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HAATHORNDEN

A STORY OF EVERY DAY LIFE

BY MRS. CLARA M. THOMPSON

CHAPTER XVI

FLIRTATIONS HIGH AND LOW

By the removal to Ingewood, Sobriety Top had not fared so well as the others of the family. She found more companions of her own stamp, who were not improving either to her morals or manners. A cousin of hers stimulated by hearing of her good fortune in falling into a 'big' rich family, had emigrated to the region of Athlaca, and their meetings and writings, for Sobriety had acquired a certain use of the pen, gave Mrs. Benton concern for the girl which she had not felt in the isolation of the Prairie Farm. In going through the house she had chanced upon a crumpled half sheet of paper, which she was about committing to the flames, when the chronography attracted her attention. Her first thought was of a lesson Sobriety had attempted to copy, as every line began with a capital letter, but after some pains she deciphered the following, which we give literally, with the exception of the form of the letters, which would require types never yet in use.

"Deer dan i reckon i dont car a pie for what i does u bout me. Not settin down to grub with Mis bentun i dont wantur Coo i likt to be round and se Mis maren thro her poety i s Upter the doctor, which she duz i tel yer wen her pap ant lukin Now i tel yer if the jine wont Rashe latun mak a tus the Doctors so poutful gud he hant No lif rashe latun rise amnt And mis maren aint no fule She noes beter than to lek a Fellar wat hant of power, and she Rashe was cut up i tel yer Wen she went to rid with the Doctor she sad to se the old farm. I ill met a nex mundy Ni du fallin yer own tru luv S t"

Somehow this illy written and worse spelled epistle gave Mrs. Benton trouble in two ways. She feared Sobriety herself was going to the bad, and it brought to her mind thoughts that had come to her on several occasions, and which she had endeavored to repress as vain, foolish and unnecessarily suspicious. For the first time she regretted the intimacy of Dr. Nelson with the family wholly on his own account. She knew Marion's love of power, and she feared that she might be somewhat unscrupulous in her ways of winning it. She had tried to quell these thoughts in the past, now she would confide them to her husband.

"This would indeed be a perplexing state of affairs, Lucy," was his reply to her first hint on the subject. "The thought is an entirely new one to me; I have seen young Leighton's fancy, but can hardly think Dr. Nelson implicated; I am a poor gossip, but will have an eye to these matters. Don't trouble yourself, my dear," he added, seeing a look of anxiety on her face. "I am only afraid," she replied very gently, "that Marion's love of power may lead her to indiscretion."

"If I see anything like trifling," he said gravely, and in his old decided manner, "I shall interfere at once. Has Marion said anything to lead you to suppose her own feelings were interested?"

"Never by word; and I have not ventured on the subject lest I might suggest thoughts to her mind which as yet are strangers, but she is not confiding like dear Rosa."

"No, Lucy, she has to learn through pride subtlety and ambition quelled, as her father has, what a friend she may find in you. I pray God she may not have to suffer as I have done."

Once placed in a post of observation, there were few persons more penetrating in their gaze into the motives of action than Philip Benton, and but few days sufficed to show him that Dr. Nelson was attracted towards Marion; but he was weeks in coming to the conclusion that his daughter was deliberately and determinedly giving both the young men sufficient encouragement to keep alive the flame kindling in their hearts. It distressed him, it shocked him, sometimes it angered him, but he waited, hoping he was mistaken, forbearing to tell his fears to his wife, knowing how deeply such conduct to heart. He saw Marion time and again devote herself exclusively to Dr. Nelson when Leighton was present, seemingly absorbed in his society, scarcely noticing the other; replying to Mr. Leighton's observations in the shortest monosyllables, and taking leave of him with a cool bow; reversing her line of conduct at the next meeting, perhaps neglecting the Doctor with marked respect, chiding and laughing with young Leighton, permitting various little amenities which the other did not dare to offer, till Dr. Nelson would hastily retire to his office without staying for his chat with Mr. Benton, and wishing in his heart that he had never seen the bewitching girl who had already fascinated him to a degree he would hardly acknowledge to himself.

The father satisfied himself as to his daughter's designs, mortifying as the conclusion was; he did not hear, to add to his mortification, the sly

jokes of Sobriety which Marion permitted, nor the foolish things said in the neighborhood, which the allowed Sobriety to repeat to her. By the proposition of her father, she had been reviewing her knowledge of Latin with Dr. Nelson at stated times, when his calls were not urgent; latterly there had been great negligence here; a call from Horatio Leighton would entirely interrupt the lesson, or she would induce Dr. Nelson to talk on irrelevant subjects till the time was passed, leaving him with a sense of short-coming in what he had undertaken. Mr. Benton had seen all this and made his resolution, norving himself to the task of reproving his daughter with difficulty, his failing health leading him to dread any excitement. The fitting opportunity came sooner than he expected; young Leighton had come in the midst of a Latin lesson for her company for a ride, horses saddled and at the door.

"How can I resist such a treat, Dr. Nelson, this beautiful spring morning? you must excuse me." He gently pleaded her father's wishes that they should be punctual in their lessons, but she, promising for another time, was off in a moment. Mr. Benton heard the voices in discussion, and his first impulse when he saw his daughter mounting for her ride was to recall her to her duties; but on second thoughts he saw that, now in her womanhood, obedient to simple obedience to his commands must be brought to bear upon her.

She returned from a long exhilarating ride, glowing with health and spirits. The Leightons came over for the evening, but Dr. Nelson did not appear till a late hour, when Marion met him with her sweetest smile, assuring him they had missed him so much, and planting herself by his side, apologized prettily for the morning delinquency, devoting herself so entirely to him to the neglect of the other guests as to be almost rude.

She was recalled to herself by her father's voice (whose every tone she knew) inquiring if she did not hear Mr. Leighton asking her to sing. She went with evident reluctance to comply with this request, calling Dr. Nelson to turn the music for her, returned to her chatting with the Doctor as soon as she could with propriety, and was apparently absorbed in the conversation the remainder of the evening, scarcely noticing young Leighton as he rose to go, with the delightful memories of the morning ride embittered by the experience of the evening.

Mr. Benton detained Marion when she came for the "good-night kiss," he looked at her steadily for a moment till her eyelids drooped under his penetrating gaze, and taking the candle from her hand he said, "My daughter, I have a word to say to you." She took her seat with an instinctive dread of a reprimand for her morning negligence, she did not realize that her father's gaze saw further than this neglect of duty.

"Marion," he said, after they had sat in silence some moments, and with a voice in which sternness and love were striving for the mastery, though he laid his hand affectionately on her arm, "your natural love of power, my child, is leading you to trifle with the holiest affection one creature can bestow upon another. The tell-tale blush that suffused Marion's cheek, but she did not look up. He continued, "I hoped for a long time that I was mistaken, and that your behavior was the result of ignorance, but I can think so no longer. I trusted your conscience would check you by a sense of the sinfulness of your course, or proper womanly feelings would have restrained you from such unbecomingly, I had almost said unchaste conduct."

"O papa," she exclaimed, weeping, "you are so severe!" "Truth often seems severe," he replied, "but could a truly pure, correct woman, coquet as you are doing?"

"But what am I to do?" she inquired, summoning resolution to excuse herself. "You are to return to your duties," he replied sternly. "Do you realize," he added more mildly, "that you are doing that which will eventually break up our pleasant circle, and make our friends who all were before friends, by your ill-fated conduct towards both Dr. Nelson and Mr. Leighton?"

"But, papa," she said almost in a whisper, "I have no reason to suppose either of these gentlemen desires to be anything more than a friend; I thought no lady had a right to think so, till the gentleman had spoken."

"That is a miserable subterfuge, my child; as if there were no way of speaking except with the lips. No man in his senses will offer his hand and heart to a woman, unless she has given him reason to believe she loves him with favor; and prove the rule, a refused lover, as a general thing, ought to cause a woman shame and sorrow that she has, through ignorance or indiscretion, led to the confession of a love that cannot be reciprocated."

"If one has no choice in heart, one should avoid giving decided preference to either, as I have seen you do many times, my daughter, a marked preference; that is coquetry, systematic, deliberate coquetry, and gives rise, O my child, to the most hellish feelings in the breast of man that can be cherished. Yes, this has made men liars—murderers—adulterers!" His tone was slow, solemn and earnest, as he uttered these words; and Marion trembled at the depth of their meaning.

"I will try to do right, papa," she said softly. "God help you," he replied, kissing her affectionately; "I expect you to do right, and if you have doubts as to matters of propriety, I can recommend your mother as a safe confidant."

There was a shade of reproach as he said this, that went direct to the fountains of her heart, already somewhat moved. "Dear papa," she exclaimed, throwing her arms about his neck, "I have nothing to confide in."

"Marion," he said, removing her arms and holding both her hands in his while he gazed into her face, which she in vain endeavored to hide, "you have not yet learned to be true with yourself."

From that day Marion was continually conscious of her father's watchful eye, her pride had received a powerful check, and she was more circumspect in his presence; but there were many nameless tiny delicate ways, in which her love of power and desire of admiration were displayed, which were not unobserved by another eye, equally vigilant and more jealous than Mr. Benton's.

Alice Leighton saw with penetrating scrutiny how evenly her friend held the balance of her admiration between her brother and the Doctor. She knew nothing of the ways of the world, but her own guileless heart told her there was a wrong in Marion's course, and gradually the warm friendship which she had given her was transferred in all its condenses to Mrs. Benton. She, with her gentle, firm nature, took the young invalid readily to her heart, and became the repository of all her hopes and fears. She understood her nature better than her more common-place mother, and in the end helped her in her efforts after that which was of more value to her than even health.

Marion was still the reigning queen in Athlaca society, not only by superiority of education and accomplishment, but by her native energy and will. Envious ones called her a "pushing girl," and though exceedingly popular, she failed thoroughly to please her parents. Dr. Nelson, busied though he was by an ever increasing practice, saw that the image of Marion Benton came between him and every other earthly object. He began to look at other things through the medium of his growing love for her, and it gave brightness to his many solitary hours, when he could bring himself to hope that ultimately she might share them. He was not much given to building air-castles, his chastened and subdued nature had taught him better; but Marion had attracted and fascinated him, and it must be a hard wrench that could liberate a constant nature like his from such a thrallhold. His knowledge of the character of woman and her motives of action was exceedingly limited, and he often blamed himself for Marion's capricious ways, fancying, when she looked coldly on him, that he had in his ignorance neglected some point of propriety, and offended her delicate perceptions. The great lack in Dr. Nelson's character was a just appreciation of himself; with that, and woman, he advanced more rapidly in the world, and been more successful in love.

TO BE CONTINUED

EASTER LILIES

BY MIRIAM J. O'CONNELL

"There are many strange, unexplainable things in life," I said to Claire, as we came out of the vast Cathedral together Easter morning. She was looking her sweetest and daintiest in a wonderful Easter gown from Fifth avenue, and the most becoming bonnet that ever adorned her chestnut hair, but Claire wasn't happy. I had known it for weeks, and months and years, and lately I had watched the shadows deepening in her eyes day by day, and the little droop around her rosy lips becoming more and more pronounced, but what could I do?—I, who would have gone down on my knees and crawled to the earth to make her happy—I was powerless, for Claire loved me not. Never a shadow crept into her eyes at my absence; never the glad light in them welcomed my coming.

"How so?" she asked absently. "The flowers were a great distraction to me in church this morning." "The flowers on the altar, you mean? How beautifully they were arranged!" "No, the flowers on the women," I replied absently. She turned and looked at me curiously. "Strange!" she remarked. "To me they seem almost holy." I glanced at Claire again. She was still nervously plucking the rose to pieces. I could hardly reconcile it with her statement, but I made no comment thereon. Had she given me

for beautiful woman? I supplied, "but that weakness does not preclude the idea of one woman in his life." Claire arched her brow a bit scornfully. "Men take a very broad view of such things," she continued, somewhat wearily. "It is very easy for them to do so because the shoe fits on the other foot. The woman in this case was a married woman, and I had no desire to enter into competition, so I placed the lilies in an overheated room until they were faded and black; then I returned them to him, with the statement that lilies could not live in a tainted atmosphere. He understood and that was all."

I stared at her in amazement. "Do you mean to tell me, Claire Easton, that loving him as you did, you dismissed him in that manner without a hearing?" "That was all," she repeated. "I was very young then."

"And he made no reply?" "He sent me back one white lily, and told me it would always be white, because his heart was filled with love of me, and where I was nothing defiled could enter—and he said if I ever changed my mind, I had only to place a lily on the altar of the Blessed Mother, and he would cross the world to come to me."

I gazed at her wonderingly. There was a missing link in the story somewhere. "And the lily he sent you today?" I asked. "The trouble deepened in her dark brown eyes. 'He sent me no lily,' she admitted sadly. 'Did he send you one last Easter?'" "Yes."

"And you did not place it on the altar?" "No." "Why not?" "The wound had not healed, and pride forbade."

"Had he sent you one today, would you have placed it there?" She nodded her head. "Why so?" "She was silent, and I continued: 'There was a lily on the altar—a single lily in a tall cut glass vase, at the feet of the statue of the Blessed Virgin.'"

"Yes," she assented. "What did that mean?" "She made no answer and we both sat silent, staring off at the distant horizon, and wondering at the conundrums of life. I loved her; she loved somebody else, and he—God knows what his feelings were!"

At last we arose and sauntered home in an absent-minded sort of way. At the door of her home her little sister met her with a big box of white hyacinths. Inside was no card, only a note directing the sacrifice to place them on the altar of the Blessed Mother.

"How strange!" she murmured, "he always sent white hyacinths for the Blessed Virgin's altar at Easter." A light dawned on my blindness, for I had heard him the night before order hyacinths for the church. The florist had made a mistake, and Claire's one white lily was reposing on the altar as a signal to Norman Garrett.

I turned and walked silently away, for the author of "V. V.'s Eyes" has it, I could even hear the thundering hoofs as Norman Garrett hastened to answer the call of his white lily, and as I strolled along I traced the petals of my roses like drops of blood along the way—my heart's blood shed for Claire.

ALLELUIA

It was Easter morning. In the soft early dawn, the little parish church of Beale, nestled cozily in a sweet Irish valley, was thronged with peasant worshippers. The strains of the "Alleluia" were swelling through the quaint old church.

A man of some thirty-five years, whose dress and bearing bespoke the well-to-do American, was kneeling before the daintily flowered altar. The peasants close at hand could have heard his forced whispering voice as he prayed, "O Ever Blessed One, risen this morning from the cold sepulchre, grant that I may meet on earth my sister Eileen."

These were pathetic, simplicity and appeal in that prayer wrung from the heart of a sorely disappointed one. For Roger O'Donnell—such was the stranger's name—some fifteen years before had been seized with the wanderlust and had set out for the great El Dorado of his dream, America. Memories were now crowding upon him and as the Sister chanted "The Alleluia" he recalled how, years ago, the rich and beautiful voice of his beloved and only sister, Eileen, had thrilled the hearts of the simple peasants as she sang the same phrase. Despite that sister's pleading on a balmy Spring morning in 18—, he had left his happy home forever.

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the happy valley one Summer, and at one fell stroke she was deprived of both father and mother. The neighbors were kind, but the gentle Eileen was disconsolate and after a brief struggle, she was forced to sell the little farm and house to meet the increasing demand. Heart-heavy and with weary eyes, she, too, turned to America—the land of refuge, not in the adventurous spirit of her brother, but as a tempest-tossed ship seeks a harbor of rest.

In the meantime, things had fared well with her brother. The life of the Western Plains appealed to him, and perseverance brought its reward. A few years after the wreck of his childhood home had been complete, he had realized enough to keep him in comfort for seven years to come. With the struggle of life lessened, his thoughts found time for other things and the yearning for home gradually grew on him. In the Fall of the year he was well on his journey homeward, counting the days ahead till Easter. He had planned a joyous surprise for his beloved ones and tasted in fancy that joy himself.

But what a rude disappointment. That Easter morn, when he knocked upon the door of the old thatched cottage 'twas a strange hand that opened it, and a strange voice that invited him in. Father, mother and Eileen gone—the old couple to the church yard on the hill beyond; Eileen—none knew where. Little wonder that in the early dawn of that Easter morn his soul went forth to Jesus, his Friend, in supplication and prayer. Inquiries among friends revealed little Eileen O'Donnell had expressed her intention of going to New York, but no one had heard from her since. To New York Roger now directed his steps. Day after day he scanned the New York papers, watching vainly for some reply to his oft-repeated advertisements. Evening after evening he could be seen walking along the busy thoroughfares hoping against hope that some fortune would throw him across the path of his long-sought sister. Often he frequented the city churches, appealing to the Lord to help him in his quest. But when the years rolled on, and no tidings reached his hungry heart, despair settled on his soul, and then drink, to drown his disappointments, bringing in its train squandered means, unsavory companions and degradation. No longer hopeful, but despondently frowned on by supposed friends, often hungry and homeless he was forced very often to seek the shelter which the city in its charity provides for human unfortunates.

The years glided by. It was Easter once more. The Easter spirit was abroad, and the glamor of the season was over the city. A calm wind was blowing over the blossoming fields on Easter morning, as a watchman, in a downtown section was making his customary rounds "Off! Away! No place for sleeping," he cried to a crouching figure in a doorway, and, as an outcast on life's highway, a feeble form went wandering aimlessly along the street.

The light and warmth beaming through an open church door attracted him. He seemed inviting and he entered. The congregation was pouring in and without determining he found himself before the high altar. There was an aspect of familiarity over all, and he knelt down. But it had been years since he had attended Mass, and now to collect his thoughts for prayer was beyond his control. Suddenly the Church organ pealed forth and the strains of "The Alleluia" were swelling along. The choir took up the chant and the notes seemed like joy-bells ringing. For a moment the choir ceased. Then slowly at first a rich, soft, heavenly sweet voice rolled forth the "Alleluia," thrilling the hearts of worshippers and seeming to fill the entire church. The human wreck at the altar rail suddenly drew himself erect and listened. And again the same rich, sweet voice swelled out in captivating tones "Alleluia," "Alleluia."

O God! O God! Eileen! Eileen! and Roger O'Donnell had fallen upon knees on the floor. A little later he came to, in the little vestry attached to the church, and to a good and attentive priest his story was then told. "And now, Father, please prepare for me to meet and forgive me," were the concluding words in appeal to the priest. "Rather, prepare you to meet her," replied the priest.

Cleanly clad, well shaven, though much the worse for his years of dissipation, he was led by Father X to the reception room of the little convent across the street. And there Sister Anna Lilla, favorite of the happy Notre Dame community was brought face to face with the brother believed lost forever. Their life's stories were soon exchanged—hers of a hard struggle for a living amid the dangers of a great city, her fruitless search for him, her hours and days of miserable loneliness and finally the call to the religious life that reached her on Easter morning three years previous as she knelt before the altar, praying to meet once more her wandering brother.

The Easter chimes were pealing their joyous "Alleluia" over the great city, the hearts of the faithful were filled with the blessedness of the day, but to two erstwhile lonely hearts there came consolation and immeasurable joy, exceeding all, as they knelt in adoration before the Lord of Hosts on that eventful Easter morn.—Catharine Barry.

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