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THE LEAVENWORTH CASE.

By A. K. Green.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—Continued.

"Smith, my boy, both of these hypotheses have been established by me. I have finally come to the conclusion that not Eleanore Leavenworth but another woman, beautiful as she, is the true criminal. In short, that her cousin, the exquisite Mary, is the murderer of Mr. Leavenworth, and, by inference, of Hannah Chester also."

He brought this out with such force and with such a look of triumph and appearance of having led up to it, that I was for the moment dumbfounded, and started as if I had not known what he was going to say. Something like a suppressed cry was in the air about me. All the room appeared to breathe horror and dismay. Yet when I turned round to look, I found nothing but the blank eyes of those dull ventilators staring upon me.

"You are taken aback!" Mr. Gryce went on. "I don't wonder. Every one else is engaged in watching the movements of Eleanore Leavenworth; I, only, know where to put my hand upon the real culprit. You shake your head!" (Another fiction.) "You don't believe me! Think I am deceived. Ha, ha! Ebenezer Gryce deceived after a month hard work! You are as bad as Miss Leavenworth herself, who has so little faith in my sagacity, that she offered me, of all men, an enormous reward if I would find her out the assassin of her uncle! But you have your doubts, and you are waiting for me to solve them. Well, nothing is easier; know first, that on the morning of the inquest I made one or two discoveries, viz., that the handkerchief picked up in Mr. Leavenworth's library had a decided perfume lingering about it. Going to the dressing-table of the two ladies, I sought for that perfume and found it in Mary's room, not Eleanore's. This led me to examine the pockets of the dresses worn by them the evening before. In that of Eleanore I found a handkerchief, presumably the one she had carried at that time. But in Mary's there was none, nor did I see any lying about the room. The conclusion I drew from this was, that she had carried the handkerchief into her uncle's room, a conclusion emphasized by the fact privately communicated to me by one of the servants, that Mary was in Eleanore's room when the basket of clean clothes was brought up, with this handkerchief lying on top."

"But knowing how liable we are to mistake in such matters as these, I made another search in the library and came across a very curious thing. Lying on the table was a penknife, and scattered on the floor beneath were two or three minute portions of wood, freshly chipped off from the leg of the table; all of which looked as if some one of a nervous disposition had been sitting there, whose hand had caught up the knife and unconsciously whittled the table. A little thing, you say, but when the question is which of two ladies, one of a calm and self-possessed nature, the other restless and excitable in her disposition, was in a certain spot at a certain time, it is these little things that become almost deadly in their significance."

"But we are not done. I distinctly overheard Eleanore accuse her cousin of this deed. Now such a woman as Eleanore Leavenworth has proved herself to be, never would accuse a relative of crime without the strongest and most substantial reasons. As to the character of her cousin, she has had ample proof of her ambition, love of money, caprice, and deceit. Of the critical position in which she stood, let the threat once made by Mr. Leavenworth to substitute her cousin's name for hers in his will in case she had married this X, answer to all who knew the tenacity with which Mary clung to her hopes of future fortune. While for the corroborative testimony of her guilt which Eleanore is supposed to have had, remember that previous to the key having been found in Eleanore's possession, she had spent some time in her cousin's room; and that it was at Mary's fireplace that I found the half-burned fragments of that letter, the contents of which you have the outline of a report that, in an hour's time from this, will lead to the arrest of Mary Leavenworth as the assassin of her uncle and benefactor."

A silence ensued which, like the darkness of Egypt, could be felt; then a great and terrible cry rang through the room, and a man's form, rushing from I knew not where, shot by me and fell at Mr. Gryce's feet, shrieking out:

"It is a lie! a lie! Mary Leavenworth is innocent as a babe unborn. I am the murderer of Mr. Leavenworth. I! I! I!"

It was Trueman Harwell.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Culmination.

I never saw such a look of mortal triumph on the face of a man as that which crossed the countenance of the detective.

"Well," said he, "this is unexpected, but not wholly unwelcome. I am truly glad to learn Miss Leavenworth is innocent, but I must hear some few more particulars before I shall be satisfied. Get up, Mr. Harwell, and explain yourself."

But in the hot, feverish eyes that sought him from the writhing form at his feet, there were mad anxiety and pain, but little explanation. Seeing him making efforts to speak, I drew near. "Lean on me," said I, lifting him to his feet.

His face, relieved forever from its mask of repression, turned toward me with the look of a despairing spirit. "Save her—Mary—they are sending a report—stop it!"

"Yes," broke in another voice. "If there is a man here who believes in God and prizes woman's honor, let him post the issue of that report." And Henry Clavering, dignified as ever, but in a state of extreme agitation, stepped into our midst through an open door at our right.

But at the sight of his face, the man in our arms quivered, and gave one bound that would have overturned Mr. Clavering had not Mr. Gryce interposed. "Wait," cried he; and holding back the secretary with one hand, he put the other in his pocket and drew thence a document which he held up before Mr. Clavering. "It has not gone yet," said he; "be easy. And you," he went on, turning toward Trueman Harwell "be quiet or—"

His sentence was cut short by the man springing from his grasp. "Let me go!" shrieked he. "Let me have my revenge on him who, in face of all I have done for Mary Leavenworth, dares to call her his wife! Let me—!" But at this point he paused; his frame, which had been one tremble, stiffening into stone, and his clutching hands, outstretched for his rival's throat, falling heavily back. "Hark!" said he, glaring over Mr. Clavering's shoulder, "it is she! I hear her! I feel her! she is on the stairs! she is at the door! she—!" a low, shuddering sigh of longing and despair finished the sentence; the door opened, and Mary Leavenworth stood before us.

It was a moment to make young hairs turn grey. To see her face—so pale, so haggard, so wild in its fixed horror, turn toward Henry Clavering, ignoring the real actor in this most terrible scene! Trueman Harwell could not stand it.

"Ah, ah!" cried he, "look at her! cold, cold; not one glance for me, though I have just drawn the halter from her neck and fastened it about my own." And breaking from the clasp of the man who would now have withheld him, he fell on his knees before Mary, clutching her dress. "You shall look at me," he cried, "you shall listen to me; I will not lose body and soul for nothing. Mary, they said you were in peril; I could not endure that thought, so I uttered the truth—yes—and all I want now is for you to say you believe me when I declare that I only meant to secure to you the fortune you so much desired; that it was because I loved you and hoped to win your love in return that I—"

But she did not seem to see him, did not seem to hear him. Her eyes were fixed upon Henry Clavering with an awful inquiry in their depths.

"You do not hear me!" shrieked the poor wretch. "I see that you are, you would not turn your head if I should call to you from the depths of hell!"

But even that cry fell unheeded. Pushing her hands down upon his shoulders, as though she would sweep some impediment from her path, she endeavored to advance. "Why is that man here?" cried she, indicating her husband with one quivering hand. "What has he done that he should be brought here to confront me at this awful time?"

"I told her to come here to meet her uncle's murderer," whispered Mr. Gryce into my ear.

But before I could reply to her, before Mr. Clavering himself could murmur a word, the guilty wretch started to his feet.

"Don't you know?" cried he. "It is because these gentlemen think that you, the beauty and the Sybarite, committed with your own white hand the deed of blood which has brought you freedom and fortune. Yes, yes, this man—turning and pointing at me—'friend as he has made himself out to be, but who, during all these four horrible weeks, has been weaving a cord for your neck—thinks you the assassin of your uncle (as does, perhaps, this other who calls you wife), unknowing that a man stood at your side, ready to sweep half the world from your path if that white hand rose in bidding. That I—"

"You?"

"Yes," clutching her robe again as she hastily recoiled, "didn't you know it? When in that dreadful hour of your rejection by your uncle, you cried aloud for some one to help you, didn't you know—"

"Don't!" she shrieked, bursting from him with a look of unspeakable horror. "Don't say that! Oh!" she gasped, "is the mad cry of a stricken woman for aid and sympathy the call for a murderer?" And turning like a doe struck to the heart by the deadly arrow, she moaned: "Who that ever looks at me now will forget that a man—such a man!—thought, dared to think, that because I was in mortal perplexity I would accept the murder of my best friend as a relief from it!" Her horror was unbounded. "Oh, what a chastisement for folly!" she murmured. "What a punishment for the love of money, which has always been my curse!"

Henry Clavering could no longer restrain himself. Leaping to her side, he bent above her. "Was it nothing but folly, Mary? Is there no link of complicity between you two? Have you nothing on your soul but an inordinate desire to preserve your place in your uncle's will, even at the risk of baking my heart and wronging your noble cousin? Are you innocent in this matter? Tell me!" Laying his hand on her head he pressed it slowly back and gazed into her eyes; then without a word took her to his breast and looked calmly around him.

"She is," said he.

It was the uplifting of a stifling pall. No one in the room, unless it was the wretched criminal shivering before us, but felt a sudden influx of hope. Even Mary's own countenance caught a glow. "Oh!" she whispered, withdrawing from his arms, the better to look into his face, "and is this the man I have trifled with, and tortured? Is this he whom I married in a fit of caprice, only to forsake and deny? Henry, do you, can you, will you, declare me innocent before God and the world?"

"I do," said he.
(To be continued)

THE ONLY THING LEFT.

A grandfather well known in the English House of Commons was chatting amicably with his little granddaughter, who was snugly ensconced on his knee.

"What makes your hair so white, Grandpa?" the little miss queried.

"I am very old, my dear. I was in the ark," replied His Lordship, with a painful disregard of the truth.

"Oh, are you Noah?"

"No."

"Are you Shem, then?"

"No, I am not Shem."

"Are you Ham?"

"No."

"Then," said the little one, who was fast nearing the limit of the Biblical knowledge, "you must be Japheth."

A negative reply was given to this query also, for the old gentleman inwardly wondered what the outcome would be.

"But, Grandpa, if you are not Noah or Shem or Ham or Japheth, you must be a beast."

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