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HAWTHORNEAN

A STORY OF EVERY DAY LIFE

BY MRS. CLARA M. THOMPSON

CHAPTER XIX.—CONTINUED

REMINISCENCES

With this he went to the door, Dora following; in the hall there were more words, a loud voice, oaths, and angry tones. It was some moments before Miss Greenwood came back, and when she entered, it was from the oratory, her face very pale, and her lips quivering. She did not renew the subject of her brother's return, but brought out cabinets filled with the treasures of land and sea, precious things with strange devices from foreign lands, which she explained to her young friend, entering into the subject with deep interest, and never pausing till she thought her companion's mind was turned from the unfortunate interview with her father. Rosine little suspected that she had been the cause of all the loud talking in the hall; the Commodore having guessed she was Philip Benson's daughter, cursed every branch of the family, as belonging to the man who had defrauded him of his hard earnings; he swore his children were ungrateful brutes they chose their friends from those who had wronged him every way; taunted Dora, with her early predilection for dissipation, vowing he would marry again and cut off his children with a young outfit. The quiet dignity of his child as she met this tirade, saved the old man in the midst of his wrath, little did he know or care for her after struggles in the oratory, with a heart that rebelled against a life filled with these grating elements.

The ladies had just finished their lunch, which was ordered in the sunny parlor, when the sister's quick ear caught the sound of a footfall on the pavement, and a springing step on the stairs, and in a few moments she was clasped in her brother's arms.

"Thank God! I am with you," he exclaimed; "and a free man," he cried, embracing her a second time.

"Harry, my own dear brother, God be praised," she replied, bringing him forward to Rosine, and introducing her as "her dear young friend."

"Excuse me, sister," he said, after the first formal greeting; "I have met this young lady before; her face is not readily forgotten."

Rosine blushed crimson as he held out his hand again, saying, "Let's shake hands for old acquaintance sake; I could not but remember the fair—the flower table. By the way, Dora," he continued, observing the confusion into which his remark had thrown Rosine, "what's this I hear of Aleck Hartland? Clandestinely married to Captain Marten's daughter! Captain Jones told me as I came up. Is it true?"

"There is no doubt of it, I believe," replied Dora, "and it has caused a great deal of very unnecessary talk."

People will talk when men do such astonishingly silly things. What on earth had they to prevent the marriage being made public? I am sorry for Aleck. His ship has been ordered direct to the Gulf of Mexico, and will not come home first, as we have done.

Dora changed the subject to the fair and the flower table, and the three laughed merrily over the odd volume of Jane Eyre. Rosine related how carefully Ned had secured the other, and Lieutenant Greenwood declared with true gallantry that he "should never part with the mate." Alone for a few moments with his sister, he made further inquiries of Aleck Hartland's marriage.

"She seems to be quite alone," said Dora, "with no protector, her father being ordered away again. There is, as you have heard, a great deal of scandal about her; but she has lately of her own free will gone to stay with Sister Agnes, which looks well, certainly. Colonel Hartland's family have quite cut her; it seems a pity, such a young, motherless girl."

"I will call upon her with you, for Aleck's sake," replied her brother. "I am certainly bound to believe nothing bad of his wife till he believes it; however, all my memory of Laura Marten is of an abominable flirt. Why, she had the air of a coquette when I was only a middy! I rather wonder at Aleck, and yet no I don't; such quiet unsuspecting men are sometimes the first to get taken in; and I have heard that Laura was very fascinating."

"The sun that had shone so brightly when Rosine left home, had become gradually obscured, and snow began to fall quite fast before she was ready to return. Lieutenant Greenwood insisted upon seeing her to the Colonel's door, although she repeatedly assured him she could find her way perfectly, it was not nearly dark, and she was so accustomed to the route. "But this short winter's day will come to a close, Miss Banton, before you reach home, and it will be quite dark; the coaches too run very far all at this hour, uncomfortably so for a lone lady; besides, at least while I wear these," he laughingly added, pointing to his shoulder straps, "I could not suffer you to run any risk of being benighted, without danger to my reputation as a soldier."

Rosine was truly thankful when she entered the crowded bus, that she had a protector, for men and boys had taken most of the seats, leaving a woman with a babe in her arms standing, and an old man leaning on his crutch. Harry Greenwood soon shamed two stout fellows into vacating their seats for these, but all his logic was unsuccessful in securing a place for Rosine; so she stood by his side, his arms supporting her in the rough jolting, till they were safely landed at Colonel Hartland's house. The Colonel rubbed his hands with delight when the young couple appeared, and laughed heartily, as he said, "To think how Ned would snarl, he having just started in his chaise for Rosine. I told him," said the Colonel, "to wait patiently, for with such a body of loyal soldiers as you have at the Navy Yard, one could be found as an escort for a lady, but I own I didn't expect to see you as knight errant my fine fellow. What about the commission? Don't you lose a great chance with the ladies? They say *these* are a great attraction," he added, laying a hand on each of the young man's shoulders.

The Lieutenant returned the joke by saying, "If shoulder straps were the magnet, they were welcomed to his any day, but for himself—why that was another question— he must own he was as yet free."

The Doctor came hurrying home about five minutes after the Lieutenant had taken leave. "So you gave me the slip completely," he cried to Rosine, as he brushed the snow from his coat over the Turkey carpet, and shook his wet hat over the polished grate; "you have given me a long, cold, disagreeable ride for nothing, and run away with that gentleman into the bargain. I shall charge you for this."

"Don't be so very cruel, Ned," she said, coming towards him and taking his outer garments.

"It vexes me to find him gone, too," he added. "I saw his Captain today. He says the Navy can't afford to lose such a man, and begged me to use my influence to recall his resignation—bah!—if I influence him, it will be on the other tack. The Commodore can't hate me much worse than he does already."

"Did you see Dora?" inquired Rosine, without a thought what she was saying.

Dr. Hartland looked at her intently and then replied, "Only for a moment—we were exceedingly gracious to each other; she regretted I should have so much trouble—and no forth—bah!—Rosa, you were singing something very sweet when I came in, what was it? Try it again for me."

"A little German song Dora gave me," she replied, going to the piano. "I think it is nice, only somehow I like to sing it best when I am alone."

"Imagine me a cabbage then," he said, "and let's have it."

"The long, long weary day, Is passed in tears away, And still at evening I am weeping, When from my window pane, I gaze on night again, I still am weeping, My lone watch keeping."

"When I, his truth to prove, Would trifle with my love, He'd say, 'For me thou shalt be weeping; When at some future day, I shall be far away, Thou shalt be weeping, Thy lone watch keeping.'"

"Don't sing that sentimental English nonsense," cried the Doctor, interrupting her; "give us the original, it will awaken memories of 'fader land,' for I heard it first in Germany."

"I can't trust myself to sing German yet," she replied; "I will learn, on purpose to sing this to you, but I must finish it in English; she sung,

"But, ah, my love is dead, To Heaven his life has fled; He was with heart and soul mine only. My'er shall see him more, My grief will ne'er be o'er; I must weep only, Be ever lonely."

It was sung to a plaintive air, and when she had finished she found the Doctor resting his head against the mantel and looking fondly into the fire.

"Did Dora ever speak of me to you?" he said turning abruptly to Rosine as she came and stood near him.

"She was confused for a moment by the suddenness of the query, but said with some hesitancy, "Yes, Ned, she has spoken of you today, and told me such a sweet, sad story about her dear lost brother; it is his birthday, and I found her weeping, and wept with her."

"Well, you may weep with her, and with me too," he replied bitterly, "for never a friend lost a dearer. Why, Rosa, upon my return to life after that terrible voyage, when I knew that he was sleeping down among the coral reefs, I begged them day and night to cast me where he was; he was dearer to me than all heaven and earth; and poor Dora weeps and prays, I'll be bound, for his precious soul!" he added with a half sneer.

"Yes," said Rosine, timidly, "it is not that better than not to care for one's soul or the soul of one's friend?"

"Did you mean that for me?" he replied, looking up into her face.

"If you did, you may ease your mind on that point; I believe, but it is in a God of infinite love, yearning

for our return, ready always to help us, not watching for our halting, as some good pious ones misrepresent Him. I do not believe in a God who could condemn such a soul as Ernest Greenwood to eternal damnation, simply because he was not baptized, or had not 'experienced religion,' as you good people tell of. He did nothing but experience religion all his life, if love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance, go for any thing, and they are called the graces of the Spirit. He had them all; and he had trials in his bitter cup which few men knew, and yet he never let go his trust—his trust in God or man and you and Dora condemn this noble soul."

"Never, Ned, never," she replied earnestly, "else why should Dora pray for him? No; the Catholic Church holds that one strong earnest desire for baptism were it earned by sin, one perfect act of love for God, saves the soul for whom Christ has died, in the hour of death—in, in fact, the gift of faith; and we don't know how often this may come to poor souls in their dying hour; at any rate, we do know and believe that God is infinite in His mercy, and will not cast out any who come to Him; but we do feel that it is dangerous to defer our duties to that hour."

"Ah, Rosine," he said, "there was a time when I nearly lost all confidence in every thing human or divine, but it is coming back to me," he added gently, "and you have helped me wonderfully."

"O how I wish I could comfort you," she added in a whisper. "Tell me how."

"Be always true, Rosita," he replied; "always transparent, free from cant and trickery, and non-sense, as you now are, and keep your faith bright, you can do wonders."

CHAPTER XX. HARD TO FORGIVE

Miss Greenwood and her brother, on their way to accomplish a call upon Mrs. Laura Hartland, suddenly came upon Rosine, who was persuaded after some urging, to join them. Neither Dora nor the Lieutenant had more than a passing acquaintance with Laura, and they would not have sought an interview with her, except from the benevolence of their hearts, and as the wife of their friend. Sister Agnes, to whom they were no strangers, had hinted that it would be a kindness, and she received them now with her always cordial welcome, while to Rosine she extended a little reproachful pat, reminding her how she had neglected her mother's friend. Laura met the visitors with a smile, but Rosine, who knew her so well, saw the shadow that came after it, the care-worn, anxious look, which had once been a stranger to her countenance. The bloom was returning to her cheek, and the flashing of her eye reminded Rosine of the past, but the subdued and thoughtful expression that had gathered on her face, gave her more of beauty but less of light than formerly. In parting, Laura drew Rosine to her bosom, and imprinted a kiss upon her forehead, whispering, "Don't hate me." Sister Agnes begged of her a visit of a whole day during the following week, that she might show her the children of the House in whom she used to be so much interested, and Rosine, though she dreaded the visit, could not well refuse. The sight of Laura had disturbed her; she felt that Dr. Hartland's influence over her had not been good, but more than all, she realized the positive hatred that had been growing in her heart, as the kiss still burned upon her brow; the kiss that had roused in her only feelings of repugnance. She had once reproached Ned with injustice and hardness, now she had a vision of her own unholiness, unforgiving spirit. She listened to the faint ticking of the clock (Laura's present), as she commuted with her heart in her own chamber, upon this change in her inner feelings; there was a change even in this moment of love, the figures were not visible, the tapers were lying unlighted beside it. She almost hoped something might happen to prevent her visit, but instead, there came a letter from her mother, inquiring if it was inability that kept her so entirely from her mother's friend. The day came, bright and clear, and there was no excuse, so she took her way to the House of the Infant Jesus, with only feelings of dislike. She found Laura gone for a week by the urgent advice of the Sister Superior; she had seldom ventured out alone, though she had been an inmate of the Home more than two months. There was no reproach to Rosine in Sister Agnes' warm greeting and kindly manner, as she took her young friend over the large establishment, showing her the new nursery, where fifty infants of less than two years were tenderly cared for.

"You don't know what a help I find in Mrs. Hartland," she said; "all these quilts are of her knitting," she added, pointing to the pure white coverings of the tiny beds; "she is bound to finish them all alike, and so neat and pretty; then there is no end to the little garments she invents, she is never a moment idle, for an idle moment brings only anguish to the poor girl's heart. Tell me, Rosa dear, do they ever speak of her at Colonel Hartland's?"

"Very seldom," replied Rosine with some hesitancy, and thinking she saw a slight shade of reproach on the Sister's face, she added, "I don't

think anything I could say would make it any better."

"Perhaps not," sighed the Sister, "though I did hope the Colonel, when he knew her real penitence, would allow her to take a position in his family, for her own and husband's sake; for us, we should miss her sadly here."

"Is she cheerful?" inquired Rosine. "Sometimes," replied the Sister; "yes, even gay when she is frolicking with the children, but every day brings its sad hours. Perhaps the Colonel thinks a longer season of probation necessary, but it seems to me as if every day would make a reconciliation more difficult. O, my dear child, how hard we frail mortals are upon our fellows, when perhaps the great God, in His infinite purity, sees on our character blot as deep as theirs!"

Rosine struggled with contending feelings. Sister Agnes, she said, "the Colonel is waiting to hear from Aleck before he takes any step; but for myself, I must tell you I have had dreadfully bitter thoughts toward Laura, they seem like love turned almost to hate; her past conduct appears to me so unworthy of a pure woman, since I know she was really married all the while. I have disliked to come in contact with her, I may as well confess it, there is something within repels me from her, when I used to love her so dearly."

"Ah, Rosa," said the Sister, taking her hand caressingly, "we should be in a sad state if our dear Lord cherished such feelings toward us—and yet I suppose they are natural feelings; but our Gospel has taught us better things, and we may abhor the sin without hating the sinner. Laura's sins are such as the world winks at in those who have friends, wealth and position, but in her comparatively friendless condition, they grow into crimes even in the eyes of those who are indulging the same folly and love of admiration. Do not think," she added, noticing an expression of surprise on the young girl's face, "that I would have you look lightly or without abhorrence upon Laura's course; unfaithfulness to the marriage vow even in thought, has God's special curse upon it; I want you only to hate the sin and pity the sinner; especially when humbled as Mrs. Hartland is. Perhaps by a gentle softening word here and there, you may open the Colonel's heart to his son's wife; she has a perfect yearning for reconciliation, and with her affectionate generous nature, kindness can do great things. Mind, Rosine, I do not mean to recommend a violent intimacy between you and Laura, a strong girl friendship; but now she is in trouble you may help her, and by your better training and knowledge of right, win her to goodness by interceding for her in the family."

Before Rosine could reply, the street door opened and closed with a sudden crash. Laura stood alone in the hall, agitated with terror; she could not speak as Sister Agnes led her to the visitor's parlor. "What is it dear?" she inquired, soothingly, as Laura bowed her head on her hands, and trembled all over with agitation.

"It is he!" she exclaimed, wildly rocking herself to and fro, "I will never leave me—he followed me—he held me by the door—even here I am not safe!"

The Sister assured her that no one could be admitted there without her permission, but it was a long time before she was calmed, or traces of color came back to her cheeks and lips. Rosine's gentle heart began to melt before such evident suffering and sorrow; she came to her, as she was wringing her hands with distress, and whispered, "Laura, I have wronged you, can you forgive me?"

"O, Rosa," she replied, "if you know what I have suffered, am suffering, and must suffer you, not hate me; you would at least pity me."

"We will be friends again," said Rosine through her tears, her warm, impulsive nature making her forget every thing.

TO BE CONTINUED

MR. BENSON'S NURSE

Out of doors, though the day was late in May, the wind wailed and the rain fell constantly in gray, depressing sheets.

Mary Benson, drumming her slender white fingers restlessly against the window panes, down which innumerable sparkling raindrops chased each other unceasingly, gave vent to her feelings presently in a groan of discontent.

"What rotten summer weather!" said Mary suddenly and viciously. She was eighteen years of age, very pretty and not a little spoiled, and on such a day as this inclined to regard the enjoining walls of her home just as would an unhappy poor wild bird the imprisoning bars of its cage.

Mrs. Benson winced visibly as her young daughter spoke. "It is so rot—so dreadfully dull," she corrected herself, "to be kept all day in the house with absolutely nothing to do. And I was so looking forward to going to the Darnison garden party. It was to be their farewell entertainment to the neighborhood; but—of course, it couldn't possibly come off on a day like this, and now, just as likely, they may not have it at all. I don't know

what I'll do when Jenny and Elsie are gone. If I could only go and be a nurse with Elsie!"

"My dear, I don't know how I could spare you," her mother said, in a half frightened way. "And your poor father would miss you terribly. There—he is awake now, I think—I am sure I heard him cough. And if you were to go up for a while and read to him I should be so glad."

Mary looked at her mother in surprise. "But—I don't think Papa really cares for me to read to him," she said then.

"He does, dear I assure you—you know he loves to have you near him and about him. But, you see, dear, he is so fond of you that he does not like to tire you, and fears the atmosphere of a sick room might make you dull and sad. And then, Mary—I—think your father sees that you don't do it willingly."

Mary's pale, pretty face flashed, suddenly red all over. "But I do, mother," she protested. "You know I'd do anything for father if I only thought he wanted me to. And I wish you wouldn't say, mother, that father will never be any better. It—it hurts." Mary's voice was choked with sobs and her eyes grew suddenly dim.

"My dear, I only hope it isn't true," her mother said sadly. "But Dr. Lyons has been attending him for so long, and without, as far as I can see, the very slightest improvement."

"Then I'd get another doctor, if I were you, mother," Mary replied hotly. "I always did think Dr. Lyons a regular old crook. For goodness sake why not have a specialist?"

"If we could afford it," her mother sighed. "But your father would not hear of it when I mentioned the matter the other day. He knows how hard it is for us to live at all; and to get in a specialist at great expense and against his wishes would only annoy and anger him—and that is above all, what we must avoid."

"But—but how, mother?" asked Mary in amazement. "You say you could not afford to get a specialist for papa—and yet how is it you are able to buy me such nice things—for instance, that pretty silk frock for the Darnison garden party?"

"Because your father wished you to have it," her mother answered quietly. "When he heard about the party coming off, he said to me, 'Do let the child go to it, Helen. It is so dull for her here. I know what young things are, and it would not help me in the least to see her fading. If you can spare the money at all let her have a nice frock and be happy. I like to see Mary, wearing pretty things. And after all, I may not be here so long and I should like to see my little girl enjoying a bit of sunshine and happiness before I go!' Those are just his words, dear."

Mary was crying now. "I—I wish you hadn't mother," she sobbed. "I mean—I wish you hadn't spent the money on that dress—I feel as though I could never wear it now, not even to please poor papa. If we could only sell it mother, and get the money back! Perhaps Elsie Darnison would buy it from me, she is so fond of pretty things. But, then if she's going to be a nurse—"

"I haven't much faith in Elsie's nursing," said Mrs. Benson, with a dubious frown. "She has always seemed to me such a shallow, vain, frivolous little thing, without any real heart or character. I'm sure she'd faint at the first sight of blood; and nursing is a hard, strenuous life. I was talking to your father about that, too, and he said if you really wished to become a nurse, why should we stand in your way?"

"But I don't—not now," Mary broke in hurriedly, thoroughly repenting and self-reproaching. "Oh, mother, she went on, 'what a silly, heartless girl you must have thought me, too. And you so unselfish, so brave, so self-sacrificing always! You seem never to tire, you are on your feet from morning to night.'"

"Nonsense, child!" cried Mrs. Benson, almost gayly. "It is just a labor of love. I do all that simply because I like it, and I shouldn't be happy observing it."

"Well, mother," cried Mary, "I'm going to do it, too, 'just because I like it.' I realize now what a selfish, lazy wretch I have been all along, but I'm going to do it now, mother, I really am! I shall do my very best to make our poor papa happy."

"That will be splendid," said her mother, with shining eyes. "For, oh, Mary, though he wanted you to be happy and enjoying yourself—as every young creature ought to do, he used to say—I could often see, my dear, that he was very, very lonely, at the same time, for his one little daughter's company. But now—if he only felt that you liked to be with him, I'm sure it would cheer him up wonderfully!"

And something of the fond hope and faith that shone in her mother's faded blue eyes was reflected now in Mary's young eager, bright ones.

After that a new lease of life seemed somehow to have been given to poor Mr. Benson. He suffered from acute heart trouble, which for the past couple of years had prevented him from carrying on his usual business, and had resulted latterly in his becoming a complete invalid, almost confined to his bed. It seemed all the sadder and more heart-breaking because he had almost broken man full of life and spirits, inspired with a thousand energies and enterprises for the comfort and betterment of those dearest to him.

Mary outvalued her mother now in her untiring devotion and usefulness. She seemed never happy anywhere except by her father's bedside, ministering to him, singing to him his favorite songs, filling the sick room with the sunshine and light of her presence just as it was filled with the sunshine and light of the long summer day. For it was not always raining; God's weather was good weather now in every sense of the term and Mr. Benson's room was made gay and bright and fragrant with roses and lilies, and each successive bloom of the year, set there daily for the delight of his eyes by Mary's loving hands.

Dr. Arthur Tremayne was the young medical man who had succeeded old Dr. Lyons.

Perhaps it was the young doctor's cheery and hope inspiring manner—so different from the depressing gloominess of his predecessor—that did half the work in this slow, weary battle between strong life and death. But Dr. Tremayne was also very clever and up-to-date in his methods. He completely changed Dr. Lyons' treatment, and with such good results that his smiling patient was soon able to sit up, and a little while later to be out in the garden, enjoying all the sunshine of the July days.

Dr. Tremayne came every day now. It was quite a usual thing for him now to come and take tea with them there, and did any professional duty interfere with his coming it would be hard to tell whether he or Mr. Benson or Mary the more deeply regretted it.

It was easy to see in what direction the doctor's affections tended, and Mr. Benson felt deeply thankful, for he had already come to love the young man almost as dearly as though he were his own son. For the boys he worried less; but how often had he wished that he might have seen his Mary, at last, happily settled before he had to go!

And now—here she was about to have the very husband—young, clever, honest, handsome and kind—that he would himself have chosen for her! And neither was he going to die, thanks be to God—and to Dr. Tremayne! The doctor himself had assured him of it, on his word of honor.

"Of course, you will need to be careful, Mr. Benson," he had told him, "as there will always be a certain delicacy, and nothing can give you a quite new heart. But with a little ordinary care and precaution, there is no reason why you should not live to a ripe old age, as I have every hope and belief that you will do."

"It is you, then, I have to thank," began James Benson, gratefully, and with a wonderfully heartened look. "Oh, no—what about Mrs. Benson, and your other little nurse," the doctor smiled deprecatingly. "A good nurse is half the battle, and in Miss Mary you could hardly have had a better one."

"I hope it is a little bit true—I mean, that I am a good nurse," Mary said a little later with a certain shy humility, as they said their good-byes at the gate; for I should like to think I had some hand in making papa well."

"Of course you had! You are the dearest and most wonderful little nurse in the world," Arthur Tremayne assured her.

"I wanted to be a hospital nurse once, not so long ago," she told him. "But as mother truly said there was plenty of nursing that I might do at home. And I'm so glad now that I did not go."

"And so am I," he added eagerly, "for in that case, just think of it—I might never have met you! And what a queer, cold, empty world it must have been to me then!"

"And me, too," hazarded Mary.—Nora Tynan O'Mahony.

EASTER-TIDE

The Easter season is one of Peace. Our Lord's first message to His Apostles after the resurrection was "Peace be to you." His coming on the first Christmas Day brought peace on earth to men of good will. So His first appearance after his glorious victory over sin and death was a harbinger of peace.

To men and women of today weary of war and strife the Easter message comes as a welcome ray of hope in the pall that has been cast about them by the events of the past few years. What they most earnestly desire and what the counsels of men intranced in high places, cannot seem to bring, is peace. Though the world has been unsuccessful, with uplifted hearts and firm faith the children of Christ look to their Master to give the peace that this world cannot give.

The War and its sequel came to a glorious ending in the armistice. It seemed then that War had indeed ceased and peace had come. That was the real meaning of the celebration of armistice day. But events proved that the rejoicing was only temporary. Hopes were centered on the Peace Conference. That was to end all war and to ensure the blessing of universal and everlasting peace. But that vast conference initiated with high hopes, and planned with lofty ideals began with the primal mistake of trusting over-much on fallible human judgments and leaving out of reckoning Him Who alone could establish a just and lasting peace among men.

Wary, distraught, and almost despairing the world has nothing to do now but to return to the God Whom it has abandoned. He alone will bring peace. In this joyous Easter

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