through foreclosure of a \$2,500 mortgage 5 1/2 miles west on the Olive street road. It was a well-known tavern called the Seven-Mile house. Deputy United States Marshals Wheeler and Soest and I left the Lindell hotel in a carriage about five o'clock one afternoon in October, 1879, and gave the driver directions to go to the Seven-Mile house, where we arrived at dusk. There was a water trough in front of the house, and as I stepped out of the carriage to uncheck the horses so they could drink, Biebush stepped out of the house, bare-headed.

In the dim light he did not recognize me, and I am doubtful if he would have known me had the light been good, as he had never seen me, except in the disguise of a river man at the Bosse saloon. Wheeler and Soest remained in the carriage. Biebush made a pleasant casual remark about the weather, and as he did so I stepped up to him and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"You are my prisoner," I said, "and you will please make no noise."

I pushed him firmly toward the carriage and into it, where the deputies immediately handcuffed him. His wife, a woman nearly as old as he, had come out of the house, and seeing her husband being taken away, began to cry piteously. Her mother's sobs attracted a grown daughter, who came running to the porch and did what she could to comfort her mother.

(To Be Continued.)

His Condition.

Mrs. Browne—I wonder if the new order of things will reform Mr. Luschley to any extent? He's married, I understand.

Mrs. Malaprop—Yes, he's a benedictine, now.—Philadelphia Press.

POPULAR SCENIC ROUTE.

Buffalo & Susquehanna Railroad Company.

Condensed Time Table in Effect June 4, 1905.

Table with columns for READ DOWN, READ UP, STATIONS, and times for various routes including Buffalo, Susquehanna, and Ansonia.

Additional trains leave Galetan at 8:15 a. m. and 6:25 p. m., arriving at Ansonia at 9:21 a. m. and 7:00 p. m. Returning leave Ansonia at 9:35 a. m., and 8:30 p. m., arriving at Galetan at 10:09 a. m., and 7:00 p. m.

Advertisement for KINLOCH HOUSE PAINT, featuring the slogan 'NOW IS THE TIME TO PAINT' and 'Above all, USE GOOD PAINT!'.

Advertisement for C. G. SCHMIDT'S BAKERY, featuring 'FRESH BREAD, PIES, FANCY CAKES, ICE CREAM' and 'CONFECTIONERY'.

Advertisement for 'STRONG AGAIN! Serrine Pills' with a portrait of a man and text describing the benefits of the pills.

Advertisement for THE Windsor Hotel, located between 12th and 13th Sts. on Filbert St. Philadelphia, Pa.

Advertisement for PATENTS and TRADE-MARKS, with contact information for GASNOW & COMPANY in Washington, D.C.

Advertisement for Madam French Female Dean's Pills, described as a safe, certain relief for suppressed menstruation.

Advertisement for J. F. PARSONS' LADIES' DR. LaFRANCO'S COMPOUND, 'The Place to Buy Cheap'.

Advertisement for FOLEY'S KIDNEY CURE, 'makes kidneys and bladder right'.

Large advertisement for KODOL DYSPEPSIA CURE, 'DIGESTS WHAT YOU EAT'.

Table titled 'TIME TABLE No. 27. COUDERSPORT & PORT ALLEGANY R. R.' showing stations and times for eastward and westward travel.

Table titled 'STATIONS' showing times for various routes including Ulysses, Crowell, and other stations.

Advertisement for R. SEGER & CO., 'Who is Your Clothier?' featuring 'NEW AND UP-TO-DATE CLOTHING AT POPULAR PRICES'.

Advertisement for RUDY'S PILE SUPPOSITORY, 'A new guaranteed if you use RUDY'S PILE SUPPOSITORY'.

Advertisement for EVERY WOMAN'S PENNYROYAL PILLS, 'Sometimes needs a reliable monthly regulating medicine'.

Advertisement for KODOL DYSPEPSIA CURE, 'Digests what you eat'.

Advertisement for FOLEY'S KIDNEY CURE, 'makes kidneys and bladder right'.

Advertisement for BANNER SALVE, 'the most healing salve in the world'.