



The Leavenworth Case

Anna Katharine Green

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This classic mystery by one of the first female authors of detective novels has influenced the writing of Agatha Christie and thrilled generations of avid readers

Everett Raymond is a junior partner in the firm of Veeley, Carr & Raymond, attorneys and counselors at law. When Mr. Horatio Leavenworth, a very old and wealthy client, is found murdered, Everett finds himself entangled in the case. Leavenworth has been inexplicably shot while sitting at his own library table at night, all the doors in the house locked and untampered with. Suicide is quickly ruled out. Was the killer someone inside the house? Suspects abound: Thomas, the butler; Harwell, the private secretary and amanuensis to Mr. Leavenworth; and Mary and Eleanore Leavenworth, the two lady nieces, one of whom has been left out of her uncle's will. Everett dives in as right-hand man to the inscrutable police detective Ebenezer Gryce, a brilliant investigator on the New York Metropolitan Police Force.

From a vanished servant to a secret marriage, from a shadowy mustached man to a forged confession, this swiftly plotted Victorian-era mystery, full of twists and turns and devastating cliffhangers, will keep you guessing until the very last page. Influential in the development of the modern suspense novel and a huge bestseller when it was first published, *The Leavenworth Case* is a groundbreaking tale not to be missed.

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The Leavenworth Case Details

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From Reader Review The Leavenworth Case for online ebook

Eirini Proikaki says

2.5*

Η Green θεωρείται η "μητέρα της αστυνομικής λογοτεχνίας" και η Υπόθεση Λάβενγουορθ που εκδόθηκε το 1878 είναι το πρώτο της βιβλίο και ακολούθησαν πολλά άλλα.

Διέβασα στο βιογραφικό της ότι ενώ η ίδια διακρίθηκε σε έναν ανδροκρατούμενο χώρο, ήταν κατ' του φεμινισμού και του κινήματος για τα γυναικεία δικαιώματα και αυτό δυστυχώς φάνεται και στο βιβλίο της.

Είναι ένα κλασικό μυστήριο τύπου "ποιος το έκανε;" όπου η υποψία περνάει από τον ένα στον άλλο μέχρι να αποκαλυφθεί στο τέλος ο ύποχος και ομολογήσει ότι παρ'όλο που σκόφτηκε αρκετές εκδόσεις στο διβάζα, τελικά δεν κατάφερα να λύσω το γρίφο.

Δεν με ξέτρελανε πάντως. Η πλοκή είναι αρκετά ενδιαφέρουσα, αλλά οι ρωές είναι λίγο αδιόφοροι και η φλυαρία κάποιες φορές είναι εξαντλητική. Λεπτομέρειες επαναλαμβάνονται ξανά και ξανά και πολλές φορές σκόφτηκε να το παρατήσω γιατί πραγματικά βαρύνει.

Είναι καλογραμμένο όμως και έχει ένα "ιστορικό" ενδιαφέρον ως ένα από τα πρώτα αστυνομικά.

Sara says

A very fun, old-time mystery/detective novel, much in the vein of Wilkie Collins (though not quite as well done). I had solved the mystery of who-did-it and why about half way in, but that did not keep me from wanting to finish the story and see all the loose ends tied up.

In the flavor of books of this era, it is a bit too neatly tied up and unrealistic by modern day standards. It is always important to think about these books in reference to the time in which they were written and without the benefit of all the stellar mystery fiction that has followed them. Green has a delightful writing style and her detective Gryce was wearing Columbo's trench coat for me throughout the tale. I couldn't help wondering if Green envisioned him as quick-witted and playing a part or as very dense but getting there in the end.

It is hard to particularly like Victorian women when they are painted as creatures with the expected sensibilities of their time. I found both Eleanor and Mary's actions incomprehensible, and even the lesser characters of Hannah and Mrs. Belden behaved in a way that mystified me but that I believe might fit perfectly with the expected behavior for women of the era. I suppose I expected a bit more depth in the female characters from a female writer, but I feel the male writers of the time might have portrayed women more realistically. Perhaps the prevailing conventions made Green need to stay within the formula or suffer derision herself.

Green has created the quintessential Victorian fiction, featuring contrivances such as shocked gentlemen, over the top reactions, implausible misdirections, sinister mustached strangers, burned and torn-up letters that can be miraculously reassembled, and mysterious keys that unlock both mysteries and doors. I took the ride with her willingly and did not feel cheated in the end.

Paradoxe says

Στα θετικά, παρ'τι οι χαρακτήρες είναι μ'τρια ανεπτυγμένοι, η συγγραφέας καταφέρνει να ντύνεται τον καθ'να τους με μεγάλη επιτυχία.

Τα τσιτ'τα στην αρχή των κεφαλαίων δε δίνονται για εντυπωσιασμό, αλλά για να δημιουργήσουν ατμόσφαιρα, δεδομένου ότι το βιβλίο είναι γραμμένο στα αμερικανικά αγγλικά των τελών του 1800 και τα βιβλία με εξάφρεση τους Αθλούς είναι εγγλίζικα, επ'σης στην εκφράση της ιδίας περιόδου. Ατυχώς αυτό χάνεται στην μετάφραση στα ελληνικά εκ των πραγμάτων, με αποτέλεσμα να φάνεσαι σα ρομαντική προσπ'θεια εντυπωσιασμού.

Όσο κι αν έπρεπε να είναι συνυφασμένο με την εποχή του, γιατί έπρεπε να είναι τόσο δακρυβρεχτό;

Στα θετικά, ότι με νευράσε η Μπλάντεν, δέγμα της πολύ καλής σκιαγράφησης του ονειροπλάνου – ρομαντικού και καθ'λου πρακτικού ανθρώπου, που έχει το χαρακτηριστικό των ανήτων συμβούλων, των παρεμβάσεων και της στοχής μεσιτείας.

Πέθει επιτυχώς το σκεπτικό ότι η ομορφιά έχει την ικανότητα να διαστρεβλώνει και να καμουφλάρει και πως τα π'θη είναι ικανά να οδηγούν και τους λιγότερο ξυπνούς, σε ευφύτητα.

Ωστόσο, η αλήθεια είναι πως βάρθηκαν. Το δι'κοπτα και δι'βαζα άλλα πράγματα, γιατί βαρύνουν ν' ασχοληθ' μαζί του. Μικρή αποζημίωση σε αυτό πως ακολουθεί τη ρεαλιστική νύρμα και όχι τη νατουραλιστική στο θέμα της διαπαιδαγ'γησης και μεταλαμπ'δευσης αξιών. Αλλά στη σελ'δα 436 δεν ντεχά άλλο, φύλλομετροσα αν'συχα για να δώ πως απ'μεναν 100+ σελ'δες ακόμα.

Παρ'λ' αυτό, ο κ'ριος Γκρ'ς είναι ο πιο παρ'δοξος κι ενδιαφ'ρων ντετ'κτιβ που έχω συναντήσει, μαζί με τον τηλεοπτικό Μονκ, για σχεδόν διαφορετικούς λόγους, αλλά όχι λιγότερο γοητευτικός.

Όσο για το δολοφ'νο αποκαλ'πτεται κραυγαλέα απ' τις πρ'τες σελ'δες, με δυο συγγραφικές γκ'φες ολκ'ς.

2.5

Panagiotis says

Ποτέ ρχιζα να διαβ'ζω το βιβλίο ξαφνικά βρίσκ'μουν σε μια εντελ'ς διαφορετική εποχή απ' την δ'κη μας πράγμα το οπο'ο μου κ'ντρίσε το ενδιαφ'ρον, η πλοκή είναι πολύ καλύτερη απ' το αναμεν'μενο δι'τι καθώς ήταν απ' τα πρ'τα 'στυνομικά μυθιστορ'ματα δεν θεωρ'σα ότι θα είχε και ικανοποιητικό υ'π'θεση. Παρολαυτα το βιβλίο είναι πολύ καλό. Ο συνδυασμός της εποχής που γρ'φτηκε και εξελ'χθηκε το μυθιστ'ρημα με έναν πρωταγωνιστ' πολύ ξυπνο θεωρ' πως ξιζε η αν'γνωση αυτού του βιβλίου.

Tristram says

The Dead Man in the Library

If there is anything classic detective stories have ever taught us, it is this – that libraries are probably the most likely non-combat-related places for you to get killed in, with private ones being even more dangerous than those of the public order. There are probably cruel and callous people out there who would think nothing of killing a man over a book – whereas it is doubtless more romantic to kill a man over a woman –, and that's why libraries usually abound in dead bodies, and also why you should be very careful as to what books you read (especially when you are foolhardy enough to do your reading in a library). Imagine someone finding your body over a bad book – what a bad example this would set to posterity.

Being found dead, or preferably alive, over Anna Katharine Green's novel *The Leavenworth Case*, which was published in 1878, is something I could live with (yes, I know there is something of a paradox included here), because it is a really entertaining detective novel and probably even has some literary value since Green can be seen as one of the earliest writers of detective novels. Therefore, when the wealthy businessman Horatio Leavenworth is found dead in his library, with a bullet in his head, his murderer is probably not guilty of cliché but of murder only. After all, up to 1878 there had not been too many dead bodies in libraries. The story involves two orphaned nieces, Eleanor and Mary, who were taken into the household by Mr. Leavenworth when they were children, and between whom a mysterious kind of estrangement has arisen. Can it have something to do with the fact that, due to a whim of their uncle's, only one of them is supposed to inherit the family fortune, whereas the other one is to be left out in the cold? Then there is the English gentleman Mr. Clavering, who seems to be stalking the two young ladies and who even haunts some people's dreams. And what has become of the Irish maidservant Hannah, who mysteriously disappeared in the night of the murder?

These are some of the questions in this generally well-written locked-room-mystery that our narrator, the decent and tactful lawyer (it *is* a piece of fiction, remember!) Mr. Raymond and the wry detective Ebenezer Gryce find themselves confronted with. By the way, Ebenezer Gryce is a recurrent character in Anna Katharine Green's fiction, and one may regard him as one of the forerunners of Sherlock Holmes. After all, *A Study in Scarlet* was published in 1887, some ten years after Gryce had solved the Leavenworth Case and, *en passant*, displayed some of his quirks. Green's style reminds me of typical Victorian literature: She has a way with words, but the words also have their way with her, and all in all, it is very readable. [1] A slight demerit, though, I will not conceal, and this is Green's, or rather her narrator's tendency to idealize the Leavenworth nieces, and Eleanor in particular. But since not even Dickens, the Champion, is above such kind of sentimental folderol, Green may be forgiven these trespasses against good taste, and let's not forget: You will definitely be surprised by the solution to this murder mystery.

[1] The only thing that really got on my nerves after a while was her excessive use of the expression “in regard to”. This, after a while, made me jump more than any pistol shot could have done.

?Emily says

Anna Katharine Green was one of the originators of the detective story. Her detective, Mr. Gryce, was created nine years before Sherlock Holmes came on the scene. Ms. Green was an influence on Agatha

Christie and Conan Doyle.

The story is fast paced with several improbable events. It is enjoyable to read an early detective story written by an American, since the most well-known authors are English.

A brief synopsis: Uncle is killed. Uncle's heir is one of his nieces. At first, it looks like the niece who doesn't inherit is the murderer. Later, it appears that the niece who inherits is the murderer. Which one could it be? Is it possible someone else committed the murder? Possible, but is it probable? To find out more, read this early detective classic for yourself.

Sweet Jane says

Παραφρζοντας τα λγια ενς φαφλατ θεου θα πα, "υπρχουν βιβλα που τα διαβζεις πριν τον πνο και υπρχουν βιβλα που σε βζουν για πνο, θες δεν θες". Ε, η Υπθεση Λβενγουορθ ανκει ξεκθαρα στην δετερη κατηγορα.

Bev says

The Leavenworth Case was written by Anna Katharine Green and originally published in 1878--nine years before Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*. It is often considered the first full-length detective story written by a woman. It was an enormous success with the public, reportedly selling more than 750,000 copies in its first decade and a half, and, for nearly half a century, Anna Katharine Green was one of America's most popular authors. She wrote many other novels, but what reputation she has today rests on this foundational detective story--noted by mystery authority Howard Haycraft as "one of the true milestones of the genre."

Green managed to introduce in her novel many of the mystery standbys that fans of the the genre will recognize at once: the crusty old man on the verge of changing his will, the body in the library, a dignified butler, coroners' inquest (called and arranged in what seems to be whirlwind haste), ballistics expert pinpointing the weapon used, a scene-of-the-crime sketch, and mysterious letters. Readers of today may sigh at some of these components, but would do well to remember how fresh these clues and incidents were in Victorian-era American crime fiction.

Green's story is narrated by Everett Raymond, junior member of the law firm which has represented the Leavenworth family for many years. At face value, the story seems a simple one. Horatio Leavenworth, a rich merchant and adoptive parent and guardian to his two nieces, Mary and Eleanore, is found shot to death at the table in the library of his home. All the doors are locked and everything points to a member of the household. More specifically, evidence--a broken key, an incriminating letter, an overheard bit of conversation would seem to point towards the nieces and the behavior of Eleanore at the coroner's inquest soon draws the attention of police, reporters and nearly everyone present.

Raymond, struck by the beauty and plight of the nieces--and particularly drawn to Eleanore, determines to aid Ebenenezer Gryce of the Metropolitan Police in bringing the proper party to justice. It is the work of these two with the assistance of "Q," one of Gryce's operatives that soon brings to light secret relationships, the intention of Horatio Leavenworth to change his will, and the mysterious goings-on the night of the murder when everyone is supposed to have retired to their rooms. The story culminates in a wrap-up scene

worthy of the many Golden Age drawing room finales. We even get the criminal's confession with a bit of a twist.

Slow-going in parts due to the Victorian style, this is still a gripping story about the tragedy of love, greed, self-sacrifice and betrayal. It is a very complex tale with several layers and a well-built element of suspense. It has also been held up as a prime example of the fallacy of circumstantial evidence--evidence that given certain twists to circumstance is made to fit several different characters for the role of prime suspect. I thoroughly enjoyed myself once I gave myself up to Green's style and found this classic mystery to be every bit the equal of the Sherlock Holmes canon.

First posted on my blog [My Reader's Block](#)

Daniel says

This was a super-excellent mystery, and I am awed by its existence. Author Green wrote and published this nearly a decade before Sherlock Holmes entered the world, and many of the conventions of the genre are present in this book. Green also throws in diagrams, codes, and passages written from alternate perspectives, complete with a shift in the tone of the prose. I am amazed that this is the kind of "sensationalist" reading that the public could pick up in the late-19th century. People probably didn't know what hit them when this gem landed.

Kim says

The Leavenworth Case published in 1878 and subtitled *A Lawyer's Story*, is a detective novel by Anna Katharine Green. It is also her first novel and she came to be called "*the mother of the detective novel*" writing more than twenty detective novels and a whole bunch of other books that weren't about crime and murder and all that stuff. Green first wanted to write poetry, but when her poetry failed to gain recognition, she switched to novels. Her first and best known novel, *The Leavenworth Case*, was praised by Wilkie Collins, and the best seller of the year. I wonder how many books were published in 1878, were more books published back then or not as many, it's not like people were sitting around watching television, but it seems like it would have been hard to publish a book in those days. No matter how hard it may be, Green became a bestselling author, eventually publishing about 40 books.

On November 25, 1884, Green married the actor and stove designer, and later noted furniture maker, Charles Rohlf, who was seven years her junior. He was a actor, stove designer and furniture maker? Sounds like what people do around here, or used to. Every town had a funeral home, but never just a funeral home, it was alwaysFuneral Home and Furniture Store. Each and every town had one, when I was a kid I used to wonder if they were selling the dead person's furniture in the store half of the building. We still have the funeral homes but for some reason most of the furniture stores are gone. Anyway, Rohlf toured in a dramatization of Green's *The Leavenworth Case*. After his theater career faltered, he became a furniture maker in 1897, I'm not sure where the stove designer came in. But I'm not talking about Green, her husband, and furniture, at least I shouldn't be, I should be talking about *The Leavenworth Case* so here we go.

The story begins with a young man coming in to the firm of "Veeley, Carr & Raymond, attorneys and counsellors at law". This young man asks for Mr. Veeley, unfortunately he isn't available, he's been called

out of town, so this young man tells our narrator, a junior partner of Mr. Veeley's, why he is there. It seems that young man is the secretary for Mr. Leavenworth and Mr. Leavenworth has just been found dead, murdered even:

"Mr. Leavenworth!" I exclaimed, falling back a step. Mr. Leavenworth was an old client of our firm, to say nothing of his being the particular friend of Mr. Veeley.

"Yes, murdered; shot through the head by some unknown person while sitting at his library table."

"Shot! murdered!" I could scarcely believe my ears.

"How? when?" I gasped.

"Last night. At least, so we suppose. He was not found till this morning. I am Mr. Leavenworth's private secretary," he explained, "and live in the family. It was a dreadful shock," he went on, "especially to the ladies."

"Dreadful!" I repeated. "Mr. Veeley will be overwhelmed by it."

"They are all alone," he continued in a low businesslike way I afterwards found to be inseparable from the man; "the Misses Leavenworth, I mean—Mr. Leavenworth's nieces; and as an inquest is to be held there to-day it is deemed proper for them to have some one present capable of advising them. As Mr. Veeley was their uncle's best friend, they naturally sent me for him; but he being absent I am at a loss what to do or where to go."

"I am a stranger to the ladies," was my hesitating reply, "but if I can be of any assistance to them, my respect for their uncle is such——"

The expression of the secretary's eye stopped me. Without seeming to wander from my face, its pupil had suddenly dilated till it appeared to embrace my whole person with its scope.

"I don't know," he finally remarked, a slight frown, testifying to the fact that he was not altogether pleased with the turn affairs were taking. "Perhaps it would be best. The ladies must not be left alone——"

"Say no more; I will go." And, sitting down, I despatched a hurried message to Mr. Veeley, after which, and the few other preparations necessary, I accompanied the secretary to the street."

Ok, here are some little details I remember that we may need to solve the crime; Mr. Leavenworth was last seen by the secretary the night before sitting at his desk. He was found in the morning by the same secretary sitting at the same place. Even though he was shot in the head it couldn't have been a suicide, the gun can't be found. Nothing is missing so it isn't a robbery. Here is an interesting thing we must keep in mind to solve the crime:

"Employing the time, therefore, in running over in my mind what I knew of Mr. Leavenworth, I found that my knowledge was limited to the bare fact of his being a retired merchant of great wealth and fine social position who, in default of possessing children of his own, had taken into his home two nieces, one of whom had already been declared his heiress. To be sure, I had heard Mr. Veeley speak of his eccentricities, giving as an instance this very fact of his making a will in favor of one niece to the utter exclusion of the other; but of his habits of life and connection with the world at large, I knew little or nothing."

I don't even need that to solve the murder, I need to solve the mystery of why he would so favor the one niece over the other and make it clear to everyone. It seems mean, although I guess he wouldn't have had to take them into his house at all. Anyway, once the secretary whose name I can't at the moment remember and Mr. Raymond, our narrator, arrive at the house they find one of the city's finest detectives, Mr. Ebenezer Gryce is there. I found out later that Mr. Gryce is there for most if not all of Green's detective novels.

Back to the things we need to remember to solve the murder. The house was locked up for the night, no one could get in, according to the butler that is. He testifies - at the coroner's inquest - that he locked all the doors and windows the night before and they were still all locked when they found Mr. Leavenworth. No one could have got in the house, so that means someone already in the house must have committed the murder. That leaves us with the butler, the cook, Molly the upstairs girl, the secretary who's name I finally remember, Mr. Harwell, and the two nieces, Miss Mary and Miss Eleanore. Oh, and then there's Hannah, or I guess, there isn't Hannah. She is the ladies maid and she is missing. According to the testimony of the cook, the night before Hannah had a toothache so she went to see Miss Eleanore who is good with things like toothaches, headaches, all kinds of aches. She never comes back however, and no one seems to know what happened to her. Oh, and not only was the house locked but the room Mr. Leavenworth was in was also locked and there is no key anywhere. Not yet anyway.

See, there is a murder, and in a locked room of course, with no weapon and no key. Plenty of suspects, especially one of those nieces, speaking of the nieces, it is clear - well, it's supposed to be - that Miss Eleanore is the murderer, but Eleanore is also the niece who doesn't inherit anything, wouldn't it make more sense for Eleanore to keep her uncle alive? That was just my first thought when the blame started falling on her. Anyway, as I said, plenty of suspects, locked rooms, and such things, what else do we need for a good mystery story? Just in case we need anything else, there is also a secret marriage, a written confession, another dead body, papers found burnt in a fireplace, all sorts of things that I could name, but I want you to read the story for yourselves and I'll never remember it all anyway. I liked the book, it was a fun mystery story, I'm not sure how early in the book I had it figured out, that's the fun for me, seeing how early in the book I can find the real bad guy. Happy hunting.

Vasilis Manias says

Γρ?γορο, καλοκαιριν?, αν?λαφρο, ορισμ?ς του whodunit αστυνομικο? μυθιστορ?ματος, με ?να τερ?στιο συγγραφικ? πακρ?ουντ που αναφ?ρεται διεξοδικ? στον πρ?λογο της ?κδοσης. Τ?τοια βιβλ?α δε γρ?φονται πια, αυτ? ε?ναι μ?α πραγματικ?τητα, και το γεγον?ς πως οι εκδ?σεις Gutenberg ?δειξαν τ?τοια φροντ?δα και επιμ?λεια σε ?να τ?τοιο ?ργο δ?νουν σε ?λους μας μια τερ?στια ευκαιρ?α να απολα?σουμε ?να πραγματικ? αστυνομικ? μυθιστ?ρημα γραμμ?νο κ?τω απ? το φως των κερι?ν, πασαλλειμ?νο με το μελ?νι εν?ς κοντυλοφ?ρου, στη σελ?νη εν?ς ?λλου κ?σμου πολ? μακρινο? απ? τον δικ? μας.
Απολαυστικ? εμπειρ?α.

Nancy Oakes says

Such a satisfying story! Nothing at all is as it seems here, making for great mystery reading. Another book I'm very, very happy to have read. Ahhhhhhhh.

Let me say the following to anyone who might be thinking of reading this book: There is a very good reason I don't read GR reviews before starting a book, and this time my reasoning proved sound -- after finishing this novel, I cruised through the reviews here, and discovered that there is one person writing about this book who gave away the whole show in the first paragraph and another who came close. I'm still shaking my head over why people do this without noting spoilers, but what can you do? Just don't go looking through the reviews here if you want to be surprised.

No look back at early crime/detective/mystery fiction would be complete without talking about *The Leavenworth Case*, which is a true landmark in the genre. In this book the author introduces the first American series detective, Ebenezer Gryce, of the New York Metropolitan Police force, who would go on to be involved in eleven more cases. But it is also, as Kate Watson notes in her book *Women Writing Crime Fiction, 1860-1880*,

"innovative in the introduction of a number of a number of themes and tropes, now familiar to the reader of crime fiction, but then new and exciting. *The Leavenworth Case* is original in its deployment of ballistics, science, medicine, and a coroner's inquest, the illustration of the crime scene, replica letters, and the inclusion of the locked room mystery. There is a diagram of the murder scene and the layout of the library, hall and bedroom, a ploy familiar to modern readers of the Golden Age detective fiction of Agatha Christie. While some of these elements had appeared in earlier criminography, the way in which Green cleverly combines them locates her text as the forerunner of what Knight has called the clue-puzzle mystery." (122)

In short, *The Leavenworth Case* occupies a sort of transitional space -- here we find a beginning in the movement toward the form taken by more modern mystery/crime/detective fiction. And by the way, Sherlock Holmes hasn't appeared on the scene yet and won't for nearly a decade, but as Watson tells us, "In the wake of Green, women writing crime became almost commonplace in America," listing several women authors, many of them now faded into the fabric of obscurity, who went on to contribute "to the form after *The Leavenworth Case*." (130)

This book is a true whodunit, and unlike my bad luck with modern crime novels, I had absolutely no clue as to the identity of the murderer until the very end. There is much to enjoy about this book -- a preponderance of clues that slowly appear, several people with motive to do away with the deceased, and a number of secrets to be unlocked as the story goes along. And then there are the numerous themes that Green works into her narrative, for example, as Michael Sims notes in his introduction, "female dependence and inheritance laws;" an examination of class constraints are also obvious here. If you enjoy books that turn on secrets then this a good one; I'm someone who just loves this sort of thing. I will admit that the reluctance of the characters to spill what they know got a bit frustrating after a time, and I will also say that some readers unfamiliar with writing during this period might become tired of the rather florid writing style in parts or the more melodramatic aspects of the story that crop up here and there. But in the long run, I found it to be a fine mystery, one I couldn't put down.

<http://www.crimesegments.com/2017/12/...>

Kim says

Published in 1878, *The Leavenworth Case* is a classic murder mystery written by Anna Katharine Green. Green is credited with developing the modern detective genre with her series featuring NY police detective Ebenezer Gryce. This book is the first of the series and the best known. It has the feel of *The Moonstone* in

its language, formality, and story complicated by Victorian manners and sensibilities. It's also a well-constructed mystery that features many of the devices we've come to recognize - a body in a locked room, a beautiful heiress with a dark secret, a missing maid, a forged confession, false identities - it's all there.

3.5 stars, well worth reading.

Tony says

THE LEAVENWORTH CASE. (1878). Anna Katherine Green. ****.

The things we don't know...When asked, "Who was the father of the American mystery story?" we would immediately answer, "Poe." Now, "Who was the mother of the American mystery story?" would leave us (at least me) scratching our heads. Turns out that the first woman to write (and create) this genre was Anna Katherine Green (1846-1938). I came across this novel, her first, in a Penguin Classic edition. It featured what was to become a series protagonist, Ebenezer Gryce, a detective who early on laid down the rules of detecting: seeking clues and organizing those clues into a coherent format that leads to the solution of the crime. Ms. Green went on to write many novels featuring Gryce, and also created other series heroes and heroines. Her works were best sellers during her career. In this novel, we learn of the death of Horatio Leavenworth, shot to death in his library while working on various projects. He was immensely wealthy and planned to leave all of his estate to Ms. Mary Leavenworth, one of two of his nieces that he had taken on as his wards. The house also was inhabited by a variety of servants and his private secretary. Since the house was locked up when the murder occurred, we are presented with an early version of a "locked room" mystery. The novel is narrated by a Mr. Raymond, an attorney from the firm that represented Leavenworth's interests. He also takes an active role in solving the mystery – and an active role acting as the swallower of all the red herrings scattered throughout the narrative. Gryce, our detective, appears mostly as the sole possessor of rational thought in the case, and sifts through the various 'clues' to keep the good ones and toss out the misleading ones. I had expected to find pages and pages of writing typical of the styles of those days, but was pleasantly surprised to discover that the writing was more in a style typical of today's mysteries. Although there is a little faltering at the end, the whole story plays out well, and the author provides excellent character development for all her players. This one is certainly worth the reader's time. Recommended.

Elizabeth (Alaska) says

I'm glad to have found this author. This is apparently her most well known of the many mysteries she wrote. As the GR descriptions says, Mr. Raymond is a lawyer with the firm of Veeley, Carr & Raymond. He is called to the home of Horatio Leavenworth the morning Mr. Leavenworth's body is discovered, slumped at his desk with a bullet in the back of his head. Mr. Veeley, the senior partner of the firm, was a close friend of Mr. Leavenworth, but, as he was out of town, Mr. Raymond was called upon to try to help Mr. Leavenworth's nieces.

This is the first in a series called "Mr. Gryce", who is, of course, the detective.

And here let me say that Mr. Gryce, the detective, was not the thin, wiry individual with the piercing eye you are doubtless expecting to see. On the contrary, Mr. Gryce was a portly, comfortable personage with an eye that never pierced, that did not even rest on you. If it rested anywhere, it was always on some insignificant object in the vicinity, some vase, inkstand,

book, or button. These things he would seem to take into his confidence, make the repositories of his conclusions; but as for you—you might as well be the steeple on Trinity Church, for all connection you ever appeared to have with him or his thoughts.

Mr. Raymond is called upon to assist, and there is another operative called "Q". Oh, of course we know who the murderer was. And of course our opinion changes as further clues are revealed. And maybe even then we are still wrong. I don't know if this is one of the "sensational" novels of the 19th Century, but certainly there are parts that are very much over-dramatized for the 21st Century reader. I am quite used to 19th Century prose, but I think others would not be bothered by it. It is not the convoluted prose of Dickens that so many think of when they think 19th Century.

I don't give out 5 stars for mysteries, but this one is quite good. I'll stretch my usual 3 stars for them to 4 and look forward to others in the series.
