

INITIALS ONLY

By ANNA KATHARINE GREEN
AUTHOR OF "THE LEAVENWORTH CASE"
"THE FILIGREE BALL" "THE HOUSE OF THE WHISPERING PINES"
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SYNOPSIS.

George Anderson and wife see a remarkable looking man come out of the Clermont hotel, look around furtively, wash his hands in the snow and pass on. Commotion attracts them to the Clermont, where it is found that the beautiful Miss Edith Chalmers has fallen dead. Anderson describes the man he saw wash his hands in the snow. The hotel manager declares him to be Orlando Brotherton. Physicians find that Miss Chalmers was clear Brotherton of suspicion. Greys, an aged detective, and Sweetwater, his assistant, take up the case. They believe Miss Chalmers stabbed herself. A paper cutter found near the scene of tragedy is believed to be the weapon used.

CHAPTER V.—Continued.

"Does that frighten you? Are you so affected by the thought of blood?"
"Don't ask me. And I put the thing under my pillow! I thought it was so—so pretty."

"Mrs. Watkins," Mr. Gryce from that moment ignored the daughter, "did you see it there?"

"Yes; but I didn't know where it came from. I had not seen my daughter stoop. I didn't know where she got it till I read that bulletin."

"Never mind that. The question agitating me is whether any stain was left under that pillow."

"I didn't see any stain, but you can look for yourself. The bed has been made up, but there was no change of linen. We expected to remain here; I see no good to be gained by hiding any of the facts now."

"None whatever, madam."
"Come, then. Caroline, sit down and stop crying. Mr. Gryce believes that your only fault was in not taking this object at once to the desk."

"Yes, that's all," acquiesced the detective after a short study of the shaking figure and distorted features of the girl. "You had no idea, I'm sure, where this weapon came from or for what it had been used. That's evident."

Her shudder, as she seated herself, was very convincing. She was too young to simulate so successfully emotions of this character.

"I'm glad of that," she responded, half fretfully, half gratefully, as Mr. Gryce followed her mother into the adjoining room. "I've had a bad enough time of it without being blamed for what I didn't know and didn't do."

Mr. Gryce laid little stress upon these words, but much upon the lack of curiosity she showed in the minute and careful examination he now made of her room. There was no stain on the pillow-cover and none on the bureau-spread where she might very naturally have laid the cutter down on first coming into her room. The blade was so polished that it must have been rubbed off somewhere, either purposely or by accident.

They returned to where the girl still sat, wrapped in her cloak, stilling still, but not so violently.

"Will—not be tell!" she whispered. The answer came quickly, but not in the mother's tones. Mr. Gryce's ears had lost none of their ancient acuteness.

"I do not see that I should gain much by doing so. The one discovery which would link this find of yours indissolubly with Miss Chalmers' death, I have failed to make. Do you remember the exact spot where you stooped, Miss Watkins?"

"No, no. Somewhere near those big chairs; I didn't have to step out of my way; I really didn't."

Mr. Gryce's answering smile was a study. It seemed to convey a two-fold message, one for the mother and one for the child, and both were comforting. But he went away, disappointed. The clue which promised so much was, to all appearance, a false one. He could soon tell.

CHAPTER VI.

Integrity.

Mr. Gryce's fears were only too well founded. Though Mr. McElroy was kind enough to point out the exact spot where he saw Miss Watkins stoop, no trace of blood was found upon the rug which had lain there, nor had anything of the kind been washed up by the very careful man who scrubbed the lobby floor in the early morning. This was disappointing, as its presence would have settled the whole question. When, these efforts all exhausted, the two detectives faced each other again in the small room given up to their use, Mr. Gryce showed his discouragement. Sweetwater watched him in some concern, then with the persistence which was one of his strong points, ventured finally to remark:

"I have but one idea left on the subject."

"And what is that?"
"The girl wore a red cloak. If I mistake not, the lining was also red. A spot on it might not show to the casual observer. Yet it would mean much to us."

"Sweetwater!"
A faint blush rose to the old man's cheek.

"Shall I request the privilege of looking that garment over?"

"Yes."
The young fellow ducked and left the room. When he returned, it was with a downcast air.

"Nothing doing," said he. And then there was silence.

A knock at the door was followed by the immediate entrance of Mr. Chalmers, who had come in search of the inspector, and showed some surprise to find his place occupied by an unknown old man.

Mr. Gryce motioned Sweetwater from the room. With a woeful look the young detective withdrew, his last glance cast at the cutter still lying in full view on the table.

Mr. Gryce, not unmindful himself of this object, took it up, then laid it down again, with an air of seeming abstraction.

The father's attention was caught.

"What is that?" he cried, advancing a step and bestowing more than an ordinary glance at the object thus brought casually, as it were, to his notice.

Mr. Gryce, observing the other's emotion, motioned him to a chair. As his visitor sank into it, he remarked, with all the consideration exacted by the situation:

"It is unknown property, Mr. Chalmers. But we have some reason to think it belonged to your daughter."

"I have seen it, or one like it, often in her hand." Here his eyes suddenly dilated and the hand stretched forth to grasp it quickly drew back. "Where—where was it found?" he hoarsely demanded. "O God! am I to be crushed to the very earth by sorrow!"

Mr. Gryce hastened to give him such relief as was consistent with the truth.

"It was picked up—last night—from the lobby floor. There is seemingly nothing to connect it with her death. Yet—"

The pause was eloquent. Mr. Chalmers gave the detective an agonized look and turned white to the lips. Then gradually, as the silence continued, his head fell forward, and he muttered almost unintelligibly:

"I honestly believe her the victim of some heartless stranger. I do now; but—but I cannot mislead the police. At any cost I must retract a statement I made under false impressions and with no desire to deceive. I said that I knew all of the gentlemen who admired her and aspired to her hand. But it seems that I did not know her secret heart as thoroughly as I had supposed. Among her effects I have just come upon a batch of letters—love letters I am forced to acknowledge—signed by initials totally strange to me. The letters are manly in tone—most of them—but one—"

"What about the one?"
"Shows that the writer was displeased. It may mean nothing, but I could not let the matter go without setting myself right with the authorities. If it might be allowed to rest here—if those letters can remain sacred, it would save me the additional pang of seeing her inmost concerns—the secret and holiest recesses of a woman's heart, laid open to the public. For, from the tenor of most of these letters, she—she was not averse to the writer."

Mr. Gryce moved a little restlessly in his chair and stared hard at the cutter so conveniently placed under his eye. Then his manner softened and he remarked:

"We will do what we can. But you must understand that the matter is not a simple one. That, in fact, it contains mysteries which demand police investigation. We do not dare to trifle with any of the facts. The inspector, and, if not he, the coroner, will have to be told about these letters and will probably ask to see them."

"They are the letters of a gentleman."
"Yes, that is understood." Then in a sudden heat and with an almost sublime trust in his daughter notwithstanding the duplicity he had just discovered, he declared: "The deed was an accident—incredible—but still an accident!"

Mr. Gryce had respect for this outburst. Making no attempt to answer

"Dear Miss Chalmers: Only a man of small spirit could endure what I endured from you the other day. Love such as mine would be respectable in a clod-hopper, and I think that even you will acknowledge that I stand somewhat higher than that. Though I was silent under your disapprobation, you shall yet have your answer. It will not lack point because of its necessary delay."

"A threat!"
The words sprang from Sweetwater, and were evidently involuntary.
"It is the only letter of them all which conveys anything like a reproach," proceeded the coroner. "Her surprise must consequently have been great at receiving these lines, and her resentment equally so. If the two met afterwards—But I have not shown you the signature. To the poor father it conveyed nothing—some facts have been kept from him—but to us—here he whirled the letter about so that Sweetwater, at least, could see the name. "It conveys a hope that we may yet understand Miss Chalmers."

"Brotherson!" exclaimed the young detective in loud surprise. "Brotherson! The man who—"

"The man who left this building just before or simultaneously with the alarm caused by Miss Chalmers' fall. It clears away some of the clouds be-fogging us. She probably caught sight of him in the lobby, and in the passion of the moment forgot her usual instincts and drove the sharp-pointed weapon into her heart."

"Brotherson!" The word came softly now, and with a thoughtful intonation. "He saw her die."
"Why do you say that?"
"Would he have washed his hands in the snow if he had been in ignorance of the occurrence? He was the real, if not the active, cause of her death and he knew it. Either he—excuse me, Doctor Heath and Mr. Gryce, it is not for me to obtrude my opinion."

"Have you settled it beyond dispute that Brotherson is really the man who was seen doing this?"

"No, sir. I have not had a minute for that job, but I'm ready for the business any time you see fit to spare me."

"Let it be tomorrow, or, if you can manage it, tonight. We want the man even if he is not the hero of that romantic episode. He wrote these letters, and he must explain the last one. His initials, as you see, are not ordinary ones, and you will find them at the bottom of all these sheets. He was brave enough or arrogant enough to sign the questionable one with his full name. This may speak well for him, and it may not. It is for you to decide that. Where will you look for him, Sweetwater? No one here knows his address."

"Not Miss Chalmers' maid?"
"No; the name is a new one to her. But she made it very evident that she was not surprised to hear that her mistress was in secret correspondence with a member of the male sex. Much can be hidden from servants, but not that."

"I'll find the man; I have a double reason for doing that now; he shall not escape me."

Doctor Heath expressed his satisfaction, and gave some orders. Meanwhile, Mr. Gryce had not uttered a word.

"Some of the letters were dated last summer, some this fall. The one you are most anxious to hear about only a month back," he added, with unconquerable devotion to what he considered his duty.

Mr. Gryce would like to have carried his inquiries further, but desisted.

But when he was gone, and Sweetwater had returned, Mr. Gryce made it his first duty to communicate to his superiors the hitherto unsuspected fact of a secret romance in Miss Chalmers' seemingly calm and well-guarded life.

CHAPTER VII.

The Letters.

Before a table strewn with papers, in the room we have already mentioned as given over to the use of the police, sat Doctor Heath in a mood too thoughtful to notice the entrance of Mr. Gryce and Sweetwater from the dining-room where they had been having dinner.

However, as the former's tread was somewhat lumbering, the coroner's attention was caught; before they had quite crossed the room, and Sweetwater, with his quick eye, noted how his arm and hand immediately fell so as to cover up a portion of the papers lying nearest to him.

"Well, Gryce, this is a dark case," he observed, as at his bidding the two detectives took their seats.

Mr. Gryce nodded; so did Sweetwater.

"She was not shot. She was not struck by any other hand; yet she lies dead from a mortal wound in the breast. Though there is no tangible proof of her having inflicted this wound upon herself, the jury will have no alternative, I fear, than to pronounce the case one of suicide."

"I'm sorry that I've been able to do so little," remarked Mr. Gryce.

The coroner darted him a quick look.

"You are not satisfied? You have some different idea?" he asked.

The detective frowned at his hands crossed over the top of his cane, then shaking his head, replied:

"The verdict you mention is the only natural one, of course. I see that you have been talking with Miss Chalmers' former maid?"

"Yes, and she has settled an important point for us. There was a possibility, of course, that the paper-cutter which you brought to my notice had never gone with her into the mezzanine. That she, or some other person, had dropped it in passing through the lobby. But this girl assures me that her mistress did not enter the lobby that night. That she accompanied her down in the elevator, and saw her step off at the mezzanine. She can also swear that the cutter was in a book she carried—the book we found lying on the desk. The girl remembers distinctly seeing its peculiarly chased handle projecting from its pages. Could anything be more satisfactory if—I was going to say, if the young lady had been of the impulsive type and the provocation greater. But Miss Chalmers' nature was calm, and were it not for these letters—here his arm shifted a little—"

"I should not be so sure of my jury's future verdict. Love—" he went on, after a moment of silent consideration of a letter he had chosen from those before him, "disturbs the most equable natures. When it enters as a factor, we can expect anything—as you know. And Miss Chalmers evidently was much attached to her correspondent, and naturally left the reproach conveyed in these lines."

And Doctor Heath read:
"Dear Miss Chalmers: Only a man of small spirit could endure what I endured from you the other day. Love such as mine would be respectable in a clod-hopper, and I think that even you will acknowledge that I stand somewhat higher than that. Though I was silent under your disapprobation, you shall yet have your answer. It will not lack point because of its necessary delay."

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Where they went under this officer's guidance, he cannot tell. The tortuous tangle of alleys through which he now felt himself led was dark as the nether regions to his unaccustomed eyes. There was snow under his feet and now and then he brushed against some obtruding object, or stumbled against a low fence; but beyond these slight misadventures on his own part, he was a mere automaton in the hands of his eager guide, and only became his own man again when they suddenly stepped into an open yard and he could discern plainly before him the dark walls of a building pointed out by Sweetwater as their probable destination. Yet even here they encountered some impediment which prohibited a close approach. A wall or shed cut off their view of the building's lower story; and though somewhat startled at being left unceremoniously alone after just a whispered word of encouragement from the ever ready detective, George could quite understand the necessity which that person must feel for a quiet reconnoitering of the surroundings before the two of them ventured further forward in their possibly hazardous undertaking. Yet the experience was none too pleasing to George, and he was very glad to hear Sweetwater's whisper again in his ear, and to feel himself rescued from the pool of slush in which he had been left to stand.

"The approach is not all that can be desired," remarked the detective as they entered what appeared to be a low shed. "The broken board has been put back and securely nailed in place, and if I am not very much mistaken there is a fellow stationed in the yard who will want the pass-word too. Looks shady to me. I'll have something to tell the chief when I get back."

"But we! What are we going to do if we cannot get in front or rear?"
"We're going to wait right here in the hopes of catching a glimpse of our man as he comes out," returned the detective, drawing George towards a low window overlooking the yard he had described as sentinelled. "He will have to pass directly under this window on his way to the alley," Sweetwater went on to explain, "and if I can only raise it—the noise would give us away. I can't do that."

"Perhaps it swings on hinges," suggested George. "It looks like that sort of a window."

"If it should—well! it does. We're in great luck, sir. But before I pull it open, remember that from the moment I unlatch it, everything said or done here can be heard in the adjoining yard. So no whispers and no unnecessary movements. When you hear him coming, as sooner or later you certainly will, fall carefully to your knees and lean out just far enough to catch a glimpse of him before he steps down from the porch. If he stops to light his cigar or to pass a few words with some of the men he will leave behind, you may get a plain enough view of his face or figure to identify him. The light is burning low in that rear hall, but it will do. If it does not—if you can't see him or if you do, don't hang out of the window more than a second. Duck after your first look. I don't want to be caught at this job with no better opportunity for escape than we have here. Can you remember all that?"

George pinched his arm encouragingly, and Sweetwater, with an amused grunt, softly unlatched the window and pulled it wide open.

"Who's that? What do you want down there?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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COTTON CROP 13,677,000 BALES

COTTON CROP COMPILED BY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

These Figures Do Not Include Linters—Probably Most Valuable Ever Grown in United States.

Washington. A crop of 6,512,856,000 pounds of cotton, not including linters, was produced in the United States during 1911. The department of agriculture announced yesterday. This is the third in size, that of 1911, which amounted to 7,459,000,000 pounds, being the record, and that of last year, when 6,851,719,000 pounds were grown, being second.

This year's crop probably will be the most valuable ever grown in the United States. At the average farm value of cotton on Nov. 1, which was 12c a pound, it is worth \$859,740,000 for the lint alone. To this about \$425,000,000 probably will be added by the value of the seed and linters. The previous most valuable crop was that of 1910, which was valued at \$829,329,000, and with seed and lint at \$963,180,000.

All the states with the exception of Mississippi, Louisiana, Missouri