

ON SECRET SERVICE

True Stories of Experiences in the State, War, Treasury and Postoffice Departments by
Col. Jasper Ewing Brady, Late Censor of Telegraphs and Chief Signal
Officer, U. S. A., Santiago de Cuba.

Written for the Desert News.

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No. 2.—Capture of Jim Fleishman, Moonshiner

IN THE early seventies moonshining was rampant, especially in Kentucky, Arkansas and Missouri, and the working of the secret service branch of the government had been at times far from satisfactory. The district of Kentucky, Arkansas and Missouri was in charge of a general superintendent, who in turn divided his district into smaller ones, each in charge of a supervisor. These supervisors had individual staffs of operatives and on their shoulders devolved the work of arresting moonshiners.

Moonshining was a crime against federal law and as such was punishable by United States courts. In the summer of '71 the federal court sitting at St. Louis was especially active in investigations; grand juries worked daily and many indictments were returned and warrants issued. The serving of these warrants was no easy matter because the moonshiners maintained a pretty good "look out" in St. Louis that tipped off all offenders. The culprits generally lived down in the interior of Missouri and Arkansas and when the secret service men arrived, "the bird had flown" and the warrant would be returned non est inventus—no found.

Jim Fleishman, a native of North Carolina, but an active Arkansas moonshiner, was one of the most flagrant offenders. Numerous warrants had been issued for his arrest, but not an officer had been able to bring him in. Judge Treat, presiding judge of the federal district court sitting in St. Louis, was a great stickler for action in his court; when a warrant was issued he wanted it served; was a United States warrant, and if one officer could not serve it—get two, get three; if necessary, get troops; were his commands. Particularly wrathful was the judge over the failure to secure Mr. Jim Fleishman. It was rumored that he had been in St. Louis and had made slighting remarks about the United States authorities in general and Judge Treat's court in particular. Again Mr. Fleishman would appear down in southern Missouri or northern Arkansas. It was said he even played poker with an officer on a Mississippi river boat while that dignitary was on his way to arrest him (Fleishman).

Gen. John W. Noble, afterwards in Harrison's cabinet, and at that time United States district attorney for Missouri, also was greatly exasperated over the secret service's inability to land Fleishman. Judge Treat and Gen. Noble had a consultation one day and sent for Capt. Jacob Morgan, acting United States marshal, to come into court, and when he arrived the judge asked him over the coals in good shape. In substance his honor said:

"This court does not propose to be trifled with any longer. Warrants have been issued time and again for the arrest of Jim Fleishman, but never served. Now I want one served."

The court was informed that diligent efforts had been made to land Fleishman; money had been spent freely and the attempt had failed. The judge admitted that all this might be true, but the fact remained Fleishman was still at large defying the government and bringing the courts into disrepute.

"Get more men; spend more money; call in the army if necessary; get Fleishman," said the judge. "I don't care how you do it; just get him."

Capt. Morgan was a gallant old soldier, not afraid of man, beast or devil; the judge's words stung him and he resolved to get Fleishman or quit his place. He assembled his staff and sent for Capt. Val Pruitt, deputy United States marshal at Poplar Bluff, near the Arkansas line.

Val Pruitt had been a "forty-niner," a bull-whacker, scout, shotgun messenger for Wells Fargo, and was absolutely without fear. When the Civil war broke out Pruitt came east, enlisted in the First Missouri cavalry, served four years honorably and had a most

distinguished record for gallantry. He was known as "the silent man" on account of his extreme reticence. When Pruitt reached St. Louis a posse was held in Capt. Morgan's office and plans devised to capture Fleishman.

"Can you get him, Pruitt?" asked Morgan.

"Yes, if he doesn't kill me," laconically replied Pruitt.

"Well, go ahead and get him. Here's your warrant. Use your own methods as to men and money; don't be miserably, only get him," snarled Morgan, remembering Judge Treat's harsh admonition.

"Won't take many men or much money," said Pruitt, glancing around the room. His eye lit on Jack Cheney. "I'll take Cheney, there; that'll be enough."

"Don't be a damned fool, Pruitt," replied Morgan. "I'll take more than two men."

"Didn't you tell me to use my own methods as to men and money? Well, I'll take Cheney and get Fleishman, unless Cheney doesn't want the job. This last with a draw while his eyes looked two sparks of fire through narrow cracks.

Cheney had his smile and said: "I'm with you, Pruitt—till hell freezes and then it necessary I'll cross over on the lee."

"That's all I want," said Pruitt. "I'll meet you at 2 this afternoon at Lebold's place and tell you what to do. So long, Morgan. So long everybody; and Pruitt was gone."

Morgan knew Pruitt well enough to know he meant just what he said. Still he was somewhat dubious about his getting Fleishman with only one man, even if that man was Cheney. At 2 o'clock Cheney and Pruitt met at Lebold's place on the levee. Pruitt's one weakness was dress, and in the interim between the meeting in Morgan's office and the time he had rigged himself out like a fashion plate. He would hardly be taken for a deputy United States marshal out after a moonshiner. His plans were matured and his instructions were brief.

"Cheney, I want you to meet me at Point Pleasant one week from today. You will leave on the steamboat Belle of St. Louis and go to Memphis. Stay there a day and keep dark, and then take the boat next morning back to Point Pleasant. You ought to reach there about dusk the same evening. Will be on or near the dock. Don't you recognize me at all. Just keep your eyes open and follow me after the boat has left. Understand?"

"Sure thing, Pruitt. I understand and I'll be there all right."

"I don't have to tell you to come well armed. Jim Fleishman is a crack shot and we've got to trap him like a bear—snap his claws first. Again the old Missouri "S'long, Jack," and Pruitt was gone.

Cheney made his preparations and when the Belle of St. Louis left on her next trip he was a passenger. Dolph Zeigler, the boat's captain, knew Cheney and made him comfortable in his cabin. The trip was uneventful and at Memphis Cheney debarked. He kept under cover all day and early the next morning he was a passenger on the "Vicksburg bound" up. About seven p. m. three long blasts announced the approach to Point Pleasant. When the gang-plank was swung out Cheney leisurely walked ashore, keeping his eye out for Pruitt. Finally he saw him seated on a pile of lumber carelessly whittling a stick. Pruitt's fine clothes had been laid aside, and at this time he was dressed in homespun and held a cob pipe between his teeth. He looked for all the world like an Arkansas cracker. The boat discharged a few passengers and a small amount of freight, and then poking her nose into the muddy current, proceeded on her way to St. Louis.

Pruitt got up from his resting place, stretched and yawned, and then slowly walked up the muddy street. Cheney, too, was dressed as a native, and followed Pruitt. Near the edge of the settlement (it could hardly be dignified by the name of city or town) Pruitt disappeared in the woods. Cheney followed, and had not gone far when the two men met.

"Howdy, Cheney," got here all right, I see. Are you ready for a bunch of excitement?"

"Hello, Val. Yes, I'm ready. What's the lay?"

"I've located Jim Fleishman about 20 miles back in the woods. He's got a pretty good place, and evidently thinks he's secure. He's living with his wife and two children. I've blazed the trail out so we won't get lost. It's not a very good trail, but we can get out all right. It's now nearly eight o'clock, and we ought to get out there by 11:30. Then, if all goes well, we will pull Fleishman and his back here by daylight and take the first boat north."

"Going to walk 20 miles between now and 11:30?" asked Cheney, with just a faint suspicion of sarcasm in his voice.

"None," replied Pruitt, not noticing the shaft. "Come on." He set out at a good pace, and Cheney followed. A short distance ahead and they came to a small clearing in which were hitched three horses, saddled and bridled. Pruitt didn't have any doubt that he would bring back Fleishman; hence the three horses.

It was quite dark when the men rode out on the winding trail. Silently they continued on their way. There was no moon and the stars shone down to rain, gently at first, and then a downpour. A pretty strong wind sprang up, and it was mighty slow in coming to follow the trail. The horses were sure-footed enough, but this pushing on through the almost impenetrable darkness was a bit uncanny. The animals became nervous. The flashes of lightning were blinding and the constantly falling thunder reminded Cheney of a vigorous bombardment of the great guns of the Potomac. Several times the trail was blown away by the blizzards and moments were slipping by. Instead of reaching Fleishman's at 11:30, as originally planned, it was one o'clock when Pruitt drew rein and said:

"About 100 yards farther and we come to his house. We'll hitch these animals here, then you go to the front door and rap. Fleishman will suspect something wrong, and come back. The back way. He'll try to get back about half a mile, where there are a number of moonshiners living. I'll nab him, and then we'll hike for the river. If he comes your way, however, and tries to break, let him have it. Don't kill him, because I want to turn him over to Jake Morgan alive." All this was said in a low voice, and the two men moved forward. Sure enough, there was the cabin dimly outlined in the darkness. Cheney waited until Pruitt got around the house, and then, quickly but silently advancing, gave a sharp rap on the door. He stepped to one side, pistol in hand, and waited. Five, 10, 15, 20 seconds, and then he rapped again. Shortly afterwards he heard Pruitt's voice say:

"Throw up your hands, Fleishman, or you're a dead one!" Cheney went around the house, and there was Pruitt with the drop on Fleishman, who had sense enough to know it. His hands were up, and Cheney came up from behind and in a minute he had them down and securely pinioned behind his back.

"Come on, now, and be quick about it," growled Pruitt. "We've got to get back."

Fleishman was put on the third horse, his feet bound under him, and the three started back on the trail. The storm had grown worse; the rain was now falling in torrents, and all blazing was completely gone, but Pruitt rode on, trusting to bull luck and horse sense.

Fleishman was the coolest man of the three. The trail was lost completely, and Pruitt tried to make the prisoner indicate the way, but he only grinned and said nothing. Once they stopped to listen, and above the roar of the storm Cheney fancied he heard horses approaching. Pruitt heard it, too, but said nothing. They floundered through the woods, and once more picked up the trail. The horses were becoming jaded, but they were pushed to their limit. Suddenly from all sides appeared armed and mounted men. There were about 20 of them. They had lived for years in these Arkansas woods, and knew every foot of the ground. Fleishman's 12-year-old son had come over after his capture and told them about it. Quickly they saddled up and followed the two officers and Fleishman. The storm worked to their advantage.

"Hold up your hands, Pruitt, we've got you cornered; also your partner. We don't want to kill you. You're too damn brave a man to be shot down like a dog. All we want is Fleishman, and then you can go on your way."

Pruitt's nerve never forsook him for a minute, nor did Cheney's; but he knew the fellows held the trump cards. "The bird was bitten," the flashes of lightning revealed his face to Cheney, and it was a perfect study. He hated to give up, but he also knew that a number of shot-guns were pointed at him and Cheney, and his first move would need death for both of them. He gave up Fleishman, and after a little rough badinage about "keeping away from these parts and minding their own business" the cavalcade rode away with Fleishman.

For once the sobriquet of "silent man" was a misnomer as applied to Pruitt. He drew a long breath, and then swore a blue streak. He ended his outburst with an oath that he would get Jim Fleishman before 48 hours rolled over his head.

Cheney and Pruitt were a sorry looking pair when they rode into Point Pleasant that morning. The Belle of St. Louis was just tied up at the dock as they rode in. They went aboard and Capt. Zeigler made them comfortable. In the confines of his roomy cabin Cheney said:

"Well, Pruitt, we didn't get Fleishman, after all. Won't Morgan raise the devil with you and me when that warrant's returned non est inventus?"

Pruitt got up, took the warrant out of an old case, and said:

"Cheney, that warrant don't go back unserved. Fleishman's got the laugh on us now, but wait. Some of the gang followed us here, saw us come on this boat. Hang them, they're watching now. They'll tell Fleishman and the gang that we've left for St. Louis. Zeigler will put us ashore in a small boat up the river a piece, and we'll come back. Fleishman will think no 'revenue' can get here again for a week and he and his family will begin to celebrate. That's where we get him. Remember, Judge Treat, Gen. Noble and Jake Morgan said, 'get Fleishman,' and we get him!"

In due time the Belle of St. Louis proceeded up stream. About four miles above Point Pleasant Capt. Zeigler let them ashore in a small boat, which they kept. He gave them provisions enough for a couple of days, and said "he would charge the boat to the government."

They pulled the boat up a small bayou, and finding a secluded spot, rested for the day. The sun came out and dried their clothing. They slept, ate and smoked, and by dark were as well rested as could be. They shoved the boat into the bayou and slowly drifted down stream. Just above Point Pleasant they went ashore, pulled the boat in under some willows, and crept toward the town. Just up from the levee was a big saloon, and about

8:30 it began to fill up. Every one in that country knew Fleishman, and was afraid of him and his gang.

Pruitt had called the turn, and by 9 o'clock the gang were there. Fleishman was a leading spirit and treated everybody. Decisively he told them "Foggy" Val Pruitt had gotten left. But Val Pruitt and Jack Cheney were right outside the saloon waiting for an opportunity. Fleishman came out for a breath of air.

As quickly and silently as a panther Pruitt was on him, one big hand over his mouth and the other holding his throat. Cheney had his arms, and he hadn't a chance. They quickly bore him to the boat, tied his hands and feet, gagged him, and threw him in. Fleishman's eyes blazed. Slowly and silently they drifted by the town. Fleishman could hear the songs of his companions, and writhed at the thought of his position. When they were a safe distance below town, Pruitt removed the gag from the prisoner's mouth. Then Fleishman snarled and swore, but Pruitt and Cheney grinned and taunted him.

"What are you going to do with me?" asked Fleishman, looking toward Pruitt.

"Deliver you to Judge Treat, at St. Louis, three days from now," answered Pruitt.

"Well, you're going the wrong way, all right."

"Oh, of the moon," ironically said Pruitt. About 2 o'clock in the morning they met the Vicksburg coming up. They succeeded in attracting attention, and were taken aboard. The captain knew both Pruitt and Cheney, and had heard of Fleishman. He agreed to take Point Pleasant this trip. One or two of the passengers kicked, but they promised to put them ashore at Bird's Point, so they could come down on the evening boat. Pruitt wasn't taking any chances of another rescue.

St. Louis was reached about 8 a. m. the third day. Pruitt and Cheney gave their prisoner a good breakfast, and at 10 o'clock took him to the courthouse. Judge Treat's court had just convened. Gen. Noble and Jake Morgan were there when Pruitt and Cheney came in with the handcuffed prisoner.

"What does this mean?" said Judge Treat. Morgan stared, scarcely believing his eyes.

"Judge Treat," said Pruitt, "you said you wanted Jim Fleishman. Here he is."

Judge Treat wiped his glasses, adjusted them on his aristocratic nose, looked at the prisoner, then at Cheney, then at Pruitt, and quite forgot his judicial dignity as he said, under his breath:

"Well, I'll be damned!"

Fleishman got 20 years' hard labor, "Story—The Taming of Mr. Leigh."

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MOHAMMED'S BLOODY HAND.

In the course of our explorations in Constantinople, says a writer in the Rosary Magazine, we visited a building in an obscure and poor quarter of Istanbul inhabited solely by Mohammedans.

It is called the Mosque Kahrie, but it is or was a church dedicated to the blessed virgin. The beauty of the mosaic ceiling and walls not even centuries of neglect have been able to obliterate.

When we returned to the great Church of St. Sophia, now a mosque, and saw again the print of the bloody hand of Mohammed, which is pointed out high up on the wall of that once Christian church, we understood its significance better than we had at first sight.

Mohammed II, after advancing his outposts gradually and stealthily, had finally, as if in a night, crossed the Bosphorus from Asia and raised his flag on the European side of the stream. Just the day before, on a trip up the Bosphorus, we had seen the ruins of those fortifications.

The rulers of the city had retested in vain against this encroachment. When the Moslems finally attacked the city, the Christians fled in terror to St. Sophia. An ancient legend, firmly believed, promised that this sanctuary was absolutely safe.

Mohammed proved the fallacy of their trust by breaking down the doors, murdering those who had sought safety there, men, women and children—so many of them that, finally forcing his horse over the great pile of dead bodies, away up on the side of a pillar he planted his bloody hand on the clear wall in token of his victory over the Christians. That gray hand still overshadows the fairest portion of southeastern Europe.

GIRL'S RECORD CLIMB.

Miss Isabelle Laugel, a French girl, aged 13 years, has created a record by climbing the Aiguille de l'Em, nearly 12,000 feet high, one of the most difficult and dangerous peaks in the Mont Blanc range.

It was first ascended by Mummery, the well-known English climber, and very seldom since his death. Miss Laugel is the first of her sex to reach the summit of this peak, and she accomplished the feat, says our Geneva correspondent, without any help from her guide.

While climbing the "Five Apostles," near Innsbruck, Franz Breunig, a Viennese mountain climber, fell and was killed.—London Mail.

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