

OUR SERIAL

STORIES OF THE SECRET SERVICE

BY Capt. Patrick D. Tyrrell

STORY No. 5

The Boscobel Koniackers

Being an Account of the Capture and Conviction of the Band of Counterfeiters Operating in Wisconsin in 1878.

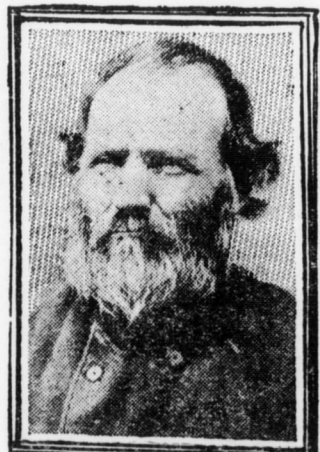
By CAPTAIN PATRICK D. TYRRELL

[Copyright, 1905, by Marion G. Scheitlin.] The further identification of Conway was a simple matter. I found he had affiliated with counterfeiters for many years, and in 1876 had been arrested for horse stealing and convicted, carrying his case to the supreme court. After securing his freedom on bail he had disappeared from his Wisconsin haunts. He had been an associate of the mysterious "Watson brothers," and had visited them at their farm at Clear Lake. Further than this he had been closely connected with a band of "koniackers" that made headquarters in St. Paul. In short, the connection between the "Watsons," Conway, the Boscobel gang and the St. Paul counterfeiters was found to be very close, although the theft of the team of horses in Watsoka county, Minnesota, was the only fact discovered that could be used against Conway at the forthcoming trial.

The defense of Conway at the trial was that "Charles Scott," whom he subpoenaed, had given him the bill. Scott testified to this fact. Conway admitted he had been arrested, and said after his arrest he had come to Chicago and then gone to New York, assuming the name of L. C. Lavaree. He remained in New York a year, he said, and then returned to Wisconsin.

His defense availed him nothing and he was sentenced to serve five years. In the meantime the case in Parsons, Kan., had been made and he served another five years for that offense. Subsequently he was given another five years for horse stealing.

With Conway "settled" in the penitentiary an investigation was made to determine the identity of the "Watsons." While it had not been proved, there was little doubt that Conway had gone east for the purpose of establishing a connection with one of the bands of counterfeiters which infested the Atlantic seaboard, that he had formed such a connection and that he had undertaken to "shove" some of the "coney" that was being issued by them. To a secret service man it was also



FRANKLIN J. BROWN

clear that such a man as Conway, who had never been east before his arrest for horse stealing, could not have formed such a connection without taking with him first-class references from counterfeiters in the west who were well acquainted with the more prominent men in that line in the east.

From all that I could gather of Conway's record he had not been associated before his eastern trip with men in the west who were on close terms with the eastern counterfeiting aristocrats. The high artistic character of the \$100 bills he had "shoved" in the Mississippi valley was indication sufficient that they had come from the hands of artisans of much skill. In establishing the identity of the "Watson" brothers, therefore, we hoped to be able to determine who had placed Conway in touch with the eastern counterfeiters and eventually to uncover the makers of the \$100 plate.

To relate the details of this investigation would consume more time and

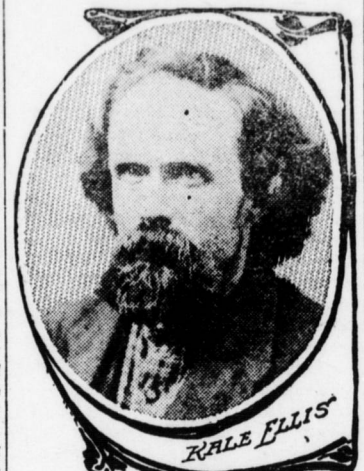
space than I have at my disposal, and I shall, therefore, state that the "Watsons" were found to have been the Ballard brothers—Thomas, George and John. In all the annals of counterfeiting in the United States the name of Thomas Ballard must stand out most prominent, and I shall take the liberty of telling enough about this remarkable criminal character to give my readers some conception of his importance in "koniacking" history.

First, let not the members of the masonic fraternity be shocked when I say that Thomas Ballard, at the summit of his success as a counterfeiter, was the master of Park lodge, A. F. & A. M., in New York city. He came of good family, never smoked a cigar nor took a drink of intoxicating liquor, was married to an estimable woman, and, like many of his kind, was a model "family man." He was born in New York state in 1840, and learned the trade of fancy carriage painting. When 18 years old he went to work for Henry Hinman, a wealthy carriage builder of New York city, and related by marriage to Joshua D. Miner, a prominent New York politician and city contractor. Hinman observed the genius of young Ballard and induced him to learn the trade of banknote engraving, at which he served four years.

Aided by Miner, Ballard obtained valuable information from the engraving department of the government. In 1862 Ballard produced for Miner and Henry C. Cole a plate of the one dollar United States treasury. His next was a plate of the two-dollar bills of the National Shoe & Leather bank, of New York. From that he went to \$10 counterfeits of three national banks of Poughkeepsie, the \$20 bill of the Shoe & Leather bank, and then to the \$100 and \$500 "old issue" United States treasury notes.

Ballard had a comfortable residence at No. 225 West Fifty-third street, and

residence on a farm near Clear Lake, Ia. They assumed the family name of Watson, and, naturally, fell into association with the counterfeiters operating in the northwest. They became acquainted with the Boscobel and St. Paul gangs, and with Frank Conway,



RALE ELLIS

which fact accounts for the frequency with which I encountered the assumed family name of the Ballards while trying to identify the man who had been arrested in Vandalia. The St. Paul contingent of counterfeiters had in their possession, it was afterward found, the Poughkeepsie and Peakskill plates that had been made in the east by Ballard and had issued money from them. There was no evidence that the Ballards accomplished much in the line of producing "coney" while in the west. It is only fair that I here call attention to the fact that from this point any credit accruing to the secret service for the ultimate discovery of the



DOYLE WAS ARRESTED AS HE LEFT THE TRAIN.

here was supposed to be a painter. He left home every morning at seven o'clock to go to the carriage factory, in which he was interested, but instead of going there he went to No. 256 Rivington street, where his brother John lived, and where the counterfeiting plant was located. The neighbors at No. 256 Rivington street believed Ballard to be a watchman in the custom house, and he left there regularly in the evening to go "to work," but in reality went home. He lived this dual life without detection for years.

The government at that time had a contract with the Glenn mills, at West Chester, Pa., for its entire output of the celebrated "fiber" paper, the mills being run under supervision of government officials to prevent the paper or the secret of its manufacture being stolen. Ballard, in addition to being a high-class engraver, was the only man in the world who could successfully make this paper outside of the Glenn mills. As an engraver, chemist, paper-maker and ink manufacturer, Ballard was unexcelled. The treasury officials and money experts generally believed the "fiber" paper to be a complete guard against counterfeiting, and they were amazed at the product of Thomas Ballard long before such a man was known to the secret service. The presses of Hinman, Miner and Ballard turned out bogus money in such amounts that the lawful currency became disparaged, and the capture of the makers of the clever counterfeits became a matter of imperative importance. He was caught in 1871, broke jail soon afterward, and his subsequent history would fill a good-sized volume.

Arrested in Buffalo for engraving a plate of a \$500 treasury note, which was pronounced superior to the genuine, Ballard was sent to Auburn penitentiary, from which institution he escaped. While in Buffalo he had also worked on a plate with which he said he was going "to bankrupt Canada," and from the perfection of the work he seemed in fair way to make good his intention.

In 1875 he was sentenced to serve 30 years in the penitentiary, after having been at large about three years with a standing reward of \$5,000 for his capture. In 1878 he ripped open his own abdomen and severed an intestine in trying to take his life, but recovered. A year later he drew a sharp knife across his throat, severing the windpipe and muscles of the neck, and again recovered.

It was during the wanderings following Thomas Ballard's first arrest and while the reward of \$5,000 was hanging over him, that he and his two brothers came west and took up their

engravers and producers of the \$100 Wilkesbarre, Boston and New Bedford bills should be bestowed on A. L. Drummond and other operatives in the eastern division of the service. In the west we had first found the bills, determined beyond doubt their eastern origin, showed the connection between Conway and the Ballards and indicated that in Conway's associates while in the east the secret service would probably find the producers of the bills.

As I have pointed out, the Ballards had given Conway credentials when he started east which, with his arrest and conviction for horse stealing, was sufficient to satisfy the eastern contingent that he was a safe man with whom to "do business." I had carefully preserved Conway's testimony at his Springfield trial, in which he told of his places of residence and some of his movements in New York, and forwarded them to headquarters, although Conway probably had no idea that the information he gave at that time would be of any value to us. It proved, however, to be of much service to the eastern operatives in unearthing the crowd that issued the bills which Conway had "shoved" in the west.

There were in the United States in the year 1879 but four men capable of producing such high-class plates as these from which had been printed the \$100 bills received in Chicago from several western points. These were Charles F. Ulrich, Benjamin Boyd, Thomas Ballard and Charles H. Smith. Each of these men possessed a distinctive style, which was familiar to the members of the secret service who had made these things the subject of long study. Ulrich's method was to lay before him a genuine bill of the issue he intended to counterfeit and laboriously and as faithfully as possible copy it on steel.

Boyd was the inventor and sole owner of a process whereby he transferred by the use of acids a reproduction of the genuine bill on to a steel plate, after cutting the plate by the lines transferred. Ballard used the copying process, but his work was much finer than Ulrich's, and had a distinct character under the microscope. Smith was at that time an engraver in the employ of the United States treasury department, and his work showed clearly the distinctive character of government engraving. Boyd was in prison, and the work on the bills was apparently not that of Ballard nor Ulrich.

For some time the secret service officers had had pretty accurate information of the operations of the band to which Smith belonged. W. E. Brockway was the leader of this crowd and enjoyed the distinction of being the first man who used the electrolytic

process. He was also a fine chemist, but Smith did the engraving. For years Smith had been employed by the government in engraving plates for currency and bonds, and his character was supposed to be above reproach. I do not know how he became entangled with Brockway. The third principal member of this crowd was James B. Doyle, who owned a 600-acre farm near Bradford, Ill. Doyle had a brother-in-law named Thomas Shotwell, who was a counterfeiter.

Through Shotwell, presumably, Doyle had met Dr. Parker, Louis Sleight and other well-known western counterfeiters, and had made a trip to New York, where he had formed the business connection with Brockway and Smith. When he came west he brought with him some of the same bills we were trying to trace. Doyle's visit to New York had been reported to headquarters by the western division, and he was "piped" in that city by Operative Kennoch, at the order of Chief Operative Drummond.

When Doyle left the eastern metropolis for Chicago, Kennoch was on the same train, and Doyle was arrested as he stepped from the train in Chicago. He was tried and convicted. At the time of his arrest he had in his possession counterfeit United States bonds representing \$204,000. These also were from plates made by Smith. They were absolutely perfect with the exception of a slight inaccuracy in the margin on one corner, and would have made the government a lot of trouble if they had not been confiscated.

Smith worked in the treasury department engraving room on genuine plates during the regular working hours, and on counterfeit plates during the time he was not working for the government. At the same time Doyle was arrested in Chicago, Brockway and Smith were arrested in the east. If my memory serves me right, Smith never turned informer, but Brockway, seeing that the eastern secret service officers had unearthed much accurate information concerning his operations, told the government where the \$100 bill plates and the plates from which the bonds were printed could be found.

He claimed he had thrown the \$1,000 plate which was much wanted, into East river some time before when he became convinced he was being crowded to the wall by the secret service. This seizure was most important, as it put a stop to the issue of currency and bonds which were so cleverly done that they would have proved a source of endless trouble. The sentences of Brockway and Smith were suspended in reward for their disclosure of the location of the plates, this being, I believe the first case under that administration in which such leniency was shown, but being justified by the great value of the plates to the government.

Before closing this narrative I wish to say that when the Ballards left Clear Lake, Ia., to return east they buried ten sets of plates near the farmhouse they had occupied. This burial was according to the ironclad rule of "good" counterfeiters never to carry such evidence with them. Other counterfeiters, however, knew where they were hid, and five sets found their way into the possession of George Woolsey and Samuel Pizer, of the particular "koniacking" outfit known as the St. Paul crowd, and in August, 1875, I had the satisfaction of arresting these shifty gentlemen and



FOUND THE PRINTING PRESS AND MATERIAL.

of confiscating these plates, \$8,000 in representative currency and counterfeiting press, inks and paper. I do not know what became of the other five sets of plates after the Ballards buried them.

My information concerning the burial of these plates came to me from a man who may yet be living. He had my word that I would never make public the source of this information, and to reveal his identity might, even at this remote day, result in dire consequences to him. For be it remembered, there are some bits of secret service history which cannot be written without violation of sacred agreements, even after the lapse of 30 years.

THE END.

Myra Kelly as a Car Full. Miss Myra Kelly, the writer of East side stories of New York life, relates this story of a gentleman's politeness to her:

"The car was entirely empty, with the exception of the one man, and his condition was exactly the reverse. As I entered he arose, made me an unsteady but magnificent bow, and said: 'Madam, please be kind 'nough toasshet this plashe.' There was nothing else for me to do, so I thanked him and sat down. For 20 blocks the idiot hung from a strap, with not a soul in the car but ourselves.

"I have been taken for another woman, but I never before had anyone think I was a car full."—Boston Herald.

The Limit. Molly—Cholly's a fool! Dolly—What kind of a fool. Molly—The kind that would say "Thank you" for a kiss.—Cleveland Leader.

Let Her Go. "How did Smith's wife come to leave him?" "It was all her fault." "But how?" "Why she told Smith that if he did not get her the bonnet she had set her heart on she would go home to her mother." "Why did he not get it for her?" "He would have gotten it for her if she hadn't made that threat."—Houston Post.

Friendship's Tribute. "Didn't the wedding go off nicely?" exclaimed Miss Sweetun, enthusiastically.

"Yes," said Miss Tartun, "except that poor, dear Fan needn't have been quite so prompt in making her responses. She hadn't the slightest reason to fear that Jack would repent and back out when she had him actually at the altar."—Chicago Tribune.

Another Version. Jack was just about to build his famous house. "Why don't you get some men to help you?" asked a curious friend. "No, sir," replied Jack, "they would call a strike on me before the house was finished. I'll build it myself." "Thus we know why the house was called 'the house that Jack built.'"—Chicago Daily News.

Parental Solicitude. "Marla, who is that young chap that's coming to see Bessie?" "His name is Hankinson. He seems to be all right." "Do you consider him a safe, young man?" "Bessie does. She says he's in good circumstances and has been operated on for appendicitis."—Chicago Tribune.

A Confident Forecaster. "The weather bureau needs jes' one thing," said the man who walks with a cane.

"Why they have a wonderfully complete scientific equipment." "Yes. But they ought to have a man with the rheumatism up there to tell 'em dash sure when it's going to rain."—Washington Star.

No Trouble. "What is the meaning of 'alter ego'?" asked the teacher of the beginners' class in Latin. "The other I," said the boy with the curly hair. "Give a sentence containing the phrase." "He winked his other I."—Chicago Tribune.

A Premature Discussion. Miss Flighty—Have you decided to take any part in the discussion, "What will we do in Heaven?" Good Minister—No, miss. I am at present much more interested in the question, "What shall we do to get there?"—N. Y. Weekly.

The Ratio. The statesman strives to be exact. His zeal, he'll ne'er restrain it. It takes a day to state a fact And thirty to explain it. —Washington Star.

MIGHT MEAN WAR.



"I say, old chap, do you think I look like an Englishman?" "You do, my boy, but don't tell the English, I said so."—Rochester Democrat-Chronicle.

Expensive. We call a girl a priceless pearl, And it is even bettering. We do it ere we are aware How costly is the setting. —Puck.

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