

Fellowes was a queer card. He had studied medicine before the law and had been expelled from the medical school for some prank. He had not the best reputation as a lawyer. He was fond of tackling dubious cases; but he won them. Perhaps he was the best lawyer Richard could have had. At any rate, he struck a stroke in court which (I was one of the jurymen) dumbfounded us and everybody. He produced One-Lamp Ike.

One-Lamp Ike was a local character, half-witted, against whom the worst known was robbery, petty thieving which had landed him repeatedly in jail, and had more often still secured him a thrashing and nothing more.

The counsel for the state had produced evidence to show that the finger-print remains through life. Fellowes was cross-examining his last witness.

"You say that only two cases in a hundred million are to be found of similar thumb markings on different men," he said. "Are there a hundred million finger prints in the world?"

"I don't know," responded the witness testily. "I haven't counted them. There are a good many."

"Name the two cases in which the thumb or finger-prints were found to be the same."

"I don't know of any two. I believe there are none."

"Then what is your ground for the statement that two cases occur in a hundred million?"

"I suppose that merely means that it only occurs in an impossibly large number," retorted the witness uneasily.

"You admit, then, that you were speaking loosely?"

"I say that there are no two men in less than a hundred millions with similar finger or thumb-prints."

"I will call the man known as One-Lamp Ike," said Mr. Fellowes.

The court was agog. Fellowes

purpose became evident and there was a breathless silence as he produced a sheet of paper, a pad coated with lamp-black, or some similar substance, and a magnifying glass.

"One-Lamp Ike," said Mr. Fellowes, "you have never had your finger-prints taken before?"

"No, your honor," answered the imbecile, grinning.

"You didn't happen to murder Mr. Halstein, I suppose?" Fellowes continued.

One-Lamp scratched his head. "I don't remember of it, sir," he said. "I was drunk at the time."

"Your memory is not very good, I think?"

"No, your honor."

It was all the typical conjuror's patter. Nobody took much notice of it. We were leaning forward in the jurybox, while Mr. Fellowes, having completed his preparations, took One-Lamp's thumb, stuck it to the pad and pressed it down hard on the paper.

"Now," he said to the court, "I claim to show that the last witness was mistaken, or else that here we have the two men in a hundred millions with similar thumb-prints. I submit this evidence to the court. And he handed it up, together with the reproduction of Richard's thumb-print and the magnifying glass.

The court looked at it for fully five minutes, turning the glass this way and that. Then he had it submitted to the jurors. We scanned it. There was no possibility of mistaking that the two prints were identical.

"I propose, your honor," said Fellowes, "that the thumb-print of the prisoner be taken again and superimposed photographically upon this."

The court adjourned in the greatest excitement. Next day, when it reconvened, the two prints were found to coincide exactly. They had been magnified a dozen times; the great web of tracings upon the paper, looking like a maze, was perfectly distinct. There was the one and