



HOME MAGAZINE



Love wore a threadbare dress of grey,
And toiled upon the road all day.
Love wielded pick and carried pack,
And bent to heavy loads the back.
Though meagre fed and sorely tasked,
One only wage Love ever asked—
A child's white face to kiss at night,
A woman's smile by candle-light.

—Margaret Sangster.

THE LEAVENWORTH CASE

By A. K. Green.

CHAPTER V.

Expert Testimony.

In the midst of the universal gloom that had now fallen upon all present, there came a sharp ring at the bell. Instantly all eyes turned toward the parlor door, and the officer who had been sent off so mysteriously by the coroner an hour before, entered with a young man at his side, whose sleek appearance, intelligent eye, and general air of trustworthiness, seemed to proclaim him to be, what in fact he was, the confidential clerk of a responsible mercantile house.

Advancing without apparent embarrassment, he made a slight bow to the coroner.

"You have sent for a man from Bohn & Co.," he said.

Bohn & Co. was the well-known pistol and ammunition store of—Broadway.

"Yes, sir," returned the coroner. "We have here a bullet which we would be glad to have you examine. Can you tell us from what make of pistol that was delivered?"

The young man rolled it slowly round between his thumb and forefinger, and then laid it down. "It is a No. 32 ball, usually sold with the small pistol made by Smith & Wesson."

"A small pistol!" exclaimed the butler, jumping up from his seat. "Master used to keep a little pistol in his stand drawer. I have often seen it. We all knew about it."

"That's so," I heard a heavy voice exclaim; "I saw it once myself—master was cleaning it." It was the cook who spoke.

"In his stand drawer?" the coroner inquired.

"Yes, sir; at the head of his bed."

An officer was sent to examine the stand drawer. In a few moments he returned, bringing a small pistol which he laid down on the coroner's table.

Immediately everyone sprang to his feet, but the coroner handing it over to the clerk from Bohn's, enquired if that was of the make before mentioned. Without hesitation he replied: "Yes, Smith & Wesson; you can see for yourself."

"Where did you find this pistol?" asked the coroner of the officer.

"In the top drawer of a shaving-table that stands at the head of Mr. Leavenworth's bed. It was lying in a velvet case together with a box of cartridges, one of which I bring as a sample."

"Was the drawer locked?"

"Yes, sir; but the key was not taken out."

The clerk from Bohn's, taking out the cylinder, held it up. "There are seven chambers here, and they are all loaded."

"But," he quietly said after a momentary examination of the face of the cylinder, "they have not all been loaded long. A bullet has been recently shot from one of these chambers."

"How do you know?" cried one of the jury.

"How do I know? Sir," said he turning to the corner, "will you be kind

enough to examine the condition of this pistol? Look first at the barrel; it is clean and bright, and shows no evidence of a bullet having passed out of it very lately; that is because it has been cleaned. But now observe the face of the cylinder, what do you see there?"

"I see a faint line of smut near one of the chambers."

"Just so; show it to the gentlemen."

It was immediately handed down.

"That faint line of smut on the edge of one of the chambers is the tell-tale, sirs. A bullet passing out always leaves smut behind. The man who fired this, remembering this fact, cleaned the barrel, but forgot the cylinder." And stepping aside, he folded his arms.

"Jerusalem!" spoke out a rough hearty voice, "isn't that wonderful!" It was a countryman who had stepped in from the street, and now stood all agape in the doorway.

Order being at last restored, the officer was requested to describe the position of the stand, and its distance from the library table.

"The library table is in one room and the stand in another. To reach the former from the latter, one would be obliged to cross Mr. Leavenworth's bedroom in a diagonal direction, pass through the passageway separating that one apartment from the other, and—"

"Wait a moment; how does this table stand in regard to the door which leads from the bedroom into the hall?"

"One might enter that door, pass directly round the foot of the bed to the stand, procure the pistol, and cross half way over to the passageway, without being seen by anyone sitting or standing in the library beyond."

The clerk from Bohn's being dismissed, the name of Mr. Harwell was again called. That person rose with manifest reluctance. Evidently the preceding testimony had either upset some theory of his, or indubitably strengthened some unwelcome suspicion.

"Mr. Harwell," the coroner began, "we are told of the existence of a pistol belonging to Mr. Leavenworth, and upon searching, we discovered it in his room. Did you know of his possessing such an instrument?"

"I did."

"Was it a fact generally known in the house?"

"So it would seem."

"How was that? Was he in the habit of leaving it around where anyone could see it?"

"I cannot say; I can only acquaint you with the manner in which I, myself, became cognizant of its existence."

"Very well, do so."

"We were once talking about firearms. I have some taste that way. Saying something of the kind to him one day, he rose from his seat and bringing this from its place in his stand drawer, showed it to me."

"How long ago was this?"

"Some few months since."

"He has owned this pistol, then, for some time?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is that the only occasion upon which you have ever seen it?"

"No, sir"—the secretary blushed—"I have seen it once since."

"When?"

"About three weeks ago."

"Under what circumstances?"

The secretary drooped his head, a certain drawn look making itself suddenly visible on his countenance. He even unfolded his arms and pressed his hands together, looking all the while into the coroner's face from under his half-closed

lids with an expression that was almost like an appeal.

"Gentlemen," he asked, after a moment's hesitation, "will you not excuse me?"

"It is impossible," returned the coroner.

"I am obliged to introduce the name of a lady," said he hesitatingly.

"We are very sorry," remarked the coroner.

The young man turned fiercely upon him, and I could not help wondering that I had ever thought him commonplace. "Of Miss Eleanore Leavenworth," he exclaimed.

At that name, so uttered, every one started but Mr. Gryce; he was engaged in holding a close and confidential confab with his finger-tips, and did not appear to notice.

"Surely it is contrary to the rules of the decorum and the respect we all feel for the lady herself to introduce her name into this discussion," Mr. Harwell went on hurriedly. But the coroner still insisting upon an answer, he began in a low, forced tone to say:

"One afternoon about three weeks since, I had occasion to go to the library at an unusual hour. Crossing over to the mantelpiece for the purpose of procuring a penknife, which I had carelessly left there in the morning, I heard a noise in the adjoining room. Knowing that Mr. Leavenworth was out, and supposing that the ladies had gone with him, I took the liberty of looking to see who was there; when what was my astonishment to behold Miss Eleanore Leavenworth standing at the side of her uncle's bed, with this pistol in her hand. Confused at my indiscretion, I attempted to escape without being observed, but in vain, for just as I set foot on the threshold of the door, she turned round, and detecting me, called me by name, and asked me if I would not explain the pistol to her. Gentlemen, in order to do so, I was obliged to take it in my hand; and that, sirs, is the only other occasion upon which I ever saw or handled the pistol of Mr. Leavenworth."

"She asked you to explain the pistol to her; what do you mean by that?"

"I mean," continued he faintly, catching his breath in a vain effort to appear calm, "how to load, aim, and fire it."

A flash like the glare of sudden lightning shot across the faces of all present. Even the coroner showed sudden signs of emotion, and sat staring at the bowed form and pale countenance of the man before him with a peculiar look of surprised compassion that could not fail of producing its effect, not only upon the young man himself, but upon all who saw him.

"Mr. Harwell," he inquired at length, "have you anything to add to the statement you have just made?"

The secretary sadly shook his head.

"Mr. Gryce," I whispered, "assure me, I entreat you—" but he would not let me finish.

"The coroner is about to ask for the young ladies," he quickly interposed. "If you desire to fulfil your duty toward them, be ready, that's all."

I slowly rose, and upon demand being made for Miss Mary and Miss Eleanore Leavenworth, advanced and said that, as a friend of the family—a pretty lie, which I hope will not be laid up against me—I begged the privilege of going for the ladies and escorting them down.

The permission sought being almost immediately accorded, I found myself, almost before I knew it, in the hall; my face aflame, my heart beating with excitement, and these words of Mr. Gryce's

ringing in my ears: "Third floor, rear room, first door at the head of the stairs. You will find the young ladies expecting you."

CHAPTER VI.

Side-lights.

Pausing only long enough on the threshold to compose myself for the interview, I lifted my hand to knock, when a rich, clear voice rose from within, and I heard distinctly uttered these ominous words: "I do not accuse your hand, though I know of none other which would or could have done this; but your heart, your head, your will, those I do and must accuse in my secret mind at least, and it is well that you should know it."

Shuddering and sick, I cowered there, my hands over my ears, when suddenly I felt a touch on my arm, and turning, saw Mr. Gryce standing there beside me with his finger on his lip, and the last flickering shadow of a flying emotion fading from his steady, almost compassionate countenance.

"Come, come," whispered he; "rouse yourself; remember they are waiting down below."

"But who is it? Who was it that spoke?"

"That we shall soon see." And without waiting to meet, much less answer, my appealing look, he struck his hand against the door, and flung it wide open.

Seated in an easy-chair of embroidered satin, but rousing from her half-recumbent position, like one who was in the act of launching a powerful invective, I beheld a glorious woman. Fair, pale, proud, delicate; looking like a lily in the thick, creamy-tinted wrapper that alternately clung to and swayed from her richly-moulded figure; with her Grecian front, crowned with the palest of pale tresses, one quivering hand clasping the arm of her chair, the other outstretched and pointing toward some distant object in the room, her whole appearance was so splendid, so startling, so extraordinary, that I held my breath in surprise, actually for the moment doubting if it were a living woman I beheld, or some famous pythoness conjured up from ancient story, to express in one tremendous gesture the supreme indignation of outraged womanhood.

"Miss Mary Leavenworth," I whispered that ever-present voice over my shoulder.

Ah! Mary Leavenworth! and I felt a sudden thrill of relief. This beautiful creature, then, was not the Eleanore who could load, aim, and fire a pistol. Turning my head, I followed the guiding of that uplifted hand, now frozen into its place by a new emotion, the emotion of a direful and pregnant revelation, and saw—but here description fails me; Eleanore Leavenworth must be painted by other hands than mine. I could sit half the day and dilate upon the subtle grace, the pale magnificence, the perfection of form and feature, which make Mary Leavenworth the wonder of all who behold her; but Eleanore—I could as soon paint the beatings of my own heart. Beguiling, terrible, grand, pathetic, that face of faces flashed upon my gaze, and instantly the moonlight loveliness of her cousin faded from my memory, and I saw only Eleanore—only Eleanore from that moment on for ever.

(To be continued.)

A young lady, visiting for the first time in the country, was alarmed at the approach of a cow. She was too frightened to run, and, shaking her parasol at the animal, she said, in a very stern tone:

"Lie down, sir! lie down!"