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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 of killing his uncle, the accused in a twinkling 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 in-

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ed till her son's acquittal. They have since been among my best friends. CHARLES P. THURBER.

PERSONAL ORNAMENTS MIXED WITH ODD SUPERSTITIONS.

Necklaces That Avert the Evil Eye and Beads That Are Potent Charms For Felicity—Legend of the Kaaba Stone—The Sacred Signet Ring.

The oriental's love of luxury, splendor of attire and personal adornment acts as a strong incentive to the eastern jeweler in the production of those exquisitely carved and multicolored creations over which the modern world raves and marvels. Nor are such decorations mere ornaments without other use or meaning.

The oriental jeweler, seated upon the floor of his little shop, inhaling the fragrant odors of his pipe and coffee, conceives his design and jealously envelops it with mysticism, adding to it the quaint charm of symbol and superstition. The bracelet, the earrings, the necklace, the clasp, the buckle and the button grow step by step into a special ornament according to the rank, means, tastes and wants of the wearer, an evidence of class and dignity.

Bracelets are by orientals worn in pairs. Each hand is provided with one, as otherwise jealousy will spring up between the manual members and evil deeds will follow. Earrings are popular among both sexes in certain parts of the orient. The ears are pierced at birth. The perforations are made unnecessarily large so as not to permit a residue of gossip. Then ornaments are offered the ears as consolation.

Necklaces are worn most conspicuously to avert the evil eye and to denote dignity and distinction. Festoon necklaces seem to have been in vogue from time immemorial, and not infrequently do they adorn the whole chest of the wearer. In India the men often borrow their wives' necklaces to decorate themselves with. Masculine vanity of certain sects of the Persians far exceeds that of women, and, aside from wearing earrings and necklaces, they almost monopolize the tiny seed pearls by stringing them in their beards, each hair being literally covered with a lustrous pearl.

Beads are among the earliest forms of ornaments and are considered potent charms for felicity, as these are often cut and sold by priests or sheiks, who maintain themselves solely by this means. The pear shaped drop so much in vogue in Europe and America is of decidedly oriental origin and has attached to it a quaint myth. The Kaaba stone in Mecca has this peculiar shape, and, according to the theory of the Mohammedans, this stone was the actual guardian angel who was sent to watch over Adam in Eden and was present at his fall. As a punishment for not having more vigilantly executed his trust the angel was changed into a stone and hurled from paradise. Most Mohammedans wear pearl shaped pendants made of wood or some precious stone as a reminder of Allah's wrath, and these are held among them in the same esteem as is the cross among the Christians.

Armlets are regarded as caste marks and are worn only by women. Anklets have a healing power and so are worn not as ornaments only. Little tinkling bells are often attached to these, which lend a pleasing sound to an approaching step and serve to denote the superiority and rank of the wearer and thus in passing render due homage. An Arabian poet describes these as "the awakeners of dormant senses."

Rings are worn in great profusion and are made of all sorts of metals. However, they invariably have exquisitely carved or openwork shanks. Even the stones have their symbols and are worn accordingly. In the orient no prejudice exists against opals.

Signet rings were of great importance among the earlier orientals, and even to the present day letters are rarely otherwise signed by those who send them. Thus the authenticity of all orders and communications, even merchants' bills, depends wholly upon an impression of a signet ring. The occupation of the seal cutter is regarded as one of great trust and danger. Such a person is obliged to keep a register of every ring seal he makes, and if one be lost or stolen from the party for whom it was cut his life would answer for making another just like it. The loss of a signet ring is regarded as a disastrous calamity, and the alarm which an oriental exhibits at the loss of the signet can only be understood by a reference to these circumstances, as the seal cutter is always obliged to alter the real date at which the seal was cut. The only resource of a person who has lost his seal is to have another made with new date and to write to his correspondents to inform them that all accounts, contracts and communications to which his former signet is affixed are null from the day on which it was lost.—Jewelers' Circular-Weekly

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PROPOSALS INVITED.

PROPOSALS FOR BEEF AND MUTTON—Office chief commissary, Vancouver Barracks, Wash., March 15, 1905. Sealed proposals for furnishing and delivering fresh beef and mutton for six months beginning July 1, 1905, will be received here and at offices of commissaries at Fort Stevens, Ore.; Boise Barracks, Idaho; Forts Casey, Columbia, Flagler, Lawton, Walla Walla, Ward, Worden Wright and Vancouver Barracks, Wash., until 10 a. m. April 15, 1905, and then opened. Envelopes containing proposals should be indorsed "Proposals for fresh beef and mutton to be opened April 15, 1905," and addressed to Commissary of Post to be supplied, or to Maj. George B. Davis, Chief Com'y.

SEALED PROPOSALS WILL BE RECEIVED at the office of the Light-House Engineer, Portland, Oregon, until 12 o'clock, M., April 10, 1905, and then opened, for furnishing and delivering fuel and provisions for light-house tender Columbine, during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1906, in accordance with specifications, copies of which, with blank proposals and other information, may be had upon application to Major W. C. Langitt, Corps of Engineers, U. S. A., Engineer.

NOTICE FOR BIDS—BIDS WILL be received for the foundation and basement of the New St. Mary's Hospital; plans and specifications may be seen at the office of the architect at St. Mary's Hospital; all bids to be in on or before the 25th of this month; right reserved to reject any or all bids. March 6, 1905.

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