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## THE MYSTERY OF AGATHA WEBB.

By ANNA KATHARINE GREENE,

Author of "The Leavenworth Case," "Lost Man's Lane," "Hand and Ring," Etc., Etc.

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CHAPTER XXIII—CONTINUED.

DEAR JAMES—Why must I write? Why am I not content with the memory of last night? Is it because that when the cup is quite full, a cup that has been so long in filling, some few drops must escape just to show that a great joy like mine is not satisfied to be simply quiescent? I have suffered so long from uncertainty, have tried you and tried myself with so tedious an indecision, that now that I know no other man can ever move my heart as you have done the ecstasy of it makes me overdone. I want to tell you that I love you; that I do not simply accept your love, but give you back in fullest measure all the devotion you have heaped upon me in spite of my many faults and failings. You took me to your heart last night and seemed satisfied, but it does not satisfy me that I just let you do it without telling you that I am proud and happy to be the chosen one of your heart and that as I saw your smile and the proud passion which lit up your face I felt how much sweeter was the dear, domestic bliss you promised me than the more brilliant but colder life of a statesman's wife in Washington.

DEAR JAMES—I do not, I cannot, believe it. Though you said to me in going out, "Your father will explain it all," I do not content myself with his explanation and never will believe what he said of you except you confirm it by your own act.

Oh, James, were we not happy? I believed in you and felt that you believed in me. When we stood heart to heart under the elm tree (was it only last night?) and you swore that if I lay in the power of earthly man to make me happy I should taste every sweet that a woman's heart naturally craved, I thought my heaven had already come and that now it only remained for me to create yours. Yet I trust in you yet, James, and if you bid me to continue that trust I will do so with all my heart and never ask you to solve this or any later mysteries for me. I do not confide with a half heart. I give you all or I give you nothing, a fact which will either insure my happiness or my ruin. I do not know which. I am as I am. Do you think my father's words would satisfy me or that I would or could believe them when they accused you of a base and dishonest act? James, you should have waited and not left me to the misery of hearing such an accusation, an accusation of theft, and theft of money, from one I could not contradict—that is, if you knew what he was going to say. But perhaps you did not. Much as I have always revered and loved my father, I find myself hoping that he has said other words to me than those you expected him to. That in his wish to see me Philemon's wife he has resorted to an unworthy subterfuge to separate us and that there is no truth in the story he told me last night or at least not the truth he would impress upon me.

If his account of the interview between you is a correct one, and you have nothing to add to it in way of explanation, then the return of this letter will be taken enough that my father has been just in his accusations and that the bond between us must be broken. But if, oh, James, if you are the true man I consider you and all that I have heard is a fabrication or mistake, then come to me at once. Do not delay, but come at once, and the sight of your face at the gate will be enough to establish your innocence in my eyes if not in those of less intuition than your own.

The letter that followed this was very short:

DEAR JAMES—The package of letters has been received. God help me to bear this shock to all my hopes and the death of all my girlish beliefs. I am not angry. Only those who have someone left to hold to in life can be angry.

My father tells me he has received a packet too. It contained \$5,000 in ten \$500 notes. James, was not my love enough that you should want my father's money too?

I have begged my father, and he has promised me to keep the cause of this rupture secret. No one shall know from either of us that James Zabel has any flaw in his nature.

The next letter was dated some months later. It was to Philemon:

DEAR PHILEMON—The gloves are too small; besides, I never wear gloves. I hate their restraint and do not feel there is any good reason for hiding my hands in this little country town, where everybody knows me. Why not give them to Hattie Weller? She likes such things, while I have had my fill of finery. A girl whose one duty is to care for a dying father has not room left for vanities.

DEAR PHILEMON—You will have my hand, though I have told you that my heart does not go with it. It is hard to understand such persistence, but if you are satisfied to take a woman of my strength against her will then God have mercy upon you, for I will be your wife.

But do not ask me to go to Sutherlandtown. I shall live here. And do not expect to keep your intimacy with the Zabels. There is no tie of af-



She was lying on the sitting room lounge, looking very weak and exhausted.

fection remaining between James and myself, but if I am to shed that half light over your home, which is all I can promise and all that you can hope to receive, then keep me from all influence but your own. That this time may grow sweet and dear to me is my earnest prayer today, for you are worthy of a true wife.

AGATHA.

DEAR JOHN—I am going to be married. My father exacts it, and there is no good reason why I shall not give him this final satisfaction. At least I do not think there is, but if you or your brother differs from me—

Say goodbye to James from me. I pray that his life may be peaceful. I know that it will be honest.

AGATHA.

DEAR PHILEMON—My father is worse. He fears that if we wait till Tuesday he will not be able to see us married. Decide, then, what our duty is. I am ready to abide by your pleasure.

AGATHA.

The following is from John Zabel to his brother James, and is dated one day after the above:

DEAR JAMES—When you read this, I will be far away, never to look in your face again unless you bid me. Brother, I meant it for the best, but God was not with me, and I have made four hearts miserable without giving help to any one.

When I read Agatha's letter—the last, for more reasons than one, that I shall ever receive from her—I seemed to feel as never before what I had done to blast your two lives. For the first time I realized to the full that but for me she might have been happy and you the respected husband of the one grand woman to be found in Porchester. That I had loved her so fiercely myself came back to me in reproach, and the thought that she perhaps suspected that the blame had fallen where it was not deserved aroused me to such a pitch that I took the sudden and desperate resolution of telling her the truth before she gave her hand to Philemon, and never paused till I reached Mr. Gilchrist's house and was ushered into his presence.

He was lying on the sitting room lounge, looking very weak and exhausted, while on one side of him stood Agatha and on the other Philemon, both contemplating him with ill concealed anxiety. I had not expected to find Philemon there, and for a moment I suffered the extreme agony of a man who has not measured the depth of the plunge he is about to take, but the sight of Agatha trembling under the shock of my unexpected presence restored me to myself and gave me firmness to proceed. Advancing with a bow, I spoke quickly the one word I had come there to say. "Agatha, I have done you a great wrong, and I am here to undo it. For months I have felt driven to confession, but not till today have I possessed the necessary courage. Now nothing shall hinder me." I said this while I saw in both Mr. Gilchrist and Philemon a disposition to stop me where I was. Indeed Mr. Gilchrist had risen on his elbow, and Philemon was making that pleading gesture of his which we know so well. Agatha alone looked eager.

"What is it?" I cried. "I have a right to know." I went to the door, shut it and stood with my back against it, a figure of shame and despair. Suddenly the confession burst from me. "Agatha," said I, "why did you break with my brother James? Because you thought him guilty of theft; because you believed he took the \$5,000 out of the sum entrusted to him by Mr. Orr for your father? Agatha, it was I, and James who did this; it was I, and James who hid and bore of my misdoings the blame because he was always a loyal soul and took account of my weakness and knew—alas, too well—that open shame would kill me."

It was a weak plea and merited no reply, but the silence was so dreadful and lasted so long that I felt first crushed and then terrified. Raising my head, for I had not dared to look any of them in the face, I cast one glance at the group before me and dropped my head again, started. Only one of the three was looking at me, and that was Agatha. The others had their heads turned aside, and I thought, or rather, the passing fancy took me, that they shrank from meeting her gaze with something of the same shame and dread I was myself suffering from. But she! Can I ever hope to make you realize her look or comprehend the

pang of utter self abasement with which I succumbed before it! It was so terrible that I seemed to hear her utter words, though I am sure she did not speak, and with some ill idea of stemming the torrent of her reproaches, I made an effort at explanation and impetuously cried: "It was not for my own good, Agatha, not altogether for self, I did this. I loved you too madly, despairingly, and good brother as I seemed, I was jealous of James and hoped to take his place in your regard if I could show a greater prosperity and get for you those things his limited prospects denied him. You enjoy money, beauty, ease; I could see that by your letters, and if James could not give them to you and I could—Oh, do not look at me like that! I see now that millions could not have bought you."

"Despicable!" was all that came from her lips, at which I shuddered and groped about for the handle of the door. But she would not let me go. Subduing with grand self restraint the emotions which had hitherto swelled too high in her breast for either speech or action, she thrust out one arm to stay me and said in short, commanding tones: "How was this thing done? You say you took the money, yet it was James who was sent to collect it, or so my father says." Here she tore her looks from me and cast one glance at her father. What she saw I cannot say, but her manner changed, and henceforth she glanced his way as much as mine and with nearly as much emotion. "I am waiting to hear what you have to say," she exclaimed, laying her hand on the door, so as to leave me no opportunity for escape. I bowed and attempted an explanation. "Agatha," said I, "the commission was given to James, and he rode to Sutherlandtown to perform it, but it was on the day when he was accustomed to write to you, and he was not easy in his mind, for he feared he would miss sending you his usual letter."

And then I told the story you know so well—how I took the money and how, after Mr. Gilchrist had accused you of the theft, you found out my guilty secret and told me that you had taken my crime on yourself and how afterward my virtue was not equal to assuming the responsibility for my crime.

"John," she said—she was under violent restraint—"why do you come now?"

I cast my eyes at Philemon. He was standing just as before, with his eyes turned away. There was discouragement in his attitude, mingled with a certain grand patience. Seeing that he was better able to bear her loss than either James or myself, I said to her very low: "I thought you ought to know the truth before you gave your final word. I am late, but I would have been too late a week from now."

Her hand fell from the door, but her eyes remained fixed on my face.

"It is too late now," she murmured. "The clergyman has just gone who united me to Philemon."

The next minute she had faced her father and her new made husband.

"Father, you knew this thing!" Keen, sharp, incisive, the words rang out.



"You, too!" she shrieked. "And I have just sworn to love, honor and obey you!"

"I saw it in your face when he began to speak."

Mr. Gilchrist drooped slightly; he was a very sick man, and the scene had been a trying one.

"If I did," was his low response, "it was but lately. You were engaged then to Philemon. Why break up this second match?"

She eyed him as if she found it difficult to credit her ears. Such indifference to the claims of innocence was incredible to her. I saw her grand profile quiver, then the slow ebbing from her cheek of every drop of blood indignation had summoned there.

"And you, Philemon," she suggested, "with a somewhat softened aspect—your committed this wrong ignorantly, never having heard of this crime. You could not know on what false grounds I had been separated from James."

I had started to escape, but stopped just beyond the threshold of the door as she uttered these words. Philemon was not as ignorant as she supposed. This was evident from his attitude and expression.

"Agatha," he began, but at this first word, and before he could clasp the hands held helplessly out before her, she gave a great cry, and, staggering back, eyed both her father and myself in a frenzy of indignation that was all the more uncontrollable from the superhuman effort which she hitherto made to suppress it. "You, too!" she shrieked. "You, too, and I have just sworn to love, honor and obey you! Love you! Honor you, the unconscionable wretch who—"

But here Mr. Gilchrist rose, weak, tottering, quivering with something more than anger. He approached his daughter and laid his finger on her lips.

"Be quiet!" he said. "Philemon is not to blame. A month ago he came to see me and prayed that, as a relief to his mind, I would tell him why you had separated yourself from James. He had always thought the match had fallen through on account of some foolish quarrel or incompatibility, but late-

ly he had feared there was something more than he suspected in this break; something that he should know. So I told him why you had dismissed James, and, whether he knew James better than we did or whether he had seen something in his long acquaintance with these brothers which influenced his judgment, he said at once: "This cannot be true of James. It is not in his nature to defraud any man, but John—I might believe it of John. Isn't there some complication here? I had never thought of John and did not see how John could be mixed up with an affair I had supposed to be a secret between James and myself, but when Philemon laid the matter before James he did not deny that John was guilty, but asked that you be not told before your marriage. He knew that you were engaged to a good man, a man that your father approved, a man that could and would make you happy. He did not want to be the means of a second break, and besides—and this, I think, was at the bottom of the stand he took, for James Zabel was always the proudest man I ever knew—he never could bear, he said, to give to one like Agatha a name which he knew and she knew was not entirely free from reproach. It would stand in the way of his happiness and ultimately of hers. His brother's dishonor was his. So, while he loved you still, his only prayer was that after you were safely married and Philemon was sure of your affection he should tell you that the man you once regarded so favorably was not unworthy of that regard. To obey him Philemon has kept silent, while I—Agatha, what are you doing? Are you mad, my child?"

She looked so for the moment. Tearing off the ring she had worn but an hour, she flung it on the floor. Then she threw her arms high up over her head and burst out in an awful voice:

"Curses on the father! Curses on the husband who have combined to make me rue the day I was born! The father I cannot disown, but the husband—"

"Hush!"

It was Mr. Gilchrist who dared her fiery anger. Philemon said nothing.

"Hush! He may be the father of your children. Don't curse!"

But she only towered the higher, and her beauty from being simply majestic became appalling. "Children!" she cried. "If ever I bear children to this man, may the blight of heaven strike them as it has struck me this day. May they die as my hopes have died, or, if they live, may they bruise his heart as mine is bruised and curse their father as—"

Here I fled the house. I was shaking as if this awful denunciation had fallen on my own head. But before the door closed behind me a different cry called me back. Mr. Gilchrist was lying lifeless on the floor, and Philemon, the patient, tender Philemon, had taken Agatha to his breast and was soothing her there as if the words she had showered upon him had been blessings instead of the most fearful curses which had ever left the lips of mortal woman.

The next letter was in Agatha's handwriting. It was dated some months later and was stained and crumpled more than any others in the whole packet. Could Philemon once have told why? Were these blotched lines the result of his tears falling fast upon them, tears of 40 years ago, when he and she were young and love had been doubtful? Was the sheet so yellowed and so seamed because it had been worn on his breast and folded and unfolded so often? Philemon, thou art in thy grave, sleeping sweetly at last by the side of her thou so idolized, but these marks of feeling still remain indissolubly connected with the words that gave them birth.

DEAR PHILEMON—You are gone for a day and a night only, but it seems a lengthened absence to me, meriting a little letter. You have been so good to me, Philemon, ever since that dreadful hour following our marriage I feel that I am beginning to love you and that God did not deal with me so harshly when he cast me into your arms. Yesterday I tried to tell you this when you almost kissed me at parting, but I was afraid it was a momentary sentimentality and so kept still. But today such a warm wellspring of joy rises in my heart when I think that tomorrow the house will be bright again and that in place of the empty wall opposite me at table I shall see your kindly and forbearing face! I know that the heart I had thought impregnable has begun to yield and that daily gentleness and a boundless consideration from one who had excuse for bitter thoughts and re-entimentation is doing what all of us thought impossible a few short months ago.

Oh, I am so happy, Philemon, so happy to love where it is now my duty to love, and if it were not for that dreadful memory of a father dying with harsh words in his ears and the knowledge that you, my husband, yet not my husband, are bearing ever about with you echoes of words that in another nature would have turned tenderness into gall I could be merry also and sing as I go about the house, making it pleasant and comfortable against your speedy return. As it is, I can but lay my hand softly on my heart as its beatings grow too impetuous and say: "God bless my absent Philemon and help him to forgive me! I forgive him and love him as I never thought I could."

That you may see that these are not the weak outpourings of a lonely woman, I will here write that I heard today that John and James Zabel have gone into partnership in the shipbuilding business, John's uncle having left him a legacy of several thousand dollars. I hope they will do well. James, they say, is to all appearance perfectly cheerful, is full of business and this relieves me from too much worry in his regard. God certainly knew what kind of a husband I needed. May you and yourself equally blessed in your wife.

Another letter to Philemon a year later:

DEAR PHILEMON—Hasten home, Philemon; I do not like these absences. I am just now too weak and fearful. Since we knew the great hope before us I have looked often in your face for a sign that you remembered what this hope cannot but recall to my shuddering memory. Philemon, Philemon, was I mad? When I think what I said in my rage and then feel the little life stirring about my heart, I wonder that God did not strike me dead rather than bestow upon me the greatest blessing that can come to woman. Philemon, Philemon, if anything should happen the child! I think of it by day, I think of it by night. I know you think of it, too, though you show me such a cheerful countenance and make such great plans for the future. Will God remember my words or will he forget? It seems as if my reason hung upon this question.

A note this time in answer to one from John Zabel:

DEAR JOHN—Thank you for words which could have come from nobody else. My child is dead. Could I expect anything different? If I did, God has rebuked me.

Philemon thinks only of me. We understand each other perfectly, now that our greatest suffering comes in each other's pain. My load I can bear, but this—Come and see me, John, and tell James our house is open to him. We have all done wrong, and are caught in one web of misfortune. Let it make us friends again.

Below this in Philemon's hand:

My wife is superstitious. Strong and capable as she is, she has felt that this sudden taking off of our firstborn as a sign that certain words uttered by her on her marriage day, unhappily known to you and, as I take it, to James also, have been remembered by the righteous God above us. This is a weakness which I cannot combat. Can you, who alone of all the world beside know both it and its cause, help me by a renewed friendship, whose cheerful and natural character may gradually make her forget? If so, come like old neighbors and dine with us on our wedding day. If God sees that we have buried the past and are ready to forgive each other the faults of our youth, perhaps He will further spare this good woman. I think she will be able to bear it. She has great strength except where a little child is concerned. That alone can henceforth stir the deepest recesses of her heart.

After this a gap of years. One, two, three, four, five children were laid away to rest in Porchester churchyard, then Philemon and she came to Sutherlandtown, but not till after the certain event had occurred, heat made known by this last letter to Philemon:

DEAREST HUSBAND—Our babe is born, our sixth and our dearest, and the reproach of its first look had to be met by me alone. Oh, why did I leave you and come to this great Boston, where I have no friends but Mrs. Sutherland? Did I think I could break the spell of fate or Providence by giving birth to my last darling among strangers?

I shall have to do something more than that if I would save this child to our old age. It is borne in upon me like fate that never will a child prosper of my breast or survive the clasp of my arms. If it is to live, it must be reared by others. Some woman who never brought down the curse of heaven upon her by her own blasphemies must nourish the tender frame and receive the blessing of its growing love. Neither I nor you can hope to see recognition in our babe's eye. Before it can turn upon us with love it will close in its last sleep, and we will be left desolate. What shall we do, then, with this little son? To whose guardianship can we intrust it? Do you know a man good enough or a woman sufficiently tender? I do not, but if God wills that our little Frederick should live he will raise up some one by the pang of possible separation already tearing my heart. I believe that he will raise up some one.

Meanwhile I did not dare to kiss the child lest I should blight it. He is so sturdy, Philemon, so different from all the other five.

I open this to add that Mrs. Sutherland has just been in with her 5 weeks' old infant. His father is away, too, and has not yet seen his boy, and this is their first after ten years of marriage. Oh, that I had such confidence as she in a future of endless delight in this babe!

The next letter opens with a cry:

Philemon! Come to me, Philemon!



"Swear you will be a mother to this child!"

I have done what I threatened. I have made the sacrifice. Our child is no longer ours, and now perhaps he may live. But, oh, my breaking heart, my empty home! Help me to bear my desolation, for it is for life. We will never have another child. And where is it? Ah, that is the wonder of it! Near you, Philemon, yet not too near. Mrs. Sutherland has it, and you may have seen its little face through the car window if you were in the station last night when the express passed through

to Sutherlandtown. Ah, but she has her burden to bear, too—an awful secret burden, like my own, only she will have the child, for Philemon, she has taken it in lieu of her own, which died last night in my sight. And Mr. Sutherland does not know what she has done and never will if you keep the secret as I shall for the sake of the life the little innocent has thus won.

What do I mean and how was it all? Philemon, it was God's work, all but the deception, and that is for the good of all and to save four broken hearts. Listen. Yesterday, only yesterday—it seems a month ago—Mrs. Sutherland came again to see me with her baby in her arms. The baby was looking well, and she was the happiest of women, for the one wish of his heart and hers had been fulfilled, and she was soon going to have the bliss of showing the child to his father. My own babe was to rest better when left entirely by himself and not under the hungry look of my eyes. Mrs. Sutherland went over to look at him. "Oh, he is fair, like my baby," she said, "and almost as sturdy, though mine is a month older." And she stooped down and kissed him. Philemon, she smiled for her, but though he never had for me, I saw it with a greedy longing that almost made me cry out. Then I turned to her, and we talked. Of what? I cannot remember now. At home we had never been intimate friends. She is from Sutherlandtown, and I am from Porchester, and the distance of nine miles is enough to estrange people. But here, each with her husband absent and a darling infant sleeping under her eyes, interests we have never thought identical drew us to each other, and we chatted with ever increasing pleasure. Suddenly Mrs. Sutherland jumped up in terrible fright. The infant she had been rocking on her breast was blue; the next minute it shuddered; the next it lay in her arms dead.

I hear the shriek yet with which she fell with it in her arms to the floor. Fortunately no other ears were open to her cry. I alone saw her misery. I alone heard her tale. The child had been poisoned, Philemon, poisoned by her. She had mistaken a cup of medicine for a cup of water and had given the child a few drops in a spoon just before setting out from her hotel. She had not known at the time what she had done, but now she remembered that the fatal cup was just like the other and that the two stood very near together. Oh, her innocent child, and oh, her husband! It seemed as if the latter thought would drive her wild.

"He has so wished for a child," she moaned. "We have been married ten years and this baby seemed to have been sent from heaven. He will curse me; he will hate me; he will never be able after this to bear me in his sight!" This was not true of Mr. Sutherland. It was useless to argue with her. Instead of attempting it I took another way to stop her ravings. Lifting the child out of her hands, I first listened at its heart and then finding it was really dead—I have seen too many lifeless children not to know—I began slowly to undress it. "What are you doing?" she cried. "Mrs. Webb, Mrs. Webb! What are you doing?" For reply I pointed to the bed where two little arms could be seen feebly fluttering. "You shall have my child," I whispered. "I have carried too many babies to the tomb to dare risk bringing another." And catching her poor wailing spirit with my eye, I held her while I told her my story. Philemon, saved that woman. Before I had finished speaking I saw the reason I turned to her eye and the dawning of a pitiful hope in her passion drawn face. She looked at the child in my arm and then she looked at the one in the bed, and the long drawn sigh in which she finally bent down and wept over our darling told me that my caution. The rest was easy. When the clothes of the two children had been exchanged, she took our baby in her arms and prepared to leave. Then I stopped her. "Swear," I cried, holding her by the arm and lifting my other hand to heaven, "swear you will be a mother to this child! Swear you will love it as your own and rear it in the path of truth and righteousness!"

The convulsive clasp with which she drew the baby to her breast told me plainer than her shuddering "I swear!" that her heart had already opened to me. I dropped her arm and covered my face with my hands. I could not see my darling go. It was worse than death. "Oh, God, save him!" I grieved. "God make him an honor!"—But here she caught me by the arm. Her clutch was frenzied, and her teeth were chattering. "Swear in your turn," she gasped; "swear that if I do a mother's duty by this boy you will keep my secret and never reveal to the world that you have any claims upon him." It was like tearing the heart from my breast with my own hand, but I swore, Philemon, and she in her turn stood back. But suddenly she faced me again, terror and doubt in all her looks. "Your husband!" she whispered. "Can you keep such a secret from him? You will breathe it in your dreams." "I shall tell him," I answered. "Tell him!" The hair seemed to rise on her head, and she shook so that I feared she would drop the babe. "Be careful!" I cried. "See, you frighten the babe. My husband has but one heart with me. What I do he will subscribe to. Do not fear, Philemon." So I promised in your name. Gradually she grew calmer. When I saw she was steady again, I motioned her to go. Even my more than mortal strength was failing, and the baby—Philemon, I have never kissed it, and I did not kiss it then. I heard her feet draw slowly toward the door. I heard her hand fall on the knob, heard it turn, uttered one cry and then—They found me an hour

after lying along the door clasping the dead infant in my arms. I was in a swoon, and they all think I fell with the child, as perhaps I did, and that its little life went out during my insensibility. Of its little features, like and yet unlike our boy's, no one seems to take heed. The nurse who cared for it is gone, and who else would know that little face but me? They are very good to me and are full of self reproaches for leaving me so long in my part of the building alone. But, though they watch me now, I have contrived to write this letter, which you will get with the one telling of the baby's death and my own dangerous condition.

Under it these words: "Though bidden to destroy this, I have never dared to do so. Some day it may be of inestimable value to us or our boy."

PHILEMON WEBB.

This was the last letter found in the packet. As it was laid down sobbers were heard all over the room, and Frederick, who for some time now had been sitting with his head in his hands, ventured to look up and say:

"Do you wonder that I endeavored to keep this secret bought at such a price and sealed by the death of her I thought my mother and of her who really was? Gentlemen, Mr. Sutherland really loved his wife and honored her memory. To tell him, as I shall have to within the hour, that the child she placed in his arms 25 years ago was an alien and that all his love, his care, his disappointment and his sufferings had been lavished on the son of a neighbor, required greater courage than to face doubt on the faces of my fellow townsmen or anything, in short, but absolute arraignment on the charge of murder. Hence my silence, hence my indecision, till this woman here—she pointed a scornful finger at Amabel now shrinking in her chair—"drove me to it by secretly threatening me with a testimony which would have made me the murderer of my mother and the lasting disgrace of a good man who alone has been without blame from the beginning to the end of this desperate affair. She was about to speak when I forestalled her."

That afternoon before the inquest broke up the jury brought in their verdict. It was:

"Death by means of a wound inflicted upon herself in a moment of terror and misapprehension."

It was all his fellow townsmen could do for Frederick.

TO BE CONTINUED.

TILLMAN AT OMAHA.

The Senator Gives His Own Story of the Jackson Day Banquet.

The papers have had a great deal to say about Senator Tillman's recent visit to Omaha, and his alleged quarrel with Mr. Bryan. The Washington correspondent of The News and Courier sends his paper the following under date of last Thursday:

Senator Tillman has returned to Washington from attendance at the Jefferson club banquet held in Omaha, Neb., last Monday night. In view of the conflicting statements sent out relative to the strained relations between Senator Tillman and the Democratic leader, William Jennings Bryan, the South Carolina senator, with characteristic frankness, disposed of the reports in this way: "I have filed no plea for political separation from Mr. Bryan," said the senator when interviewed on the subject this afternoon at the Capitol. "My relations with Mr. Bryan are not strained in the least and I had a very plain talk with him on the political situation. I told him, as I told the people at the Jefferson banquet, that it is too early to commit myself to any candidate or any specific platform which might be binding in 1904. I don't think I was misunderstood on that subject, for I have a way of trying to express myself clearly when I have anything to say. I don't believe the gentlemen at the banquet in Omaha misunderstood me and I don't believe Mr. Bryan misunderstood me. In fact, he seemed to be impressed with my views on the subject from the fact that when he reached Chicago he stated there that he intended to take his place as a private in the Democratic ranks and fight for the principles of the party as long as he lives.

"I cannot," said the senator, "be responsible for the imaginary statements which newspaper reporters make concerning my attitude toward Mr. Bryan in the future. I do not regret going to Omaha, as some of the newspapers have stated. On the contrary I am glad I went, as I had a royal good time. I could not have received a greater ovation than that which was given me at the banquet at Omaha. I gave them my ideas of Democracy right from the shoulder, and they whooped it up for me in great shape. I set them crazy when I pitched into Cleveland. I wish you could have heard them shout when I tore him to pieces, and the rest of the gang who worship at the Cleveland shrine, who want to reorganize the Democratic party, but who go to the polls on election days and vote the Republican ticket. I did not pose as a leader of the Democracy, but I told them that I did represent the sentiments of the Democratic party of South Carolina. I told them I had been elected to the governorship, once to the United States senate and had been endorsed for re-election for another term in the senate without opposition, and my commission would be due in a few weeks. Representing the Democracy of South Carolina I told them that it would be premature for me to commit myself to any man or platform at this stage of the game, but I assured them that I would rather go down to defeat again four years hence than accept the leadership of or surrender my principles to such a party and to such a leadership as that Cleveland crowd." "You should have seen that crowd shout and yell when I uttered these sentiments," continued the senator enthusiastically. "Why? They got stuck on the words—as it matter of fact they didn't know them—so they compressed by singing—'America!'"