

JAMES McPARLAND'S THREE YEAR PURSUIT OF THE MOLLY MAGUIRES

Pinkerton Detective Recounts How He Posed as a "Bad Man" and Ensnares the Pennsylvania Band That Had Committed Thirty Thousand Assassinations

PERHAPS it is not remarkable that James C. McParland is still in active business at the age of sixty-seven years, for he is a well preserved man. But it is remarkable that he is alive at all, for beyond doubt there have been more threats against this man's life and more attempts to carry them out than any other man has suffered between the Atlantic and the Pacific.

Behind a long table, that is kept clear of the mass of letters and reports that daily find their way into his office, James C. McParland is to-day in charge of the Pinkerton office in Denver, Colo. The gray hair and moustache tell of advanced years; the glasses add to the mark of time, but the blue-gray eyes still have a sparkle and fire in them; the ruddy complexion falls to show any ravages of years and the broad shoulders are well thrown back.

Detective stories have been made the subject of countless pages, but never has the greatest fiction writer manufactured a story as strange as the true stories of James C. McParland. Never has a detective of fiction performed more impossible feats than those he performed when he broke up the famous Molly Maguire band of Pennsylvania.

Born in 1844 in the province of Ulster, Ireland, Mr. McParland came to the United States in 1863. He moved to Chicago in the late sixties and lost all he had saved in the Chicago fire. He joined the Pinkerton detective agency under its founder, Allan Pinkerton, early in the seventies, and while he had not been long in the business his "remarkable" memory marked him as the man to be sent to Eastern Pennsylvania to gather evidence against the organized band of murderers.

When he went on the witness stand in trial after trial and told the inside secrets of the Molly Maguires—secrets that resulted in the execution of eleven men and the sending to prison of nearly three score more—he demonstrated that his memory was so good that the most trying cross-examination failed to break his evidence in the slightest detail.

While Mr. McParland gained fame as the man who procured the confession of Harry Orchard in the Moyer-Hayward trial of the Western Federation of Miners, his connection with the Molly Maguires remains as his masterpiece of work, as it does of all detective work in this country.

When he took up the Molly Maguire case he required more than the skill of the trained operator; he had to have courage, plenty of courage—in fact, he had to live on nerve night and day. The slightest slouching at any time would have meant his death.

Mr. McParland tells for the first time some of the incidents in connection with his history making efforts.

"Their idea of correcting was to go to a man's house at night, pull him out of bed and cut off an ear. If this did not have the desired effect the other ear would be cut off and in the end the man murdered.

"No one was immune from the Molli's. They struck high and low. It never has been known, and never will be, how many men were assaulted and killed by this band, which soon numbered more than thirty thousand.

"They were duly organized into districts, with a body-master, secretary, assistant secretary and treasurer of each. They had secret passwords, grips and signs, and were as well organized a crew of bandits as one could ever expect to find. There was but one set of laws for them to obey, and these agreed with their likes or dislikes. If a rule or a law ran afoul of their way of thinking, then the law was 'corrected' by them with murder or a series of murders.

"Eastern Pennsylvania had been for years in a state

with a crowd of drunken men, the landlord being the drunkenest. I was promptly pushed out of the door and informed that tramps were not wanted, though I believe I had more funds hidden about my person than had all the men in the room combined. I found quarters for the night at a railroad sleeping house, and the next morning I started out to find a job."

Mr. McParland smiled as he recalled his efforts to secure work as a miner.

"I wanted to go to work and learn something of the inside conditions, and my first opportunity was to drive a car in a coal mine," he went on. "I learned how to use a pick, and of course made acquaintance among my fellow workers. I did not hurry the making of friends, but managed to drop into the saloons out of working hours and meet men. That was my object, to meet as many persons as I could and to fall into their habits, for I had made up my mind that I was going to become a

Michael, or 'Muff,' Lawler, a member of the band, decided that I was good material. I had asserted my bravery by leading the fight against coal mines. One day I led an attack on a colliery that I knew was filled with detectives armed with rifles. The local police decided I was a bad man and tried to arrest me more than once. One day Mr. Gowen happened to be near the scene of a hot fight between the police and the miners, and an effort was made to arrest me for being so close to him. Of course he did not let any one know he knew me.

"It was on April 14, 1874, that I became a full fledged Molly, joining the band at Shenandoah, Pa. At last I had gained the inner circle of the organization, or at least I had been made a trusted member. It did not take me long until I was made a secretary, and once I became an officer secrets were unfolded to me day by day." He grew serious as he recalled the long list of crimes and was lost in thought for a time.

"There was a long list of murders that had not been cleared. What was the best way to get the evidence against the men high in the band? I did not care so much for the men who personally did the killing—I wanted the men who did the directing—the leaders.

"The murder of Alexander Rea, a mine superintendent, had taken place long before I was on the scene, but it had been an extra brutal case and I found that many of the leaders were connected with the execution of it. There were so many, in fact, I decided it would be worth while to get all the evidence in this case.

"We had our meetings from time to time and some member would complain against an official of the mines or some tradesman. A warning would be sent to the man complained about, either to correct his ways or leave the country. These warnings were in the form of crudely drawn coffins, surrounded by revolvers. Once the warnings had been posted the man would know by long years of the Molli's crimes that his time had come. The number of happy homes that were shattered by these warnings will never be known, of course. But I am safe in saying that hundreds of persons were forced to flee for their lives.

"When it was decided that a man was to be killed, the plan was carried out in this manner:—Say the Molli's of District No. 1 wanted a man 'put away.' A request would be sent to District No. 2 for a man, or sufficient men, to do a 'job.' The men would be selected and would arrive at the place designated, ready for work. They did this in secret. The night of the murder every Molly in the district in which the killing was to be done would see that he had a strong alibi. He would make it a point to be with or near some non-member of the organization. When District No. 2 had a killing on hand they would send to District No. 1 or 3 for men to do the work for them. In this way it was always strangers who committed the deeds.

"Time and again I was tempted to go out in the open and give my evidence, but while I might have some good facts against the band in Pottsville I knew that the men would continue to carry on the work in Mahanoy City, Mauch Chunk or a score of other places. Therefore I had to be patient and work slowly to get all of the necessary evidence.

"No one will ever know or realize how slow it all seemed to me. A meeting would be held and some man selected to be killed. Sometimes I would get a line on the man who was to do the real killing, but often my evidence would not hold in a court of law, I knew. What could I do? It was impossible to stay in the background and not give the man a chance for his life, and as a result I often ran many close risks by giving a warning. Many were the heated discussions at my meetings of the Molli's as to who could be winning the intended victims."

"The telephone bell rang and when he had given a hurried 'yes' over the wire he once more took up the thread of his story.

"There is one case that I never will forget in connection with my residence among the Molli's. Gomer James was a big, powerful Welshman who had become unpopular with certain of the band. It was agreed that he should be killed. All the details for murdering him were gone over with care and it was decided that he should be killed at the colliery where he worked.

"The day and the hour had been set. I do not know that I was suspected, but it occurred to me that an extra number of Molli's were about me on the day the killing was to be done. I had tried every way I could think of to be free for a time to get a warning to James, but had failed. He had but a short time to live and he was going about his work, all unthinking that a man was waiting to plant a bullet in his heart.

"I managed at last to get out of a side window in my

room and get a warning to James in time. I spent some mighty anxious hours for the next few days and, of course, was glad to know that he had taken the warning in time and had not been killed. James was proud of his strength and was not afraid of any man. But he was not dealing with men; he was dealing with a horse who struck in the dark. He forgot my warning, or at least decided he could care for himself, and went to a dance at Shenandoah, where he was killed.

"A meeting of the Molli's was being held at Tamaqua. There was much rejoicing over the killing of James and it was decided that the man who had done the killing be rewarded with \$500 for his work. Remember, I attended this meeting at Tamaqua and all these details were discussed in my presence.

"Thomas Hurley, a member, went to the front and claimed the reward, declaring that he had done the killing. He went into details and seemed to be proud of his efforts. We were about to vote him the money for the murder when a man named Michael Butler astonished the meeting by declaring Hurley had not done the killing, but that a man named McClain was entitled to the reward.

"A discussion followed as to the merits of the two claims.

"You would have thought by their bragging that those two men were arguing over the merits of a real estate deal. McClain was not present to tell his side of the story, and the convention had grown so excited over the discussion that it was decided to appoint a committee of two to gather all the evidence and then report to the convention, so that the reward could be paid to the man proved to be the real murderer.

"I hoped that I might be a member of the committee. I wanted to hear all the evidence and listen to the stories of the witnesses. Butler was suggested as one member of the committee, to represent the McClain faction. Then there was a long pause. Suddenly some one suggested James McKenna, my assumed second member of the committee. I was at last to get into the very inner circles of the Molli's. The convention agreed that I would be a proper man to take up the Hurley side of the case.

"The next Sunday Butler and I agreed would be the proper time to hear the merits of the case. We notified the witnesses that we would hold court in the brush, near town, and all the men who knew anything about the actual murder of James should be on hand.

"Perhaps there have been stranger committee meetings than that one, but I never attended it. The witnesses were on hand and told their stories in detail. There was some objection to my taking notes, but, fortunately, Butler agreed that it would be a help to us in going over the case later on.

"On that Sunday morning, in the midst of the thrifty mining and farming community, we gathered, and man after man told what he knew, or what he thought he knew, of the killing of James. There was \$500 reward up, remember, but, more than that, there was the glory of having killed James."

Mr. McParland shook his head as he wiped his glasses and sighed deeply.

"We weighed the evidence with care—at least I took extra care," he continued. "That evidence I knew would have to go into court later on, and I did not want any mistakes.

"When all the men had told their stories there was not the slightest doubt that Hurley had been the man who did the killing. The reward was never paid, for the murder of two men, Sanger and Uren, caused an added sensation at that period, and the arrests that followed kept the Molli's in a condition of turmoil for some time afterward.

"It is not to be forgotten that I had been reporting, every move of the Molli's each day to the home office, sending out a statement as complete as I could make it of everything that happened during the day. My evidence was piling up and my superiors were hard at work checking up and gathering the loose ends together for wholesale arrests.

"It can be guessed that there was something of a sensation when at last I was ready to go out in the open and march into court. The trial at Pottsville, Pa.—that was the first of the trials—began on May 9, 1876, and I had to take the witness stand.

"Perhaps I will be pardoned if I pride myself a bit on my memory. I have a good memory for dates, places, names and facts, and it stood me in good stead during the trials, for the defendants had a battery of the best attorneys money could obtain to defend them. But a detective who wants to make his way must not only have a good memory, but he should train it every day. It is that which I had done.

"More than seventy arrests were made in the various branches of the Molli's. Of course, many of the leaders of the band escaped, rushing to other parts of the country or back to the old country. But twenty-three men were sentenced to the gallows and some two score sent to State prison.

"I have lost track of the number of attempts that were made to put me out of the way. Efforts were made to poison me, throw me down mine shafts, blow me up with dynamite, shoot and stab me, but I kept close watch and was fortunate in escaping with my life.

"The trial of the captured members of the Molly Maguires was a sensation in the newspapers of the day. It would not be remarkable to-day, it was remarkable in those days to have a newspaper man go a long distance to attend a trial. But this case was so important to all parts of the country that the New York Herald sent a staff man to report the proceedings.

"There was much effort made during the entire period of the case to work up sympathy for the men on trial. Meetings were held in New York and other parts of the country and Archbishop Wood was accused for joining Mr. Gowen in sending me to collect evidence against the murderers. Some unthinking persons said he should have sent missionaries to tell the men how wrong it was to kill a fellow being."

"For the first time this famous detective showed signs of anger and he clenched his fist as he exclaimed:—'If those who talked this way could have gone into the meetings of the Molly Maguires; if they could have heard the bloodthirsty threats, boasts, and discussions, they would have realized that they were not encountering real humans. I often think that murder of a fellow being meant no more to many of those men than merely shooting a rabbit. In fact, it seemed sport to some of them, who were the most depraved. We have men of this type to-day, but for real downright cruelty I never met the equal to some of the Molli's of the '70's.

"When Jack Kehoe, who was called by some of the Molli's 'the King,' was found guilty of murder in the first degree it was a big sensation. Thomas Duffy, also convicted of murder in the first degree, was perhaps the boldest and most defiant member of the band. He made a hard fight for his freedom, for he not only had money but he also had brains.

"This is but a brief outline of some of the points in connection with the Molly Maguires. There are scores of other incidents where I ran close races with death—stories of some of the most awful murders by knife, dynamite and gun.

"Detectives are often held up to public inspection for their work. I pride myself for the part I took in this case. I was working for law and order. A dangerous band of twenty-five hundred men had gone into the wholesale business of killing their fellows. Certainly no one can find fault with a man who would use every power within his knowledge to clear a great commonwealth of these assassins."



JAMES McPARLAND

We Weighed the Evidence With Care.

BEHIND a long table in one of the tallest office buildings in Denver, overlooking a window that faces the snow topped Rocky Mountains, you can find each day a quiet appearing man reading his mail or directing his many assistants in their duties. There is nothing about the man at first glance to lead one to suspect him of being one of the world's famous detectives. You would never guess that his life had been in danger more times than perhaps that of any other man of his years. Certainly there have been more attempts to kill him than any man who has come before the public in the last two score years.

Not dozens but hundreds of plans have been worked out to kill this man, and yet to-day he is calmly going on about his duties seemingly without a thought of his remarkable life. James McParland is passing strange in that he does not seek publicity—in fact, he has refused for more than thirty-five years to tell of his connection with the famous Molly Maguire case; but after all these years he was found in the Denver office of Pinkerton's National Detective Agency and granted an interview that gives the story of what is still called the most daring piece of detective work ever accomplished in this or any other country.

"I have no desire to discuss this case," objected Mr. McParland; "and while it is an old story it is still new, for all the details have never been known."

It was suggested to Mr. McParland that the public had been fed on Sherlock Holmes cases—detectives had told of marvellous work of theirs in detecting crime.

"That's the point," he snapped. "The public thinks the average detective is some strange wizard, when as a matter of fact he must have good common sense—just plenty of that. I go in for hard work, and that is all."

"And you still recall the Molly Maguire case in all its details?" he was asked.

"There are some things in a man's life that always remain vivid to him, no matter if he is talking about what occurred nearly two score years before," declared Mr. McParland as he turned from his desk. "It would be strange, indeed, if I did not recall in all its details my connection with the Molly Maguire cases of Pennsylvania, even though I entered into the long case in 1873.

"Whether I was a 'born detective' or not never worried me. A detective must have plenty of common sense, perhaps some nerve, and the ability to stick to a case when matters look the darkest. But, more important, he must be ready to do hard work; ready to go days without rest at times.

"An operator must have confidence in his employers, and that is what I had with the Pinkertons. I was also deeply interested in the Molly Maguire cases for more reasons than one. But first I did not forget I was a detective sent to collect evidence. I kept that in front of me at all times. I am not trying to tell the young man how to be a detective—I don't think you can do that.

"To tell the detailed story of the Molly Maguire case would require more than one book, when it will be remembered that I spent more than three years in gathering evidence against perhaps the boldest band of murderers and dangerous men that ever infested this country."

Mr. McParland paused to read a telegram and write a reply, and then continued:—

"The Molly Maguires of Pennsylvania obtained their name from the band of the same name in Ireland. The Molly Maguires of Ireland crept into being to contest the rights, or so-called rights, of the non-resident landlords of Ireland. When an agent of a land owner, backed by bailiff and constable, called upon the tenants of Ireland to collect what was more often unjust taxes he was met by a band of men dressed as women, who attacked and beat the agent and his assistants.

"During the late '60's the Molli's, as they were often called, organized in Schuylkill, Carbon and Columbia counties and other coal districts of Pennsylvania. They were not satisfied with the wage scale that existed or with the way a mine superintendent ran his business. They objected to the way certain men did their work. As a rule they comprised a cold, cruel, selfish body of men who, unable to have things done as they wished, took it upon themselves to correct existing conditions.

of siege from the Molli's. No man's life or home was safe. Conditions came to such a crisis that something had to be done. The local police and State officials had spent months and years trying to convict, but owing to the well organized condition of the Molli's and the terror they struck into the hearts of every household in their neighborhood little or no progress had been made.

"Franklin B. Gowen, president of the Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company, decided the band must be broken up. Archbishop Wood, of Philadelphia, had held many conferences with Mr. Gowen, and the two men discussed ways and means of getting at the root of the organization.

"It fell to my lot to gather the evidence which, later on, was to send men to the gallows or State Prison, in an effort to restore peace once more to the law abiding citizens."

"I cannot even now go into all the details, but I can relate enough to give the public some idea of the conditions that existed in Pennsylvania when I went to Port Clinton, Pa., in 1873.

"I had lost all of my savings in the great Chicago fire and was employed by the Pinkertons in Chicago, under its organizer. I was a detective, or an operator. One day I was told I was to go to Pennsylvania and gather evidence against the Molly Maguires. The words were simple enough, but I knew that it was going to be a hard piece of work—the most difficult and trying that I had ever encountered.

"One evening about eight o'clock I landed in Port Clinton, with my baggage slung over my back. I had entered into the stronghold of the band of murderers, and my first thought was to find some place to sleep for the night. I noticed a light not far away and made my way toward it, only to find a tavern filled

full fledged Molly. It was the only way I could gather evidence that would hold in court. I must know the secrets of the organization and mark out the ring-leaders who were directing the killing of so many men.

"I had agreed to make a report each day to headquarters. I did not know what I was doing when I made that promise, but I kept it. I was often afraid to buy ink, and sometimes I would be forced to take bathing, used in washing clothes, to make ink, or combine soot and water, until I could write with it.

"My supply of stamps I kept concealed in my boots. The mailing of my daily report often called for the best tricks I could command. If there had been the slightest shadow of doubt raised about me in those early days my life would have been flicked out instantly. I knew that, and the Molli's felt themselves well protected against a detective entering their ranks, due to their reputation for cruel murders.

"I was never overly fond of even the best of liquors, and the bad whiskey I was constantly forced to drink to make a showing with my comrades was often one of my most trying experiences. It was important that I become a leader. I was strong and I could hold my own with the majority of the men in the sports of the day or in drinking bouts, and this won the Molli's admiration.

"Day by day I grew closer to the members of the band. I was known as James McKenna to the Molli's, and in fact to every one. I had to do some tall boasting. Through my efforts it soon became circulated that I had cut off the ears of a man in Luzerne county, that I had killed a man in Buffalo and that I was a fugitive from justice for being connected with a counterfeiting band. This reputation was of the highest order. It made me a fit candidate for the Molli's.

Routing Negro "Hants" with Looking Glasses.

It would seem to be very difficult at this late date to discover anything new in the way of negro superstitions, but one has been unearthed in Raleigh, N. C., which may or may not have wide prevalence. A negro graveyard—for they do not use the word cemetery at all—is often a strange sort of a place. There is something rather barbaric about it. In a cemetery there are great many of the graves are covered with bright objects, and in one case,

where a man died of consumption, the earth mound is almost covered with triangular bottles, which once contained medicine, bits of looking glass being inset here and there, so that the effect is really dazzling.

In another case a grave is covered with broken bits of looking glass, of all sorts and shapes, and it is this particular grave which developed the fact of the superstition. An aged negro was met very near it, and conversation began, taking quite a range. There was some discussion of "hants" and a story was told regarding the appearance of one of these spectres in the suburbs of Raleigh, an aged negress declaring that a little before dusk she had seen the "hant."

Here is what she said about it:—

Another bit of superstition developed in the same graveyard, where on a grave mound there is a child's chair, with a plate and eating utensils on it. The old man said about this:—"Dat chair an' dem eatin' things is put dar so dat when de speret comes it can git sump'in' eat."

When surprise was expressed that spirits had appetites the old negro went on to say "Hants don't eat nutthin', but sperets dey do. Dey gits bongry, jes like you and me, an' folks in generl."

The Squirrels' Team Work.

THE members of an outing expedition in New England while tenting in a grove near a glen witnessed an incident that seemed to show a friendly understanding among squirrels.

The members had just finished their dinner, but were still "at table," when a squirrel with glistening, eager eyes came creeping down a tree that stood near. He crept nearer and nearer, and finally leaped upon the improvised table.

Seeing that the woman who was presiding at table extended him a silent invitation to help himself to what he might like, the little fellow made bold to creep up to a loaf of bread from which only a slice or two had been cut. He seized it and dragged it to the side of the table and somehow managed to scramble down the side with it to the ground. He then fixed his teeth in the crust and dragged it away and down the steep sides of the glen.

But when he reached the bottom, and confronted the steep rise on the other side it was too much for him. Then he gave a sort of call, which seemed to be understood, for soon squirrels were seen coming from several directions. They crowded around him, and after a little conference all took hold, and with tug and strain they managed to bring the loaf to the top of the hill and disappeared with it in the woods beyond.

"I wuz er standin' in my pouch when I seed er sort uv twinkle in de element (meaning the sky) and right dar and den er hand drapped. He flung himself all erbout on er little grass mound 'side an ole well what ain't got no top den drap down in de well, come out, tuk off his hair, put it under one arm and den jump' over a road into er graveyard. He didn't go by er place whar a whole lot uv horsehoes is nailed up on er house do'. Hants an' no other kind uv sperets kin stan' horsehoes."

The old darkey listened to this story very intently; his eyes rolled and he said "Bless Gawd!" several times. Then he looked about and said, "Niggers shorely is feared uv hants. Dat's why dey puts lookin' glasses on dese here graves. Er hant comes erlong, er floatin', and when he sees himself in dem glasses he goes on. He thinks dat er bigger hant dan he is er guardin' 'em."

Inquiry was made of the old fellow as to why he said "hants floated," to which he replied:—"Dat's de way dey gits erbout. Dey don't walk an dey haint got no whings, so dey jus' float. Dey kin go high an' low, but dey mos' git nerly goes close to de ground."

The Intoxicated Pigeons.

A HEAVY truck loaded high with kegs of liquor was jolting across a line of downtown car tracks when one of the kegs toppled and fell from the top of the pile into the street. It was thoroughly smashed, so the truckman whipped up his team and went his way without stopping. The rum flowed out over the street—one little dent in the paving collecting a visible puddle of it.

In a few minutes a pigeon came fluttering down to drink at the pool thus fortunately provided for thirsty birds. The initial taste was a surprise, but a second and a third soon followed and soon the pigeon tottered stumbling away, too overcome to fly. Other birds, seeing him there and anxious to wet their parching throats on so sultry a day, followed their brother in his path of wicked intemperance.

Five minutes later a passerby was astonished to see a dozen pigeons in the gutter of the otherwise deserted street, some dancing drunkenly, others a ready sound asleep. A few feet away a band of respectable appearance was creeping up, slowly and a trifle unsteadily, on his unsuspecting and bibulous quarry. As he was almost among the birds his feet went suddenly in several directions and he lay in the gutter among the pigeons, growing sleepily to himself, for he, too, was drunk.