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AN ALIBI

(Original.)

It was a winter night. The wind was driving a tempest of snowflakes. The street lamps shone dim. Except for the storm there was not a sound. No footfall could be heard on the snow, and there was no one abroad.

I had reached the town of M. a few minutes before by train and, finding no conveyance at the station, had started to walk to my hotel.

Suddenly, midway between street lamps, where it was dark, I ran against a man. I stood stock still. The snow on either side of us was deep, and I waited for the man to divide the way with me. Instead of that he began to talk to himself incoherently, seeming to be unconscious of my presence.

"Horrible," he muttered, "horrible! Death—death that might be prevented by a little loose change he may have had in his pocket, and he wouldn't give it. He's a dog, a murderer. I hope I may see him burn with an everlasting fire."

"You seem in trouble," I said in a kindly tone.

"Trouble! Isn't it trouble that there's but one person in the world who can help and who won't help? I told him mother was dying; that I had been sent to the drug store for a prescription and hadn't a cent to pay. He told me to get out."

I remembered that all my change had been spent, and I had only a ten dollar bill. I would go with the young man to a drug store, pay for the medicine he required and give him something besides.

"Come," I said, "lead the way to a drug store."

"I only fear they are all closed," he said. "It's very late."

He led me to one drug store after another. We found every one closed and no one to answer a night bell. I had been with him nearly an hour. This I knew, for I had arrived at ten minutes after 11 and the town clock was now striking 12, and, having made a failure, I was obliged to let him go home without his medicine. As we were about to part I was fumbling in my trousers pocket with my keys and other articles, when I clasped a silver half dollar.

"Here," I said, "take this coin. It's a pocket piece of the year of my marriage, with my wife's and my initials scratched on it. Take it. You'll need it, and more."

He seized the piece eagerly, then turned and vanished in the darkness.

It was three months after this that I had occasion to go to M. again. I am a lawyer by profession and had a case to come off in court there. Having some time to spare at the courthouse before my case would be called, I strolled into the criminal court room.

A man was being tried for the murder of his uncle. It seemed to be a very plain case against the accused. He was very poor and his uncle was very rich, and the accused was sole heir at law. The prosecuting attorney proved conclusively that the young man had every inducement to kill his uncle from the fact that the old man was making arrangements to leave all his property to endow certain institutions. It did not appear to me that the defense had any case at all. Indeed, the last person known to have been with the murdered man, and that only an hour before his death, was the accused.

There were so many heads between me and the prisoner that I did not for some time get a good look at him. When I did, there was something about his face and figure that was familiar to me. The prosecuting attorney was summing up to the jury.

"We have proved," he said, "that the prisoner was with the murdered man as late as 11 o'clock; how much later we cannot prove, but no one saw him leave. At half past 11 a cry was heard; a maid entered the old man's bedroom and found him dying. There was a convenient door for the murderer's escape without being seen. At half past 12 the prisoner was arrested on the street muttering maledictions against his uncle."

The last words brought back a picture that had appeared to me on that stormy night three months before. I waited till the speaker had finished, then said to the judge:

"Your honor, I am an attorney. I believe I can throw some light on this case and request your permission to examine the prisoner."

After much wrangling permission was granted.

"Have you ever seen me before?" I asked.

"Not that I remember."

"Did I not meet you one night three months ago when you were going for medicine for your mother?"

"I met a man. If I could find him I could prove my innocence."

"What did you do with the coin he gave you?"

"I gave it to my mother. It is now in the hands of my attorney."

"On that coin," I said, turning to the jury, "are my initials and those of my wife. It is a half dollar coined in 1891. I met this young man on the night of Jan. 20 last a few minutes after 11 and remained with him till shortly after 12."

Amid a sensation the coin was produced and found to be as I had stated. The jury found a verdict of not guilty without leaving their seats.

About to be convicted, the killing found himself exonerated and heir to a fortune. I met him and his mother soon after the trial at their home and found her recovered from an illness that lasted till her son's acquittal. They have since been among my best friends.

CHARLES P. THURBER.

APPLICATIONS TOO "PREVIOUS"

Leases Have Some Time to Run, Pratt Says Watt.

Land Commissioner Pratt has decided not to receive the applications for the opening of various tracts of land in Hilo district, which have been pouring into the land office from several new settlement associations by the last two Hilo mails, says the Bulletin.

He takes this action after having conferred about the matter with the Acting Governor, who approves of this course. Pratt will write to the various settlement associations concerned to this effect, and will advise them of his reasons for standing them off.

"I am going to write to the settlement associations which applied for the opening of various tracts of government land in Hilo district, advising them that I will not receive their applications," said Land Commissioner Pratt today while discussing the matter. "Also that I do so with the approval of the Acting Governor. The reason why I will not receive these applications, is in the fact that the leases, under which the lands in question are at present being held, will not expire for periods ranging from fifteen months to four years. These associations evidently filed their applications at this time with the idea, that if they were received, their members would be in on the ground floor, and would have first choice of the land when it was finally opened. Now, it would manifestly be unfair that these people should in that manner be allowed the pick of these lands to the exclusion of all others, even citizens who might be as well qualified to take them up as they are. I am going to explain this in my letters to them, and also the fact that the refusal of their request must not in any way be interpreted as a refusal on my part to open the lands in question, when they revert to the government, upon the termination of the leases under which they are now held."

The settlement associations referred to are as follows: The Kaone Settlement Association, which wants the Kawaiui tract at Onomea, the lease of which expires on July 19, 1908; the Kaapoko Settlement Association, which applies for the 106-acre Kaapoko tract at Papaikou, the lease of which terminates March 16, 1907; the Antone de Souza Settlement Association, which seeks the 210-acre Kaupakua tract at Pepekeo, which is under a lease that has until June 17, 1907, to run; J. M. Kau Settlement Association, which is after the Kaieie tract, between Papaikou and Onomea, which is leased until July 1, 1910, and one more association.

Rubber Has Bright Prospects.

Messrs. R. A. Wadsworth and W. L. Decoto of the Koolau Rubber Company have returned from a personal inspection of the company's plantation at Nahiku and are highly pleased with the outlook of rubber on their plantation and the others in that vicinity. Mr. Wadsworth says the trees that were planted from seed last June are now as high as fifteen feet and are thriving beyond belief. The company has twenty-five acres planted or ten thousand trees all of which are doing well. Practically all of the lands are cleared and ready for planting and as soon as the seed and plants arrive, which will be soon, the work will go rapidly on.

The lands were practically all covered with a heavy growth of trees and brush and it has cost but six dollars per acre to clear the land while the digging of the holes for the planting has cost but one cent per hole. This is due principally to the fact that the soil is loose and free from stones and as it is free from grass it is an easy proposition.

It is confidently expected that the growing of rubber will be one of the most successful industries on the island and will make possible the utilization of many acres of land that are now useless.—Maui News.

All Hawaiians For Kuhio.

Col. Iaukea's advice that Hawaiians stand by Kuhio shows that the color line is being sharply drawn in the Congressional contest. Col. Iaukea is the Democrat who ran for Congress against Kuhio two years ago. Most Hawaiian politicians agree with Colonel Iaukea in this matter and the more potent ones in all three parties are expected to unite and push Kuhio to the front. His friends have no hesitation in saying that, if he is denied the Republican nomination, he will be supported by the great majority of native voters as an independent candidate. Hawaiians have come to regard the post of Delegate as their own race prize and are jealous of any attempt which may be made to get it, even temporarily, for a white man.—Advertiser.

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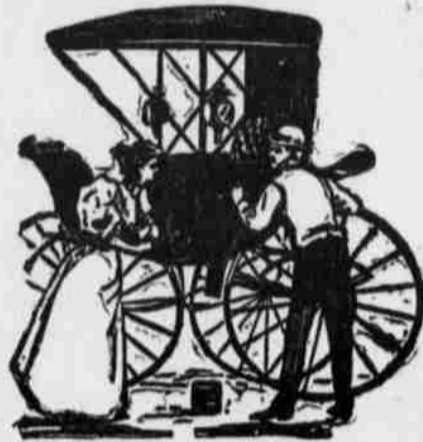
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