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THE KISSANE CASE.

A Compromise By the Companies
Carrying Policies On the
Burned Boat.

Detective Burton Not a Volunteer,
But Regularly Employed
By the Defense.

LOCAL RECOLLECTIONS OF THE CRIME.

Col. James B. Meriwether, a prominent lawyer of Jeffersonville, in speaking of the case of Kissane, who, having assumed a fortune under an assumed name in California, is now seeking to procure the dismissal of an indictment for forgery which was found against him in New York many years ago, said to a COURIER-JOURNAL reporter yesterday:

"In the year 1892 or 1893, I was a member of the firm of Bright, Chapman & Meriwether, at Madison, Ind. Kissane, Chapin, Rodgers, Holland, and possibly others, pretended to load the steamer Martha Washington, which they owned, with goods, a portion of them being merchandise from Cincinnati. Rodgers, I think, was captain. The boat purported to be loaded with dry goods, boots and shoes and leather, but was in reality laden with boxes of rubbish of various kinds. A large amount of insurance was obtained from Cincinnati offices and agencies, and from the Madison Insurance Company and the Firemen's and Mechanics' Insurance Company, both of Madison, Ind. The Martha Washington was burned just above Helena, on the Mississippi river, and the boat was burned the insurance was demanded of them, and a man by the name of Earl laid the policy against the Madison Insurance Company, and brought suit in the United States Circuit Court at Indianapolis for the amount of policy. We were employed to defend. The several insurance companies selected Mr. Tappan, of New York, who was President of the Underwriters' Association, to take charge of their interests, and he was given almost

ENTIRE CHARGE OF THE CASE.

"The Madison insurance companies and the Cincinnati agencies employed attorneys, and a man named Burton. In some way became connected with the case as a detective. I have seen it stated that he volunteered his services, but this was a mistake. He lived at Ohio City, near Cleveland. Burton seemed to be a criminal, but he had been convicted. The first tangible clue which was obtained by him was through a young man named Filley, who had been a bookkeeper for Chapin in Cincinnati. He was taken sick afterward and died. Burton always suspected that Filley was poisoned on account of the confidential knowledge which he possessed of the affair. Filley's parents lived in Boston. I am not certain whether he went back to Boston or remained in Cincinnati. At all events he made a dying statement. It was upon his statement that the parties to the crime were arrested. There was a trial at Columbus, Ohio. My recollection now is that they were arrested on a requisition from the Governor of Arkansas and a writ of habeas corpus was taken out before Judge McClain, of the United States Supreme Court. But, anyway, they were discharged. Kissane and his co-defendants had been indicted in Arkansas for murder on account of the persons being burned on the Martha Washington. Holland escaped to Rio Janeiro, Brazil. Kissane was arrested for some offense in New York and was convicted and sentenced to the penitentiary. Burton and myself had been sent to Albany, N. Y., and, while Mr. Tappan, now Gov. Clark,

A PROPOSAL HAD BEEN MADE

by Kissane's friends that he would detail all the circumstances if he could be pardoned. I am not now certain that he was pardoned, but my recollection is that Gov. Clark agreed to pardon him, and that he was pardoned. During the trial at Columbus, I occupied the same room with Burton at the hotel, and two mornings a cocktail was sent to his room, and each time he feared poison and threw it in the fire. Burton told me that he always suspected that Filley was poisoned. On the trial of the suits at Indianapolis against the Madison Insurance Company the deposition of Holland was ordered taken at Rio Janeiro, Brazil, and I went there for that purpose. In this deposition Holland confessed the whole plot, but the deposition never reached Indianapolis. It was lost in transit, whether purposely or not was never known. I had a copy of the deposition, but, of course, that could not be used, notwithstanding it was a certified copy. This failure of course accentuated a continuance of the case, and we agreed to pay 10 per cent, and the suit was dismissed on the payments, which was sufficient to defray their costs and attorneys' fees. Whitney, the Secretary of the Madison Insurance Company, went to Cincinnati to attend a meeting of the parties interested in the policies for the purpose of making a settlement, and among them all they nearly beat him to death. The persons who assaulted him were supposed to be connected with the crime. He came back without being able to accomplish anything. There were connected with the burning of the boat either

TWO BROTHERS NAMED KISSANE

or two brothers named Chapin. I don't remember which. My best recollection is that it was two Chapins, and a man by the name of Hemmington. Another by the name of Cole was very active in the matter. It is such a long time that I can not recollect the Christian names of any of the parties concerned in the crime.

"Burton died at Ohio City, O., and I was sent for to take his deposition; a sort of a dying declaration to perpetuate his testimony. When I got there he was at the point of death, and he was just able to recognize me. He put out his hand and said 'poisoned,' or 'I am poisoned.' Burton always felt that his life was in danger on account of his connection with the case, and on one occasion he had to draw his pistol while getting out of an omnibus in Cincinnati, he being assaulted by the parties. He was engaged on the case as a detective for two or three years."

"Did you ever see Kissane?"
"Yes, I saw Kissane, Chapin, Earl, Cole, Rodgers and Holland. The one which seemed to be the sharpest was a small red-headed man without whiskers at that time. He was a rather large man with brown whiskers and brown hair. Rodgers was a heavy man with brown hair, and Holland was a man of good physique and black hair. I am not certain whether the first man I described was Kissane or Chapin. Filley in his dying declaration told how the boat was loaded. Some boxes of boots were hauled to the boat and then taken back to the store again. These parties kept at one time a very large leather store in Cincinnati."

