

A Strange Story.
Wonderful Chain of Circumstantial Evidence.

A certain Dr.—, many years ago traveling in the West, became acquainted, on board a steamboat, with a Mr. Hamilton, who had been a member of the Legislature from his district, and was again a candidate for that office. After passing their time pleasantly, and becoming well acquainted with each other in the course of the trip, Hamilton, on landing, invited the doctor to pass to his house in the village, which was kept by his sister, and tarry with him while he stayed in that part of the country. The doctor remained with them a short time, and then departed on the land inspecting tour into the interior, which was the object of his visit to the West.

On leaving the village on horseback, Hamilton accompanied the doctor to show him his way, but becoming interested in the conversation of his companion, and not being particularly engaged at home, he continued with him when, among a number of branching roads, they lost their way. After journeying on until dark, in hope of reaching some house where they might obtain the requisite direction, they reached, just at night fall, the banks of a river on which they found the encampment of three stout laboring wayfarers, with their families and wagons. They asked permission to spend the night with the party, and spent a portion of it around the fires, engaged in conversation on their various plans of emigration and settlement.

At daylight preparations were made for separation, and Dr.— received from one of the three men the direction of the desired road. He told him there were two roads, called the “upper” and “lower” roads, but the “lower” one was that which he should take. He took the one advised, and started with Hamilton. They went a short distance together, when Hamilton bade him good-by and left him. But before he departed the doctor told Hamilton that he knew he was in embarrassed circumstances, and wished to aid him if he could. He offered to give him \$500. This Hamilton refused, but finally accepted a loan conditionally, to be refunded punctually at the specified time.

He felt grateful for this kindness and to reciprocate his good will, according to his humble means, took a breast-pin from his shirt, and giving it to the doctor, said, jocularly, that he hoped to see it some day adorning the bosom of some fair daughter of the West. In return for this the doctor took a neat pen-knife from his pocket, on which was a silver plate with his name engraved on it, and on parting gave it to Hamilton. Hamilton had gone but a short distance from where he had left the doctor, when he heard the sharp crack of a rifle and immediately after a deer bounded out before him and fell dead on the road. Hamilton got off his horse to examine the animal, and in doing so got the cuffs of his shirt sleeves and his pantaloons and waist-coat bloody. He again mounted his horse and reached home. As soon as he did so he changed his clothes and gave them to his sister to wash, desiring her to do so at once. That day he went round the village and collected together his various bills, which he paid. At night, after closing his office, he stopped at the village tavern, on his way to see a young lady to whom he was engaged to be married. Several persons came in while he was there, and declared that a murdered man had been found on a certain road. Hamilton immediately exclaimed: “Heavens!—it must be my friend, the doctor!”

From the tavern he continued on his way to the house of his betrothed, and while there her father

came in with three police officers, who arrested him for murder. He was taken to prison, and was told the circumstances which led to suspecting him. He was told that it was known that he had left the town with the doctor, and was the last person seen with him; that he had been in difficulties before his return, but had on that day paid all his debts; that his pistol and breast-pin had been found beside the body of the murdered doctor; that he had pretended to lose his way in a country which was well known to him; and finally that he had come home with blood stains on his clothes, which he had given to his sister with orders to wash immediately. On hearing this story recounted, Hamilton threw up his hands and exclaimed that “he was a lost man.”

He was tried, convicted and sentenced. The day for his execution arrived, but Hamilton was too ill to receive the final action of the law, and was respited. And before his respite had expired Hamilton had died in prison.

All these facts had, of course, satisfied the public mind that the verdict was just, and that Hamilton was the murderer—but about three years afterwards one of the three men with whom our travelers had bivouaced on the bank of the river was tried and convicted, in the far West, of murder. Before his execution he confessed that he was the person who had slain the doctor—that he had misled him as to the road—that he had stolen Hamilton’s pistol from his holster during the night, and left it by the doctor’s body, and that he had heard in the chat round the camp fire that the doctor had money with him, and was engaged in the purchase of land.

The Western Democrat, January 28, 1868