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A farce comedy recently opened in New York with the title, "The Merchant of Venice." The critics praised it and it was apparently destined for a long run, but despite the fact it was in the smallest theater in town very small audiences came. The manager discovered that people thought it was a burlesque of a Shakespearean play. He changed the name to "Because of Helen!" and the theater was filled every night thereafter.—Atlanta Constitution.

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THE MARK OF CAIN

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Coroner Berg was disheartened. He had a natural dislike for the "person or persons unknown" conclusion, and yet, what other one was possible? Perfunctorily, he called the office boy, who was employed in Mr. Trowbridge's private office.

A few of the audience noted that this was the youth who had remarked "Gee!" with such enthusiasm and gave him a second look for that reason.

"What is your name?"

"Fibsy.—I mean Terence McGuire."

"Why did you say Fibsy?"

"Cause that's what I'm mostly called."

"Why?"

"Cause I'm such a liar."

"This is no time for frivolity, young man; remember you're a witness."

"Sure! I know what that means. I ain't a goin' to lie now, you bet! I know what I'm about."

"Very well, then. What can you tell us of Mr. Trowbridge's movements yesterday?"

"A whole heap. I was on the job all day."

"What did you see or hear?"

"I seen and heard a whole lot. But I guess what'll interest you most is a visitor Mr. Trowbridge had in the mornin'."

"A visitor?"

"Yep. And they come near havin' a fight."

The audience listened breathlessly. The red-headed, freckle-faced youth, not more than 16, held attention as no other witness had.

It was not because of his heroic presence, or his manly bearing. Indeed, he was of the shuffling, toe-stubbing type, and by his own admission, he had gained a nickname by continual and more or less successful lying. But in spite of that, truth now shone from his blue eyes and human nature is quick to recognize the signs of honesty.

"Tell about it in your own way," said the coroner, while the reporter braced up with new hope.

"Well, Mr. Berg, it was this way. Yest-day mornin' a guy blew into the office."

"What time?"

"Bout eleven, I guess. It was 'bout an hour fore eats. Well, he wanted to see Mr. T. and as he was a feller that didn't seem to want to be fooled with, I slips in to Mr. T.'s private office an' I sez, 'Guy outside wants to see you.' 'Where's his card?' says Mr. T. 'No pasteboards,' says I, 'but he says you'll be pleased to meet him.' Well, about now, the guy, he's a big one, walks right over me and gets himself into the inner office. 'Hello, Uncle Rowly,' says he, and stands there smilin'."

"Good gracious, is this you, Kane?" says Mr. Trowbridge, kinder half pleased an' half mad.

"Yep," says the big feller, and sits down as ca'm as you please. "Whatter you want?" says Mr. T. "Briefly?" says the guy, lookin' sharp at him. "Yes," an' Mr. T. jest snapped it out. "Money," says the guy. "I thought so. How much?" an' Mr. T. shut his lips together like he always does when he's mad. "Fifty thousand dollars," says Friend Nephew, without the quiver of an eyelash. "Good-mornin'," says uncle s'renely. But the chap wasn't fazed. "Greeting or farewell?" says he, smilin' like. Then Mr. T. lit into him. "A farewell, sir!" he says, "and the last!"

But Nephew comes up smilin' once again, already, yet! "Oh, say, now, uncle," he begins, and then he lays out before Mr. T. the slickest minin' proposition it was ever my misfortune to listen to, when I didn't have no coin to go into it myself! But spiel as beautiful as he would, he couldn't raise answerin' delight on the face of his benefactor-to-be. He argued an' he urged an' he kerjelled, but not a mite could he move him. At last Mr. Trowbridge, he says, "No, Kane, I've left you that amount in my will, or I'll give it to you if you'll stay in New York city; but I won't give it to you to put in any confounded hole in the ground out west! And no amount of talk changed that idea of Mr. T.'s. Well, was that nephew mad! Well, was he! Not ragin' or blusterin', but just a white and still sort o' mad,

like he'd staked all and lost. He got up, with dignerty and he bowed a little mite sarkasterkul, and he says, "Scuse me fer troublin' you, uncle; but I know of one way to get that money. I'll telephone you when I've raised it." And he walked out, not chop-fallen, but with a stride like Jack the Giant Killer.

Fibsy paused, and there was a long silence. The coroner was trying to digest this new testimony, that might or might not be of extreme importance.

"What was this man's name?"

"Fibsy.—I mean Terence McGuire."

"I don't remember his full name, sir. Seems 'sif the last name began with L,—but I wouldn't say for sure."

"And his first name?"

"Kane, sir. I heard Mr. Trowbridge call him that a heap of times, sir."

"Kane!"

"Yes, sir." And the Fibsy added, in an awed voice, "that's why I said, 'Gee!'"

The coroner looked at the expectant audience. "It seems to me," he began slowly, "that this evidence of the office boy, if credible or not, must at least be looked into. While not wishing to leap to unwarranted conclusions, we must remember that the Swede declared that with his dying breath, Mr. Trowbridge denounced his murderer as Cain! It must be ascertained if, instead of the allusion to the first murderer, which we naturally assumed, he could have meant to designate this nephew, named Kane. Does any one present know the surname of this nephew?"

There was a stir in the back part of the room, and a man rose and came forward. He was tall and strong and walked with that free, swinging step, that suggests to those who know of such things, the memory of alfalfa and cactus. With shoulders squared and head erect, he approached the coroner at his table and said, "I am Kane Landon, a nephew of the late Rowland Trowbridge."

CHAPTER VI.

Out of the West.

A bomb dropped from an airplane could scarcely have caused greater excitement among the audience. Every eye in the room followed the tall young figure, as Kane Landon strode to the table behind which the coroner sat.

That worthy official looked as if he had suddenly been bereft of all intelligence as well as power of speech. In fact, he sat and looked at the man before him, with such an alarmed expression, that one might almost have thought he was the culprit, and the new witness the accusing judge.

But Mr. Berg pulled himself together, and began his perfunctory questions.

"You are Kane Landon?"

"Yes."

"Related to Mr. Trowbridge?"

"I am the nephew of his wife, who died many years ago."

"Where do you live?"

"For the last five years I have lived in Denver, Col."

"And you are east on a visit?"

"I came east, hoping to persuade my uncle to finance a mining project in which I am interested."

"And which he refused to do?"

"Which he refused to do."

There was something about the young man's manner which was distinctly irritating to Coroner Berg. It was as if the stranger was laughing at him, and yet no one could show a more serious face than the witness presented. The onlookers held their breath in suspense. Avie stared at young Landon. She remembered him well. Five years ago they had been great friends, when she was 15 and he 20. Now, he looked much more than five years older. He was bronzed, and his powerful frame had acquired a strong, well-knit effect that told of outdoor life and much exercise. His face was hard and inscrutable of expression. He was not prepossessing, nor of an inviting demeanor, but rather repelling in aspect. His stern, clear-cut mouth showed a proud curve and a scornful grin shone in the steely glint of his deep gray eyes. He stood erect, his hands carelessly clasped behind him, and seemed to await further questioning.

Nor did he wait long. The

coroner's tongue once loosed, his queries came direct and rapid.

"Will you give an account of your movements yesterday, Mr. Landon?"

"Certainly. The narrative of my uncle's office boy is substantially true. I reached New York from the west day before yesterday. I went yesterday morning to see my uncle. I asked him for the money I wanted and he refused it. Then I went away."

"And afterward?"

"Oh, afterward, I looked about the city a bit, and went back to my hotel for luncheon."

"And after luncheon?"

Landon's aplomb seemed suddenly to desert him. "After luncheon," he began, and paused. He shifted his weight to the other foot; he unclasped his hands and put them in his pockets; he frowned as if in a brown study and finally, his eyes fell on Avie and rested there. The girl was gazing at him with an eager, strained face, and it seemed to arrest his attention to the exclusion of all else.

"Well?" said the coroner, impatiently.

Landon's fair hair was thick and rather longer than the conventions decreed. He shook back this mane, with a defiant gesture, and said clearly, "After luncheon, I went to walk in Van Cortlandt park."

The audience gasped at Landon curiously. Hoyt was a clever man and quick reader of character, but this young westerner apparently puzzled him. He seemed to take a liking to him, but reserved decision as to the justification of this attitude.

Avie went white and was afraid she was going to faint. To her, the admission sounded like a confession of the crime, and it was too incredible to be believed.

And yet, as she remembered Kane, it was like him to tell the truth. In their old play days, he had often told the truth, she remembered, even though to his own disadvantage. And she remembered, too, how he had often escaped with a lighter punishment because he had been frank! Was this his idea? Had he really killed his uncle, and fearing discovery, was he trying to forestall the consequences by admission?

"Mr. Landon," went on the coroner, "that is more or less incriminating statement. Are you aware your uncle was murdered in Van Cortlandt park woods yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes," was the reply, but in a voice so low as to be almost inaudible.

"At what time were you there?"

"I don't know, exactly. I returned home before sundown."

"Why did you go there?"

"Because when with my uncle in the morning he happened to remark there were often good golf games played there, and as it was a beautiful afternoon, and I had nothing especial to do, I went out there."

"Why did you not go to call on your cousin, Miss Trowbridge?"

Landon glared at the speaker. "You are outside your privileges in asking that question. I decline to answer. My personal affairs in no way concern you. Kindly get to the point. Am I under suspicion of being my uncle's murderer?"

"Perhaps that is too definite a statement, but it is necessary for us to learn the truth about your implication in the matter."

"Go on, then, with your questions. But for Heaven's sake, keep to the point, and don't bring in personal or family affairs. And incidentally, Miss Trowbridge is not my cousin."

The words were spoken lightly, almost flippantly, and seemed to some listeners as if meant to divert attention from the business in hand.

"But she is the niece of the late Mr. Trowbridge."

"Miss Trowbridge is the daughter, who died years ago. I am the nephew of Mr. Trowbridge's late wife, as I believe I have already stated."

Nobody liked the young man's manner. It was careless, indifferent, and inattentive. He stood easily, and was in no way embarrassed, but his bravado, whether real or assumed, was distasteful to those who were earnestly trying to discover the facts of the crime that had been committed. There were many who at once leaped to the conclusion that the Swede's testimony of the victim's dying words, proved conclusively that the murderer was of a necessity this young man, whose name was Kane, and who so freely admitted his presence near the scene of the tragedy.

"As you suggest, Mr. Landon," said the coroner, coldly, "we will keep to the point. When you were in Van Cortlandt park, yesterday, did you see your uncle, Mr. Trowbridge there?"

"I did not."

The answer was given in a careless, unconcerned way that exasperated the coroner.

"Can you prove that?" he snapped out.

Landon looked at him in mild amazement, almost amusement.

"Certainly not," he replied; "nor do I need to. The burden of proof rests with you. If you suspect me of having killed my uncle, it is for you to produce proof."

Coroner Berg locked chagrined. He had never met just this sort of a witness before, and did not know quite how to treat him.

And yet Landon was respectful, serious and polite. Indeed, one might have found it hard to say what was amiss in his attitude, but none could deny there was something. It was after all, an aloofness, a separativeness, that seemed to disconnect this man with the proceedings now going on; and which was so, only because the man himself willed it.

Coroner Berg restlessly and only half-consciously sensed this state of things, and gropingly strove to fasten on some facts.

Nor were these hard to find. The facts were clear and startling enough, and were to a legal mind conclusive. There was, so far as known, no eye-witness to the murder, but murderers do not usually play to an audience.

"We have learned, Mr. Landon," the coroner said, "that you had an unsatisfactory interview with your uncle; that you did not get from him the money you desired. That, later, he was killed in a locality where you admit you were yourself. That his dying words are reported to be, 'Kane killed me! Wifful murderer.' I ask you what you have to say in refutation of the conclusions we naturally draw from these facts?"

There was a hush over the whole room, as the answer to this arraignment was breathlessly awaited.

At last it came. Landon looked the coroner squarely in the eye, and said: "I have this to say. That my uncle's words,—if, indeed, those were really his words, might as well refer, as you assumed at first, to any one else, as to myself. The name Kane, would, of course, mean in general way, any one of murderous intent. The fact that my own name chances to be Kane is a mere coincidence, and in no sense a proof of my guilt."

The speaker grew more emphatic in voice and gesture as he proceeded, and this did not militate in his favor. Rather, his irritation and vehement manner prejudiced many against him. Had he been cool and collected, his declarations would have met better belief, but his agitated tone sounded like the last effort in a lost cause.

With harrowing pertinacity, the coroner quizzed and pumped the witness as to his every move of the day before. Landon was forced to admit that he had quarreled with his uncle, and left him in a fit of temper, and with a threat to get the money elsewhere.

"And did you get it?" queried the coroner at this point.

"I did not."

"Where did you hope to get it?"

"I refuse to tell you."

"Mr. Landon, your manner is not in your favor. But that is not an essential point. The charges I have enumerated are as yet unanswered; and, moreover, I am informed by one of my assistants that there is further evidence against you. Sandstrom, come forward."

The stolid-looking Swede came. "Look at Mr. Landon," said Berg; "do you think you saw him in Van Cortlandt park yesterday?"

"Ay tank Ay did."

"Near the scene of the murder?"

"Ay tank so."

"You lie!"

The voice that rang out was that of Fibsy, the irrepressible.

And before the coroner could remonstrate, the boy was up beside the Swede, talking to him in an earnest tone. "Clem Sandstrom," he said, "you are saying what you have been told to say! Ain't you?"

"Ay tank so," returned the imperturbable Swede.

(To be continued next week.)

It is reported that various religious organizations throughout the country have united in a campaign to force stricter observance of Sunday through a constitutional amendment.