

THE LEAVENWORTH CASE.

By A. K. Green.

CHAPTER XXXIII.—Continued.

"And is that all?" I asked, "Did she never give you any information in regard to the transaction which led to her flight?"

"No, sir. Neither then nor when upon the next day, I confronted her with the papers in my hand and the awful question upon my lips as to whether her flight had been occasioned by the murder, did she do more than acknowledge she had run away on its account."

"Mrs. Belden," I interrupted, "pardon me, but you said in the beginning of this interview that you did not believe Mary herself had any direct hand in her uncle's murder. Are you ready to repeat that assertion?"

"Yes—yes, indeed. Whatever I may think of her influence in inducing it, I never could imagine her having anything to do with its actual performance. Oh, no; whatever was done on that dreadful night Mary Leavenworth never put hand to pistol or ball, or even stood by while they were used. Only the man who loved her, longed for her and felt the impossibility of obtaining her by any other means, could have found nerve for an act so horrible."

"Then you think —"

"Mr. Clavering is the man? I do, and oh, sir, when you consider that he is her husband, is it not dreadful enough?"

"It is, indeed," said I.

Something in my tone or appearance seemed to startle her. "I hope and trust I have not been indiscreet," she cried.

"You have said nothing," I said. "No one can blame you for anything you have either said or done to-day. But I wish to ask one thing more. Have you any reason beyond that of natural repugnance to believing a young and beautiful woman guilty of a great crime, for saying what you have of Henry Clavering?"

"No," she whispered, "none but that." I felt the reason insufficient, and turned away with something of the same sense of suffocation with which I heard that the key sought for had been found in Eleanor Leavenworth's possession.

By some indefinable impulse I went immediately upstairs, and took my stand at the western window of the large room directly over Mrs. Belden. Did the circumstantial evidence even of such facts as had come to our knowledge preclude the possibility that Mrs. Belden's conclusions were correct? Was it impossible to find evidence yet, that Henry Clavering was, after all, the assassin of Mr. Leavenworth?

Filled with the thought, I looked across the room to the closet where lay the body of the girl who, according to all probability, had known the truth of this matter, and a great longing seized me. Oh, why could not the dead be made to speak?

Carried away by the fervor of the moment, I made my way to her side. Ah, God, how still!

With a feeling that was almost like anger, I stood there, when—oh, what was it I saw protruding from beneath her shoulders where they crushed against the bed? an envelope? a letter? yes.

I stooped in great agitation and drew the letter out. It was sealed, but not directed. Breaking it hastily open, I took a glance at its contents.

This is what I saw rudely printed in lead pencil on the inside of a sheet of common writing paper:

"I am a wicked girl. I have known things all the time which I had ought to have told, but I didn't dare to, he said he would kill me if I did I mean the tall splendid-looking gentleman with the black mustash who I met coming out of Mister Leavenworth's room with a key in his hand the night Mr. Leavenworth was murdered. He was so scared he gave me money and made me go away and come here and keep everything secret, but I can't do so no longer. I seem to see Miss Eleanor all the time crying and asking me if I want her sent to prison. God knows I'd rather die. And this is the truth and my last words and I pray everybody's forgiveness and hope nobody will blame me and that they won't bother Miss Eleanor any more but go and look after the handsome gentleman with the black mustash."

(To be continued.)

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