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No. 1 and 2 sold in Chatham at the Central Drug Store, C. H. Gunn & Co.

The Mystery of Agatha Webb.

By Anna Katharine Green.

Author of "The Leavenworth Case," "Lost Man's Lane," "Hand and Ring," Etc., Etc.

Copyright, 1900, by Anna Katharine Green.

"I have, sir. It's been in and out of the till 20 times today. I haven't known what to do with it. I don't like to think wrong of anybody, but when I heard that Mrs. Webb, God bless her, was murdered last night for money I couldn't rest for the weight of this thing on my conscience. Here's the bill, sir. I wish I had let the old man rap on my door until morning before I had taken it from him."

They did not share this feeling. A distinct and valuable clue seemed to be afforded them by the fresh, crisp bill they saw in his hand. Silently Dr. Talbot took it, while Mr. Fenton, with a shrewd look, asked:

"What reasons have you for calling this mysterious customer old? I thought it was so dark you could not see him."

The man, who looked relieved since he had rid himself of the bill, eyed the constable in some perplexity. "I didn't see a feature of his face," said he, "and yet I'm sure he was old. I never thought of him as being anything else."

"Well, we will see. And is that all you have to tell us?"

His nod was expressive, and they left him.

An hour or so later Detective Knapp made his reappearance.

"Well," asked the coroner as he came quietly in and closed the door behind him, "what's your opinion?"

"Simple case, sir. Murdered for money. Find the man with a flowing beard."

CHAPTER XI.
THE ZABEL MOTHERS.

There were but few men in town who wore long beards. A list was made of these and handed to the coroner, who regarded it with a grim smile.

"Not a man whose name is here would be guilty of a misdemeanor, let alone a crime. You must look outside of our village population for the murderer of Agatha Webb."

"Very likely, but tell me something first about these persons," urged Knapp. "Who is Edward Hope?"

"A watch repairer. A man of estimable character."

"And Sylvester Chubb?"

"A farmer who, to support his mother, wife and seven children, works from morning until sundown on his farm and from sundown until 11 o'clock at night on little fancy articles he cuts out from wood and sells in Boston."

"John Barker, Thomas Elder, Timothy Sinn?"

"All good men. I can vouch for every one."

"And John Zabel, James Zabel?"

"Ah! You might as well ask about ourselves. Irreproachable, both of them. Quite famous shipbuilders once, but the change to iron shipbuilding has quite thrown them out of that. Pitt, too, for they were remarkable builders. By the by, Fenton, we don't see them at church or in the docks any more."

"No. They keep very much to themselves. Getting old, like ourselves, Talbot."

"I've boys once. We must hunt them up, Fenton. Can't bear to see old friends drop out of good company. But this isn't business. You need not pause over their names, Knapp."

But Knapp had slipped out. We will follow him.

Walking briskly down the street he went up the steps of a certain house and rang the bell. A gentleman with a face not entirely unknown to us came to the door.

The detective did not pause for preliminaries.

"Are you Mr. Crane," he asked, "the gentleman who ran against a man coming out of Mrs. Webb's house last night?"

"I am Mr. Crane," was the slightly surprised rejoinder. "And I was run against by a man there, yes."

"Very well," remarked the detective quietly. "My name is Knapp. I have been sent from Boston to look into this matter, and I have an idea that you can help me more than any other man here in Sutherlandtown. Who was this person who came in contact with you so violently? You know, even if you have been careful not to mention any names."

"You are mistaken. I don't know. I can't know. He wore a sweeping beard and walked and acted like a man no longer young, but beyond that—"

"Mr. Crane, excuse me, but I know men. If you had no suspicion as to who that person was, you would not look so embarrassed. You suspect or at least

associate in your own mind a name with the man you met. Was it either of these you see written here?"

Mr. Crane glanced at the card on which the other had scribbled a couple of names and started perceptibly.

"You have me," said he. "You must be a man of remarkable perspicacity." The detective smiled and pocketed his card. The names he thus concealed were John Zabel, James Zabel.

"You have not said which of the two it was," Knapp quickly suggested.

"No," returned the minister, "and I have not even thought. Indeed I am not sure that I have not made a dreadful mistake in thinking it was either. A glimpse such as I had is far from satisfactory, and they both are such excellent men—"

"Right! You did make a mistake of course. I have not the least doubt of it. So don't think of the matter again."



Knapp was not to be awed by her small, keen eye or strident voice. I will find out who the real man was, rest easy."

And with the lightest of bows Knapp drew off and passed as quickly as he could, without attracting attention, around the corner to the confectioner's.

Here his attack was wariest. Sally Loton was behind the counter with her husband, and they had evidently been talking the matter over very confidentially. But Knapp was not to be awed by her small, keen eye or strident voice.

He presently succeeded in surprising a knowing look on the lady's face, which convinced him that in the confidences between husband and wife a name had been used which she was less unwilling to impart than he appeared to be. He consequently turned his full attention toward her, using in his attack that older and most subtle weapon against the sex—flattery.

"My dear madam," said he, "I see what a good heart you have. Your husband has told you who he thought, this man was, but, fearing that he may be mistaken, you do not like to repeat the name. A neighborly spirit, may I say, which bounds to your goodness. If you simply told us whom this man resembled, we would be able to get some idea of his appearance."

"He didn't resemble any one I know," growled Loton. "It was too dark for me to see how he looked."

"His voice, then? People are traced by their voices."

"I didn't recognize his voice."

Knapp smiled, his eye still on the woman.

"Yet you have thought of some one he reminded you of?"

The man was silent, but the wife

had changed in his contemplation of her. He smiled as he saw this and in a half careless, half wistful tone said quietly:

"Agnes, what would you think of a man who, after having committed little else but folly all his life, suddenly made up his mind to turn absolutely toward the right and to pursue it in face of every obstacle and every discouragement?"

"I should think," she slowly replied, with one quick lift of her eyes toward his face, "that he had entered upon the noblest effort of which man is capable and—the hardest. I should have great sympathy for that man, Frederick."

"Would you?" he said, recalling Amabel's face with bitter aversion as he gazed into the womanly countenance he had hitherto slighted as uninteresting. "It is the best kind word you have ever given me, Agnes. Possibly it is the first I have ever deserved."

And without another word he doffed his hat, saluted her and vanished down the hillside.

She remained, remained so long that it was nearly 9 o'clock when she entered the family parlor. As she came in her mother looked up and was startled at her unaccustomed pallor.

"Why, Agnes," cried her mother, "what is the matter?"

Her answer was inaudible. What was the matter? She dreaded, even feared, to ask herself.

So be Continued.

He who, when goodness is impressively put before him, exhibits an instinctive loyalty to it, starts forward to take its side, trusts himself to it—such a man has faith, and the root of the matter is in such a man.—Sir J. Seeley.

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