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One Kind of Coroner

Monday's testimony in the Powell murder case disclosed a state of affairs which would hardly be too severely condemned by even so strong a word as "uncommon," and which seems amply to justify the prosecution in obtaining a change of venue. Redwood City, the town from which Mr. Powell thought it expedient to remove Editor Ralph Smith, has the distinction and advantage of numbering among its "prominent citizens" two brothers named Ross, one of whom is an ornament to the legal profession; the other adorns the medical. At the time when Mr. Powell sated his desire for the absence of Editor Smith by shooting him down in cold blood when he was unarmed, the medical Ross held the office of coroner and naturally conducted an inquest with a view to ascertaining if anyone was in fault. The *post mortem* examination showing that only two of Mr. Powell's bullets had penetrated the body, and that only one of these had done any damage, the other having been fired when the man was already down, and would have died pretty soon anyhow—seems to have convinced Dr. Ross, the coroner, that Mr. Powell's connection with the matter was too slight really to implicate him in a murder; for he straightway went upon his bail bond. This, we believe, is not customary; it does not appear to be required of coroners by the laws defining their official duties.

Possibly Dr. Ross may have been able more clearly to discern his duty to go upon Mr. Powell's bail bond by the broad beam of revelation thrown upon that gentleman's innocence by Lawyer Ross' retention for the defense. The Ross blood is apparently a good deal thicker than water—thicker even than the blood of poor Ralph Smith, upon the hands of Mr. Powell. We cannot, of course, say with certainty whether Ross was influenced by fraternal considerations in standing by his brother's client; his belief in Mr. Powell's blameless intentions in shooting down an unarmed and comparatively weak man and shooting him after he was down—together with a private method of interpreting the laws prescribing a coroner's official duties—may sufficiently account for his act. To accuse such a man of fraternal feeling, or feeling of any kind, is going pretty far.