



In October.

"The crisp, pure air, the clear and mellow light;
The deep, cool, shady nooks behind the woods;
The showy fringe upon the hem o' the year
Of purple asters and the goldenrods;
The spicy smell of apples and wild grapes
Along the country road: the film of sound
Rising from myriad insects in the fields;
The distant chorus of tumultuous crows;
The lowlands white with frost at early morn
Among the yellow, brown and crimson hills."

—Selected.

THE LEAVENWORTH CASE

By A. K. Green.

CHAPTER III.—Continued.

The little juryman proposed that an instant search should be made for it, but the coroner decided that the inquest should proceed in the usual manner, till the verbal testimony was all in.

"Then allow me to ask a question," said the irrepressible. "Mr. Harwell, we are told that upon the breaking of the library door this morning, Mr. Leavenworth's two nieces followed you into the room."

"One of them, sir, Miss Eleanore."

"Is Miss Eleanore the one who is said to be Mr. Leavenworth's sole heiress?" the coroner here interposed.

"No, sir, that is Miss Mary."

"That she gave orders," pursued the juryman, "for the removal of the body into the further room?"

"Yes, sir."

"And that you obeyed her by helping to carry it in?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, in thus passing through the rooms did you observe anything to lead you to form a suspicion of the murderer?"

The secretary shook his head. "I have no suspicion," he said emphatically. "Somehow I did not believe him. Whether it was the tone of his voice, the clutch of his hand on his sleeve—and the hand will often reveal more than the countenance—I felt that this man was not to be relied upon in making this assertion."

"I would like to ask Mr. Harwell a question," said a juryman who had not yet spoken. "We have had a detailed account of what looks like a discovery of a murdered man. Now, murder is never committed without some motive. Does the secretary know whether Mr. Leavenworth had any secret enemy?"

"I do not."

"Every one in the house seemed to be on good terms with him?"

"Yes, sir," with a quaver of dissent in the assertion, however.

"Not a shadow lay between him and any other member of his household as far as you know?"

"I am not ready to say that," he returned, quite distressed. "A shadow is a very slight thing. There might have been a shadow—"

"Between him and whom?"

A long hesitation. "One of his nieces, sir."

"Which?"

"Again that defiant lift of the head, 'Miss Eleanore!'"

"How long has this shadow been observable?"

"I cannot say."

"You do not know the cause?"

"I do not."

"Nor the extent of the feeling?"

"No, sir."

"You open Mr. Leavenworth's letters?"

"I do."

"Has there been anything in those lately received by him that recurring to your memory now, might seem to throw any light upon this deed?"

It seemed as if he never would answer. Was he simply pondering over his reply, or was the man turned to stone?

"Mr. Harwell, do you hear the juryman?" enquired the coroner.

"Yes, sir. I was thinking."

"Very well, now answer."

"Sir," he replied, turning and looking the juryman full in the face and in that way revealing his unguarded left hand to my gaze, "I have opened Mr. Leavenworth's letters as usual for the last two weeks, and I think of nothing in them bearing the least on the tragedy."

The man lied; I knew it instantly. The clenched hand pausing irresolute, then making up its mind to go through with the lie firmly, was enough for me.

"Mr. Harwell, this is undoubtedly true according to your judgment," said the coroner, "but Mr. Leavenworth's correspondence will have to be searched for all that."

"Of course," he replied carelessly, "that is only right."

This remark ended Mr. Harwell's examination for the time. As he sat down I made note of four things.

That Mr. Harwell, himself, for some reason not given, was conscious of a suspicion which he was anxious to suppress even from his own mind.

That a woman was in some way connected with it, a rustle as well as a footstep having been heard by him on the stairs.

That a letter had arrived at that house and not long since, which, if found, would be likely to throw some light upon this subject.

That Eleanore Leavenworth's name came with difficulty from his lips; this evidently unimpressible man manifesting more or less emotion whenever he was called upon to utter it.

CHAPTER IV. A Clew.

The cook being now called, that individual stepped forward with alacrity, displaying upon her good-humored countenance such an expression of mingled eagerness and anxiety that more than one person found it difficult to restrain a smile.

"Your name?" said the coroner.

"Katherine Malone, sir."

"Well, Katherine, how long have you been in Mr. Leavenworth's service?"

"Shure, it is a good twelve-month now, sir, since I came, on Mrs. Wilson's recommendation, to that very front door, and—"

"Well, well: no matter about that. You have been in Mr. Leavenworth's family a year?"

"Yes, sir."

"And liked it? Found him a good master?"

"Och, sir, niver have I found a better. He was that free and generous, sir, that many's the time I have said to Hannah—"

She stopped with a comical gasp of terror, looking at her fellow-servants like one who had incautiously made a slip. The coroner, observing this, enquired hastily,

"Hannah? Who is Hannah?"

"She? Oh, only the ladies' maid, sir."

"But I don't see anyone here answering to that description. You didn't speak of anyone by the name of Hannah, as belonging to the house," said he, turning to Thomas.

"No, sir," the latter replied. "You asked me who were in the house at the time the murder was discovered, and I told you."

"Oh," said the coroner, satirically, "used to police courts, I see." Then turning back to the cook, "and where is this Hannah?"

"Shure, sir, she's gone."

"How long since?"

The cook caught her breath hysterically. "Since last night."

"What time last night?"

"Troth, sir, and I don't know. I don't know anything about it."

"Was she dismissed?"

"Not as I knows on; here clothes is here."

"Oh, her clothes are here. At what hour did you miss her?"

"I didn't miss her. She was here last night, and she isn't here this morning, and so I says she's gone."

"Humph!" said the coroner, casting a slow glance down the room, while every one looked about him as if he had suddenly stumbled upon a door in a closed wall.

"Where did this girl sleep?"

"Shure, we all sleeps at the top of the house, sir."

"In one room?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did she come up to the room last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"At what hour?"

"It was ten. I heard the clock a-striking."

"Did you observe anything unusual in her appearance?"

"She had a toothache, sir."

"Oh, a toothache! What then? Tell me all she did."

But at this the cook broke into tears and wails.

"Shure, she didn't do nothing, sir. It wasn't her, sir, as did anything, don't you believe it. Hannah is a good girl, and honest, sir, as ever you see. She only went down to Miss Eleanore for some toothache drops—"

"There, there," interrupted the coroner, "I am not accusing Hannah of anything. I only asked you what she did after you reached your room. She went downstairs, you say. How long after you went up?"

"Troth, sir, I couldn't tell."

"You didn't see her go down?"

"No, sir."

"Nor see her come back?"

"No, sir."

"Nor see her this morning?"

"No, sir; how could I when she's gone?"

"But you did see last night that she seemed to be suffering with toothache?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well; now tell me how and when you first became acquainted with the fact of Mr. Leavenworth's death."

But her replies to this question contained but little information, and the coroner was on the point of dismissing her, when the little juror, remembering and admission she had made, of having seen Miss Eleanore Leavenworth coming out of the library door a few minutes after Mr. Leavenworth's body had been carried into the next room, asked if her mistress had anything in her hand at the time.

"I don't know, sir. Faith—" she suddenly exclaimed, "I believe she did have a piece of paper. I recollect, now, seeing her put it in her pocket."

The next witness was Molly, the upstairs girl.

As her testimony related mostly to Hannah, and what she knew of her and her remarkable disappearance, I shall confine myself to a mere synopsis of it.

As far as she, Molly, knew, Hannah was an uneducated girl of Irish extraction, who had come from the country to act as ladies' maid to the two Misses Leavenworth. She had been in the family for some time, before Molly herself; and though by nature remarkably reticent, refusing to tell anything about herself or her past life, she had managed to become a great favorite with all in the house. But she was of a melancholy nature and fond of brooding, often getting up at nights to sit and think in the dark; "as though she was a lady!" exclaimed Molly.

This habit being a singular one for a girl in her station, an attempt was made to win from the witness further particulars in regard to it. But Molly confined herself to the one statement. She used to get up nights and sit at the window, and that was all she knew about it.

Drawn away from this topic, she went on to state in connection with the events of the past night, that Hannah had been ill for two days or more with a swelled face; that last night it had given her so much trouble she got out of bed, and, dressing herself—Molly was closely questioned here, but insisted upon the fact that Hannah had fully dressed herself, even to arranging her collar and ribbon—lighted a candle, and made known her intention of going down to Miss Eleanore for aid.

"Why Miss Eleanore?"

"Oh, she was the one who always gave out medicines and such like to the servants."

Urged to proceed, she went on to state that that was all she knew about it. Hannah did not come back, nor was she to be found in the house at breakfast time.

"You say she took a candle? with her," said the coroner. "Was it in a candlestick?"

"No, sir; loose like."

"Why did she take a candle? Does not Mr. Leavenworth burn gas in his halls?"

"Yes, sir; but we put the gas out as we came up, and Hannah is afraid of the dark."

"If she took a candle it must be lying somewhere about the house. Now has anybody seen a stray candle?"

"Not as I knows on, sir."

"Is this it?" exclaimed a voice over my shoulder.

It was Mr. Gryce, and he was holding up into view a half-burned paraffin candle.

"Yes, sir; lor, where did you find it?"

"In the grass of the carriage yard, half way from the kitchen door to the street," he returned quietly.

Instantly the back door assumed the chief position of interest. The candle found lying in the yard seemed to prove not only that Hannah had left the house shortly after descending from her room, but had left it by the back door, which we now remember was only a few steps from the iron gate opening into the side street. But Thomas, being recalled, repeated his assertion that not only the back door, but all the lower windows of the house, had been found by him securely locked and bolted at six o'clock that morning. Inevitable conclusion—someone had locked and bolted them after the girl. Who?

(To be continued.)