

THE INSURANCE TRIAL

JUDGE GRAHAM PRONOUNCES SENTENCE ON THOSE CONVICTED.

AND THE COURT HAS ADJOURNED

The Judge Declares it the Most Stupendous Crime That Has Ever Been Committed in North Carolina and Regrets That he Cannot Mete Out Heavier Punishment-- Appeals Taken and the Defendants Allowed to Give Bond Until the Matter is Decided.

TRENTON, N. C., Dec. 20. (Special)—The trial of the insurance conspiracy cases here have been brought to a close.

There were three cases before the court the last day—State against C. R. Hassell, Albert Wigfall, Sivas Blount, David Parker and T. B. Delamar, conspiracy; State vs. J. C. Delamar and S. D. Delamar, forgery, and State vs. gery. The last case was continued on Levi T. Noe and David Parker, for account of the necessary absence of Maria Hamilton, the principal witness. This old woman went home Monday. A deputy sheriff was sent for her. He did not bring her back because he found upon reaching Beaufort her feeble old husband had just died. His life had been insured by the parties just convicted.

News comes from Beaufort that Shep Davis, the aged negro—80 odd years—who was insured by the gang as 56 years of age, is dying. These two lives would in all probability have been brought in to some one in Beaufort \$10,000 but for the recent investigations.

The case for conspiracy was taken up first to-day. All the testimony introduced was of the most damaging character to the defendants. Four letters from Hassell were introduced. They show the character of the man in the darkest hues. The defendants offered no testimony. There were no speeches by counsel. By agreement Judge Graham, in his charge to the jury omitted the reading of the testimony as taken down by him. The jury returned in a few minutes—the verdict guilty.

The next case called was State vs. Selden D. Delamar and J. C. Delamar, for forgery. The charge was that of forging the name of Ella G. Rountree to an application for insurance in the Life Insurance Clearing Company, of St. Paul. There were policies on her life to the amount of \$17,000. She was shown to be a consumptive, of which she died within a few months after the policies were issued. The application represented her to be in perfect health. The prosecution, being unable to show in whose handwriting the name was signed, or to show that it was unauthorized, announced that it would not contend for a verdict, and suggested that a verdict of not guilty be entered, which was accordingly done.

Then all the defendants were brought into court. In pronouncing judgment upon the conspirators, Judge Graham said:

"If the evidence in these cases be true, the most stupendous crime ever committed in North Carolina has been unearthed. I suppose there is nobody that had any conception of the degree to which this rascality had gone. I can see how people could be drawn into this nefarious business of procuring or buying these policies upon these dying people and people who were likely to die, but few could be innocent. In order to procure these policies, forgery, false pretences and conspiracy were all committed. There has never been, within my knowledge, in the criminal annals of our whole country, a more gigantic conspiracy than this. Here we have the greatest crimes known except rape, murder, arson and burglary. It seems to have been going on for years, and it has drawn in a great many unsuspecting people, and these, in order to make money, either by the commissions or out of the policies, have committed these crimes. There has been enough forgery proven against Dr. T. B. Delamar to send him to the penitentiary for one hundred and fifty years, if all the cases for forgery were prosecuted against him, and the extreme punishment inflicted on him in each case.

"I regret circumstances are such that these men have not all been convicted of crimes for which I could impose punishment adequate to the offences proven, many cases of forgery and false pretense being proven though not charged. But the crime of conspiracy is a misdemeanor and punishable only by imprisonment in jail and a fine. The crimes of false pretences and forgery are both felonies and can be punished by imprisonment in the penitentiary, and though I regret the same punishment cannot be meted out to all the defendants alike in these cases, still when this conspiracy is proven, when false pretences are proven, when forgery is proven to have been committed, then I must discharge my duty in each one of the cases, under the laws of North Carolina as I find it laid down in our statute books.

"It has been proven that these men, Levi T. Noe, J. C. Delamar and Selden D. Delamar were agents doing this fraudulent business; that Dr. T. B. Delamar was their medical examiner; that David Parker and William Fisher were their henchmen and went out and got the names of those people who were in the last stages of disease, as Parker said, 'would die soon,' in order, as one of the witnesses said, 'they might make a little quick money.'

"In the case of C. R. Hassell, if the evidence is to be believed, he is the arch conspirator of the whole lot. He seems to have been engaged in this business for years, and his success for a time seems to have induced others to go into it. Then Noe took it up and after pursuing it for a year he takes the Delamars in with him. They are all induced by the success with which he has met to engage in this disreputable business.

"Then Bill Fisher comes in and forges the name of Florence Chadwick and others, and David Parker also appears as an agent and one of the conspirators. Their particular conspiracy was to defraud in probably 20 cases by the use of the names of a

large number of people who were in the last stages of disease, many of whom were produced before the jury by the State. So without going into the details I repeat this is the most stupendous crime that has been committed in our State within my knowledge.

"As much as I sympathize with the families of these defendants in the misfortunes that have overtaken them, as much as I regret the disgrace that will have to attach to them the balance of their days, and as hard as it is for me to pronounce sentences in cases of this kind—for this is the hardest part of a Judge's life, I am bound to do my duty. The judgment of the court is that C. R. Hassell be confined in the State penitentiary at hard labor seven years; that Bill Fisher be confined in the penitentiary at hard labor five years; that Selden D. Delamar, T. B. Delamar, J. C. Delamar and Levi T. Noe be confined in the common jail of Craven county for a term of two years, and pay a fine of three hundred dollars each, that being the limit of imprisonment allowed by law."

An appeal having been taken, Hassell will give a justified bond in the sum of \$1,500 for his compliance with the judgment of this court if affirmed by the Supreme Court.

The rest of the defendants will give bond in the sum of \$1,000 each. The learned and upright judge who has presided for nine days at these trials, is commended on all sides for his impartiality and fairness. Even two of the defendants, C. R. Hassell and J. C. Delamar, having been heard to express this sentiment.

At no time during the trials did either of the defendants offer to go upon the witness stand to testify in his own behalf.

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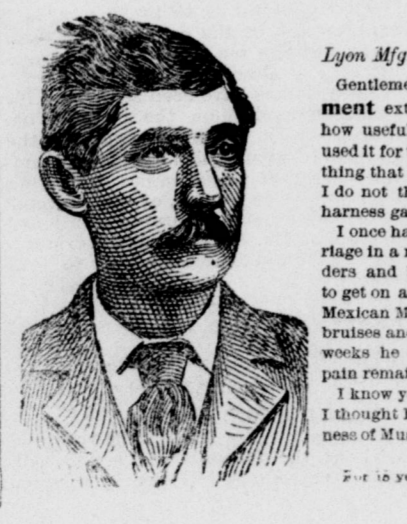
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