INITIALS ONLY

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

George Anderson and wife are a remarkable looking man come out of the Grand Central Station, New York, and attract his keenly observant eye. Circumstance attracts them to the Carleton Club, where he learned that the beautiful Miss Challoner has fallen dead. Anderson declares that she has been murdered. He is taken here to be Orlando Brotherson. Physicians declare that she died from heart disease, but Anderson insists that she was the victim of suspicion. Given an envelope containing a number of letters, he finds a batch of letters found in his pocket, addressed to Miss Challoner, and a note, unsigned, whose style the writer was disguised. This letter is from Orlando Brotherson, and the writer, who calls himself Sweetwater, proves to be Brotherson, who is found in a tenement house. Anderson tells him he is not the murderer of Miss Challoner explains that he found the letters in his pocket by mistake. Brotherson declares himself innocent of the murder of a waiter-girl, Dorothy Challoner, and his further efforts to discover the murderer of his daughter was sought in the rooms of Miss Challoner, and brought to the same building with Brotherson. He watches the latter's movements, and finds that he has formed the habit of "throwing his voice" in a room, addressing Brotherson. He is arrested for the murder of Miss Challoner. Anderson, who has been employed by Brotherson, who declared he recognized him at once.

CHAPTER XX—Continued.

"Letters?" Fred Ayres echoed the question, in a voice, and lost a savage gleam to his eye. "Forgeries! Make a confession! Miss Challoner never wrote the devil's own fare to designate as letters. It was concocted at police headquarters! Some made me tell my story, and then they found some one who could write a poetic pen. I'm obliged to them for the confidence he'd show in my credulity. I credit Miss Challoner with such words as have been given me to read here to-day! I know the lady, and I know myself. Neither had passed between us—not an event in which we were both concerned, that had been forgotten by me, and no feature of our intercourse for the last year you have ascribed to her. On the contrary, there is a lamentable contradiction between facts as they were and the fancies you have invented to judge by. And this, as you must acknowledge, not only proves your falsity, but exonerates Miss Challoner from all possible charge of sentimentality."

Yet she certainly wrote those letters. We had them from Mr. Challoner. The woman who brought them was the good nurse to appreciate him.

"I do not want to believe you."

It was said defensively said; but the conviction it expressed was absolute. Sweetwater recognized the tone, one of truth, and inwardly laid down his arms. He could never take the man; there was too much true in him. But he had to acknowledge that as a foe he was invincible. The letters were forgeries, to one who had the good sense to appreciate him.

"I do not want to believe you."

This did Professor Leighmont's character no honor. For if I were to attribute to him the forgery of the letters there, we do not know where to stop. Nor will I. Let the matter rest here. As a silent journey I have before me.

"You will start tomorrow?"

"At 10 o'clock in the morning."

And you will first inquire, not for O. H., that is not definite, but for a young girl by the name of Dorothy, who holds the place, or rather she is the only woman."

"No, a child, I won't say child exactly, she must be sixteen."

"She lives in Derby. Derby is a small place. You will have no trouble

"Dear Little Doris!"

in finding this child. It was to her Miss Challoner's last letter was addressed. The name—"

"Doris is one."

"Yes, this one, Sweetwater. The affair is as blind as pure hat; nobody could see him himself. All we had, but thread. O. H.'s letters—the real O. H., those written by the murderer—are gone. He's no more of a milksop than this Brotherson, and unlike your indomitable friend he seems to have some heart. I only wish he'd give us some facts, by which we could get conversant. But the letters reveal nothing except that he knew Doris, he written in one of them: 'Doris is learning to embroider. It's like a fairy weaving a cobweb!' Doris isn't a very common name. She must be the same girl to whom Miss Challoner wrote from time to time."

"Was this letter signed O. H.?"

"Yes, they all are. The only exception is the date and address; the second O. H.'s absorption and restored him to the full mockery of his overweening self-confidence. He was in his element, and he knew it. In spite of his superfluous emotion. "You can't account for a feeling, Mr. Gryce. The man has no heart. He's as hard as rocks."

"You've found no evidence against him."

"No—no!"

Then listen to this. The test with the letters failed, because what he said about them was true. They were not meant for him. Miss Challoner had another lover."

"Only another? I thought there were a half-dozen, at least."

"Another whom she favored. The letters found in her possession—not the ones I am also sure of herself, but those which were written to her over the signature O. H. were not all from the same hand. Experts have been busy with them for a week, and their reports are unanimous. The O. H. who wrote the threatening lines acknowledged to by Orlando Brotherson, was not the O. H. who penned all of those love letters. The similarity in the writing misled us at first, but once the doubt was raised by Mr. Challoner's discovery of an alliance in one of them which pointed to another writer than Mr. Brotherson, and experts had no difficulty in reaching the decision I have mentioned."

"Two O. H.'s! Isn't that incredible, Mr. Gryce?"

"Yes, it is incredible; but the incredible is not the impossible. The man who has been showing some of his letters there is learning to embroider."

"Yes, I remember."

"So you must first find Doris."

"And as Miss Challoner's letter was directed to Derby, Pa., you will go to Derby."

"Yes, sir."

"Anything more?"

"I've been reading this letter again."

"It's worth it."

"The last sentence expresses a hope."

"That has been noted."

Sweetwater's eyes slowly rose till they rested on Mr. Gryce's face. "I cling to the thought you've given me. I'll work myself through the labyrinth before me and I'll reach him."

Mr. Gryce smiled; but there was no sarcasm, sudden and sympathetic fear for youthful enthusiasm in that smile than there was confidence or hope.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Doris.

"A young girl named Doris Scott?"

The storekeeper looked up from what sharply at the man he was addressing, and shook his head.

Mr. Gryce's eyes twinkled.

"That won't make your task any more difficult, Mr. Sweetwater. The boy we thus throw out is as likely to prove the person as the girl."

The prospect grows pleasing When one is to look for my mate."

Your ticket is bought to Derby, Pa. If the name happens to be a fancy one, time there, we do not know where to look for you. Good-by, and may good luck attend you."

"Thank you, sir."

Another when the latter turned. The keen eye also wrote himself, but those which were written to her over the signature O. H. were not all from the same hand. Experts have been busy with them for a week, and their reports are unanimous. The O. H. who wrote the threatening lines acknowledged to by Orlando Brotherson, was not the O. H. who penned all of those love letters. The similarity in the writing misled us at first, but once the doubt was raised by Mr. Challoner's discovery of an alliance in one of them which pointed to another writer than Mr. Brotherson, and experts had no difficulty in reaching the decision I have mentioned.