

THE LEAVENWORTH CASE.

By A. K. Green.

CHAPTER XXXII.—Continued.

"I don't know," murmured she. "I think not. Uncle is not as strong as he looks, and—" She did not say any more, horrified perhaps at the turn the conversation was taking. But there was an expression on her face that set me thinking at the time, and has kept me thinking ever since.

Not that any actual dread of such an occurrence as has since happened came to me then. But when a letter came to me from Mr. Clavering, with a vivid appeal to tell him something of the woman who, in spite of her vows, doomed him to a suspense so cruel, and when, on the evening of the same day, a friend of mine who had just returned from New York, spoke of meeting Mary Leavenworth at some gathering surrounded by manifest admirers, I began to realize the alarming features of the affair, and, sitting down, I wrote her a letter, telling her what was the risk she ran in keeping so ardent a lover from his rights. Her reply rather startled me.

"I have put Mr. Robbins out of my calculations for the present, and advise you to do the same. As for the gentleman himself, I have told him that when I could receive him I would be careful to notify him. That day has not yet come." . . . "But do not let him be discouraged," she added in a postscript. "When he does receive his happiness, it will be a satisfying one."

When, I thought. Ah, it is that when which is likely to ruin all! But intent only upon fulfilling her will, I sat down and wrote a letter to Mr. Clavering, in which I stated what she had said, and begged him to have patience.

In two weeks from that time I heard of the sudden death of Mr. Stebbins, the minister who had married them; and was further startled by seeing in a New York paper the name of Mr. Clavering among the list of arrivals at the Hoffman House. I was consequently far from being surprised when in a couple of weeks or so afterward, a letter came from him to my address, which, owing to the careless omission of the private mark upon the envelope, I opened, and read enough to learn, that driven to desperation by the constant failure of his endeavors to gain access to her in public or private, he had made up his mind to risk everything, and by making an appeal to her uncle, and the suspense under which he was laboring. "I want you, Amy," he wrote, "dowered or dowerless, it makes little difference to me."

Neither can I say that I was much surprised, knowing Mary as I did, when in a few days from this, she forwarded to me for copying this reply: "If Mr. Robbins ever expects to be happy with Amy Belden, let him reconsider the determination of which he speaks. Not only would he by such an action succeed in destroying the happiness of her he professes to love, but run the greater risk of effectually annulling the affection which makes the tie between them endurable."

To this there was neither date nor signature. What its real effect was upon him and her fate I can only conjecture. All I know is that in two weeks thereafter Mr. Leavenworth was found murdered in his room, and Hannah Chester, coming direct to my door from the scene of violence, begged me to take her in and secrete her from public inquiry, as I loved and desired to serve Mary Leavenworth.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Unexpected Testimony.

Mrs. Belden paused, and a short silence fell upon the room. It was broken by my asking how Hannah could have found entrance into her house without the knowledge of the neighbors.

"Well," said she, "I had gone to bed early—I was sleeping then in the room off this—when, at about a quarter to one there came a low knock at the window-pane. Thinking that some of the neighbors were sick, I rose on my elbow and asked who was there. The answer came in low muffled tones: 'Hannah, Miss Leavenworth's girl! Please let me in at the kitchen door.' Fearing I knew not what, I hurried round to the door. I saw she looked very pale and strange. 'Miss Leavenworth has sent me,' said she. 'She told me to come here; said you would keep me. I am

not to go out of the house, and no one is to know I am here.' 'But why?' I asked, 'what has occurred?' I dare not say, she whispered; 'I am forbid; I am just to stay here and keep quiet.' 'But you must tell me. She surely did not forbid you to tell me?' 'Yes, she did; everyone,' the girl replied, 'and I never break my word.' She looked so utterly unlike herself that I could do nothing but stare at her. 'You will keep me,' she said; 'you will not turn me away?' 'No,' I said, 'I will not turn you away.' 'And tell no one?' she went on. 'And tell no one,' I repeated.

"Thanking me, she followed me upstairs. I put her into the room in which you found her because it was the most secret one in the house, and there she has remained ever since till this horrible day."

(To be continued.)



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