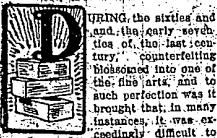


HOIST BY HIS OWN PETARD

A True Story of the Secret Service
by
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Former Chief U. S. Secret Service



detect the bogus stuff from the genuine.

"An insidious enemies of the people in every walk of life, counterfeiters may well be classed among the most subtle and dangerous persons with whom officers of the law have to cope. Wide awake and on the alert for treachery in their own ranks, these crafty rogues can pull the cat's paw and be convicted by means of carefully baited traps, or by what is generally known as the stool-pigeon system."

Counterfeiters are divided into six distinct classes: First, the procurer; second, the engraver; third, the printer; fourth, the wholesale dealer; fifth, the retailer, and sixth, the shaver or circulation. The procurer is the most difficult man to catch as he seldom handles any of the plates or spurious money, hence the chief offender in this line may walk calmly about, defying the detective, each tacitly understanding the other in his relative position.

The methods pursued by detectives to entrap counterfeiters are rarely better illustrated than in the following account of the capture of William M. Gurney, alias "Big Bill," the Koniacer, one of the foremost wholesale dealers in counterfeit money, reared in the quietude incident to country life, educated and supplied with a sufficient amount of money wherewith to live like a gentleman and, strange enough, he chose a path that led to his ultimate ruin.

In the excitement of those tumultuous days the city of New York was well stocked with men possessing a genius for conceiving and concealing crime. Perhaps no other city in the civilized world has ever afforded a better opportunity for fleeing the public. Gurney had been handling counterfeit money for several years but had managed to escape punishment. He was one of the chief distributors for Joshua D. Miner, who was the head and front of a powerful octopus whose tentacles were stretched out in almost every section of the country.

Gurney was by no means unattractive in appearance, and there were few men walking Broadway in his day whose physique could compare favorably with his. He stood six feet two inches in height and was correspondingly well proportioned, while his expansive chest and well-developed arms gave him the appearance of a giant. His black eyes were sharp and, severe, or mild and pleasant, at will; occasions. In conversation, he was easy and interesting and, among his associates, would readily have passed for a gentleman of marked ability. He was a leader among the counterfeiters, and his influence seemed to have been the crowning glory of his highest ambition.

In the spring of 1899, I was appointed chief of the government secret service and, though I had had experience with General Butler's staff, and later in the internal revenue service, I was unknown among the counterfeiters.

Shortly after my appointment I received information, at my request, from a Washington, regarding a rather serious affair that had taken place at one of the drinking resorts on Houston street, in New York city. William Gurney, with his characteristic dash and daring, had invited a party of "quidnuncs" to partake of a banquet at this place. There were 24 persons present at this function, three of which being among the number.

On the following day I was furnished with the particulars of this remarkable assembly, and the ex-detective who reported it also provided a list of the banqueters. Among others, I learned that the most prominent as chief of the secret service was discussed at the affair, and pronounced a good joke upon the government. Gurney addressed his guests, boasting of his position, and, in the midst of his remarks, he said that he might do for a preacher, or an internal revenue clerk, but that he could never cope with a shrewd man like the government.

New York opportunity to say, "to keep it close," I said, "At the time this was said, I advised my friends that he was going to take the new chief into his confidence and keep him well stuffed with flattery and information. The meaning," he continued, "will draw out from him his plans and keep myself posted as to his proposed movements."

This plan pleased the fancy of the conspirators, and they agreed that they would do a great deal of work. They were seated at the tables merrily, health and they drank to Gurney's health, while the ex-detective and counterfeiter looked on and, as the evening wore on, they became more and more intoxicated. When suddenly, after a while and enthusiasm, they stopped the banquet by hurrying for his assistance. The feast of Balaam was

a tame affair in comparison with the indulgence of these men. If there were any letters of warning upon the walls, all were too drunk to read them, or they lacked a sober Daniel to interpret them.

Under the circumstances it seemed advisable to allow these merry rogues to pursue their way unmolested until sufficiently drunk to permit the successful carrying out of a plan to entrap and apprehend the entire party.

Most of my time was now spent at my New York office in Bleeker street, where, in due time, Gurney called upon me for the purpose of paying his respects and, tendering some information in regard to counterfeiters. The ardent appearing fellow said that when quite young he had been foolish enough to engage in counterfeiting, but had long since abandoned it and was now ready to render the government such assistance as he could. I affected to receive him with open arms, and apparently gulped down as truth everything he had to offer. Gur-

ney was cautiously, "but I do not like to take the chances any more." "Oh, ho!" replied Gurney. "We've got everything our own way now. The government detectives are all green men and there's no danger of getting caught unless a fellow goes and gives himself up." Telling him this, I let a few counterfeit notes on the National Note and Leather Bank of New York city, he added: "Here's something good enough to deceive the disciples."

After some parleying, Gurney accepted \$500 of the "quidnuncs" for the diamond, and I now instructed Gurney to stay away from Gurney for a couple of weeks.

While Gurney had been working, Gurney, that worthy had been coming to my office every few days to work me. He imagined that I fully believed what he said, and that he was regarded as a valuable ally. I always received him kindly, and assured him that I had no desire to make arrests unless forced to do so, and that I did

not believe in using harsh measures unnecessarily. Gurney fairly chuckled at this simplicity and was thrown completely off his guard.

He assumed an air of great mystery and spoke of the possible existence of counterfeit plates that might be reached for a reward. He would not, he declared, accept a dollar for his great fancy for me, was ready to assist in every way possible. He was permitted to harp along and play the game to his own liking, secure in the belief that he was completely deceiving the government officials.

In the meantime the services of an old counterfeiter, fresh from the penitentiary, had been secured. Many of his old confederates were now operating with the Gurney gang and, through him, Bill Butts, a fresh-looking detective from one of the western states, was introduced to several of the men who made their headquarters at a saloon on the Bowery. Butts informed the bartender of the saloon that he had just served a term for "keeping the eye."

At first the counterfeiter and thieves hanging round the place appeared to be suspicious of Butts. One day, however, when these villains were drinking beer in the back room of the place, a fight arose. The detective went in with the rest and stretched out several of the fellows; though he was badly beaten up in the end, and in addition was robbed of his pocketbook and watch.

The ethics of the criminal profession are peculiar. When a crowd of crooks meet they frequently rob one another and if the victim calls to the police to recover his property, he loses the confidence of the rest, who regard him as a snitch.

For months, and secured evidence to convict about twenty of the Gurney party. When Butts had been busy with the gang of shavers, Bower had been devoting his time to Gurney and the other leaders. On one occasion Bower purchased \$500 of counterfeit money from Gurney, and this he handed to me as I was on my way to dinner at the St. Clair house. As I entered the restaurant I met Gurney looking as cheerful and innocent as a Raphael cherub. The usual appearance of a bland smile and informed me that he had come there especially to see me about counterfeiting transactions out west. I took him by the hand, thanked him, and invited him to dine with me. We selected a table where Gurney could talk without being overheard. His information, as usual, was indefinite, hearsay, with no particular point to it. He told me that his policy of being easy with the counterfeiters was working like a charm—that there was no counterfeit money in circulation in the east—in fact, he had not seen a bad dollar in six months. At that very moment my hand was resting on the package of counterfeit money that had just been purchased from him by Bower.

A few days later Gurney told Bower, in a boasting way, of this interview and, in a burst of enthusiasm, declared that everything about the government "detective" headquarters was known to him before it was a piece. He asserted that he was one of my assistants, and was so proud of his imaginary success that he never believed he knew what was going on in an office like that.

who took part in the fray. But if he keeps silent it is conclusive evidence in their minds that he cannot stand investigation, and this establishes his character beyond doubt. He is accepted by them as sufficient voucher that he is a member of solid standing in the brotherhood of crooks, and he is then admitted into full fellowship.

Shortly after the mole one of the crowd suggested to Butts that he call for the police. He promptly replied: "No police for me," and the detective was thereupon received without hesitation or mental reservation. During the next seven or eight months Butts worked with this gang of counterfeiters as a shaver of quidnuncs.

"Counterfeit shavers," as they are called, usually travel in pairs. One fellow carries the bogus money and remains outside, while the other takes one bill into a place of business, purchases some trifles, tenders the counterfeit note in payment, and receives change in good money. If this precaution were not observed, the possession of other counterfeit money, in case of detection and arrest, would indicate guilt and lead almost inevitably to conviction.

Detective Butts, however, did not pass any counterfeit money, but instead a good bill in the place of the one he received from the carrier. This was kept for evidence, and in this way he deceived the quidnuncs

disputed my qualifications. Gurney, at the banquet, as I stated, Bower had completely won Gurney's confidence. Telling him that he was about to take a trip to Tampa, he inquired if he could buy \$5,000 in counterfeit money at a wholesale price.

Of course, any amount of it answered Gurney. A deal was arranged for its delivery on the New York side of Fulton Ferry. Bower was to be at a designated spot at a certain time, and Gurney was to pass along, hand over the spurious and receive good money in payment.

At the appointed time there was a large crowd standing around the ferry landing waiting for the boat. Bower was there, and a few paces from him stood a second Gurney, unclothed with a joint of stove-pipe under his arm and a pair of snippers in his hand. His clothes and the coat upon his hands and face bore unmistakable signs of his waiting. Near by, looking in another direction, stood a stout, built business man of ample figure. In one hand he carried a hat box, in the other a valise. In the immediate vicinity was a tall, reverential appearing gentleman, with neat side whiskers, whose white tie and the ministerial cut of his coat were in keeping with the sanctimonious expression of his face.

When the ferry boat struck the dock Gurney stepped off, peered cautiously and carefully around, scanning the faces of those who were standing near. Being satisfied that there were no suspicious persons about, he drew a package from under his coat and stepped toward Bower to deliver it.

At this instant the ministerial-looking man raised his hand. The fat man dropped his luggage and the tall man's tools. Bower seized Gurney by the arms and held him while the tall brother, with a quick movement, snatched handcuffs on his wrist. Everything was done so quickly that Gurney did not have time to catch his breath before he was securely ironed.

The prisoner was taken to the secret service office. I removed my side whiskers and made some change in my clothing, then entered the office and shook hands with the crestfallen criminal.

During that day and evening the pretense of officers were engaged in arranging the shavers of the gang against whom Butts had secured evidence. Two of the ex-detectives, guests at Gurney's banquet, had already been arrested for passing counterfeit money one at Pittsburgh and the other at Cincinnati. By 11 o'clock that night the officers had arrested 20 of the gang. They were arranged in a circle at the office, and the right hand of one was handcuffed to the left hand of the next. Gurney, appropriately, happened to be the center-piece.

I could not help a feeling of pity for the unfortunate, but they and voluntarily propped upon society and transgressed the laws of their land, and the common weal required that they be punished. They were all tried and convicted, most of them entering a plea of guilty.

The boastful Gurney now fully realized the trap into which he had fallen. He had been hoisted by his own petard, a circumstance that seemed to humiliate him almost beyond measure. With little or no pressure he weakened and confessed that he had received his counterfeit money from Joshua D. Miner, who was the capitalist that owned the National Note and Leather Bank.

Among the secret service officers Miner was known to be a counterfeiter, but on account of his great wealth and political standing, he was considered a difficult man to grapple with. He was a large city contractor at this time, and employed about one hundred men building up a new road at the end of Ninth avenue.

Gurney was altogether too timid to make a deal with Miner in order to give the officers an opportunity to capture him, and he was finally, after agreeing to go with me to see Miner who, he believed, would surrender his \$200 counterfeit plates for the purpose of shortening his sentence.

Leaving a servant on the boulevard, I walked with Gurney a short distance on Sixty-ninth street toward Miner's house. We met Miner on the sidewalk and I was introduced by Gurney, who then explained the trouble he had gotten himself into. Miner said he could do nothing for him, and, as a last resort, I requested Gurney to stop aside with me, where I told him that I was convinced that he was the owner of the counterfeit plates of the National Note and Leather Bank. This he firmly denied, but I insisted and threatened to arrest him. He finally said that he would make an effort to secure the plates, I knew what this meant and, under his promise to meet me the following day, I left him.

Miner appeared at the time, but was quite doubtful in regard to his ability to make the surrender, demanded. He was a hard nut to crack but, before we parted, I succeeded in convincing him, by the use of language and less threatening than it was, that it was for his interest to surrender the plates. This he now promised to do and, shortly after, another interview at his home, I received the plates. They were in a bag, and I carried them back to the Grand Central depot. A detective went to the baggage room at this depot and obtained an old hair trunk in which were found the plates.

Through my intervention and explanation, was given a sentence of seven years' instead of the maximum sentence of fifteen years. Gurney, through my intervention, was given a sentence of seven years' instead of the maximum sentence of fifteen years. Gurney, through my intervention, was given a sentence of seven years' instead of the maximum sentence of fifteen years.

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Good Arrangement. A genial looking gentleman wanted an empty bottle in which to mix a solution, and went to a chemist's purchase one. Selecting one that answered his purpose he asked the shopman how much it would cost. "Well," was the reply, "you want the empty bottle it will be a cent, but if you want anything in it you can have it for nothing." Well, there's talk," said the customer, "put in a cork."

STOPPED SHORT. Taking Twines, and Built Up an Right Foot.

The mistake is frequently made of trying to build up a worn-out nervous system on so-called tonic—drugs. New material from which to rebuild, wasted nerve cells, is what should be supplied, and this can be obtained only from proper food.

Two years ago I found myself on the verge of a complete nervous collapse, due to overwork and study, and to illness in the family. I was constantly young mother.

"My friends became alarmed because I grew pale and thin and could not sleep nights. I took various tonics prescribed by physicians, but their effects wore off shortly after I stopped taking them. My food did not seem to nourish me and I gained no flesh nor blood.

"Reading of Grape-Nuts, I determined to stop the tonics and see what a change of diet would do. I ate Grape-Nuts four times a day, with cream and drank milk also, and to bed early after eating a dish of Grape-Nuts.

"In about two weeks I was sleeping soundly. In a short time gained 25 pounds in weight. I felt like a different woman. My little daughter whom I was obliged to keep out of school had sprung out of account of chronic catarrh had changed from a thin, pale, nervous child to a healthy, hearty girl and gave back to school last fall.

"Grape-Nuts and fresh air were the only agents used to accomplish the happy result."

Read "The Road to Wellville," by Dr. J. C. Benson. "I never read the above letter. A man who appears from time to time in the world—millions because it works."