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HAWTHORNEAN

A STORY OF EVERY DAY LIFE

BY MRS. CLARA M. THOMPSON

CHAPTER X.—CONTINUED

He had difficulty in restraining the animal upon which he rode, who continually pulled at the bit, and reached out her head, as if in search of something; presently a peculiarly affectionate and gentle neigh was heard just before him, which he recognized at once. In an instant he was on his feet, and the next moment, Albus was rubbing his nose against him in token of recognition. He put his hand upon the saddle, it was empty; and the fearful thought that his daughter had fainted with fright, and fallen from her horse in that wilderness of grass, struck a blow upon his heart, that caused him to stagger and groan.

The attention of Leighton and the rest of the company, men, women and children, who had left their cabins, and assembled about the cabin door to listen, was attracted by the groan. Lights flickered about, and the white pony was soon discovered with his head resting lovingly on Meg's neck. The young McGarities came around him with no other most flattering remarks about "dad" for so long the little pet. In the meantime the dog Bob o'link was restlessly running about his master's heels, and pulling at his coat tail.

"This fellow knows more nor we do," Rice whispered to Leighton, "let's follow." The sagacious animal led the way to the leeward of a group of haystacks, and there in a snug nook between two of the largest of the stacks, lay Marion, as if the pony knew the very place where she would be most sheltered, he had here first halted. Rice held the lantern to her face, while Leighton raised her head; she was still insensible. Her hat had fallen from her head, and with it her comb, leaving her long hair streaming over her face.

"Is she dead?" inquired the elder of two little ones who had followed the lantern.

No," said Rice, gravely; "scatter every chick of yea, and ye shall not strike up so 'thin' for the gal."

The good news travelled quickly, and Mr. Benton hurried toward the stack, in time to meet Leighton carrying Marion to the house. The father's strength was prostrated by the sudden revulsion of feeling, and he followed Leighton without a word. His presence of mind returned when he reached the miserable apology for a bed, which had been disturbed of its occupants to receive the young lady, and with a wave of the hand to the rest of the company, he requested that they would allow himself and the good Mrs. McGarity to wait on Miss Benton. Leighton immediately retired to the further corner of the room, taking the young ones with him. Mr. Benton was a sorry nurse, and Mrs. McGarity was not much better; she bustled about hither and thither, wondering if the girl wanted any truck; made a great noise, scolded the children, and did nothing.

Rice stood before the immense fire-place in which he had kindled a fire, his hands folded behind him, his cheeks stuffed with tobacco, and his eyes riveted on the girl, as she lay in that helpless state. Driven away as he had been by Mr. Benton, he proffered no advice, but the expression on his face was a singular mixture of anxiety and mirthfulness. He could restrain himself no longer, when the old woman took a box from the shelf, saying, "see how this would do Miss a heap o' good," and Rice reached out his long arm and snatched the box from her hand. "I vow!" he exclaimed, "if the old critter wasn't agoin' to give her quinine—quinine for a faint!" she don't know nothin' but quinine and marcery! Give the gal a sling, mum," he said, bringing his hand down on the shelf, to the manifest risk of sundry vials and packages of doctor's stuff thereon deposited. Give the gal a stiff sling, I say, marm; untack her stays, and give her breathin' room; put so 'thin' hot to her feet, and give her a sling."

No sooner was the suggestion made than carried out. Mr. Benton had been so bewildered he had not thought to loosen her clothes, but had busied himself chafing her benumbed hands.

The powerful whisky sling was made ready from the steaming kettle, which Rice, with his customary forethought, had hung over the fire. Innocent Mrs. McGarity, as soon as whisky was mentioned, seemed to come to her senses, and continued to administer it externally and internally.

The storm had now commenced in real earnest, the wind roared and howled across the prairie, and shook the cabin to its foundation. The lightning played in fantastic streaks about the premises, and the thunder roared and roared again, with a strange underground reverberation. The hot sling assisted the powers of nature in restoring Marion's consciousness; she opened her eyes and looked about bewildered, a slight color came back to her cheeks and lips, but utter weariness, together with the sling, induced drowsiness before she could so far recover herself as to speak, and she sunk into a heavy slumber, from which she had still awoke when the gray of morning appeared in the east, showing a clear sky, a pure silver crescent just fading before the new day, and

the green earth rejoicing in her freedom from the spectral fog, that had so long shrouded her beauty.

"Waal, I reckon I'll go," said Rice, at the first streak of dawn, "there ain't no use for me here."

"Not till you've had grub," replied the notable Mrs. McGarity, swallowing the glass of whisky which Marion had received the first half.

In a moment all was bustle and business in preparation for a meal. One child was dispatched for fuel to replenish the fire, a second was delegated to pound the coffee which was tied in a bag and bruised between two stones for want of a mill. The ham was cut in large thick slices and put to frizzling over the fire, around which children and ebullient huddled together, the latter coming and going at pleasure between the stones that composed the chimney. Mr. Benton grew impatient when he saw preparations for eating, and going to Leighton, who, from the window, moodily watched the approaching day, he spoke with less of pride and more of manly confidence: "Will you help me to get out of this place with my daughter, as soon as possible?"

"It will never do," replied Leighton, drawing away from the listening children, "to refuse their hospitality, they would in return refuse to assist us; we must stay, and try to eat. I will go and make arrangements for leaving immediately after, if you wish."

Mr. Benton thanked him, and the young man went out gladly from the stifling air of the cabin, and made everything ready for their departure.

When he returned the breakfast was spread on a long table which filled the best part of the common room; it was spread with a variety, to say the least: there was apple butter and pumpkin-butter, piles of bread cut in chunks, and potato pies; these with the ham and the coffee, which in spite of the primitive method of preparation was really delicious, served to make what is called in western phrase a breakfast meal.

"We have nothing but corn-meal and common doin'," said the hostess while she pointed Mr. Leighton to a seat. "I reckon you're used to wheat meal and chicken fixens," she added, nodding to Mr. Benton. This gentleman, in obedience to the beseeching look on the young man's face, took a place at the table and tried to eat. Rice entered heart and soul into corn-dodgers and apple-butter, while Leighton's experience as a cabin life made him find good even in Mrs. McGarity's "common doin'."

Marion was aroused from her first slumber that night by Sobriety standing by her bedside, lantern in hand. "I'm goin for the Doctor, Miss; your pap's sick, you better stir, and help your mum. Mary sprang from the couch. "Are you crazy, child?" she said, looking at the girl. "The Doctor lives four miles from here, and there's no moon."

"I know the stars," she replied. "Let me go with you," exclaimed Marion, eagerly. "Let's saddle Meg and go together."

"And have another dead one belike," replied Sobriety scornfully; "your face is as white as taller! No, stay with your mum, you'll do a heap more good that way." The girl flew off without another word, and Marion hurried to her father's room. She found him in a burning fever, delirious, and calling for Jeannie.

"Marion," said her mother, trembling from head to foot, "we ought to have a physician at once. I am afraid this is that dreadful fever; could you watch him closely while I try to go for somebody?"

"You, dear mamma!" exclaimed Marion; "why Sobriety has been gone for the Doctor some time."

"Sobriety! that child!" said Mrs. Benton; "can she find the way, the night is dark? O, my daughter, there is help only in God. May he send a good Angel to guide that child—and we must wait."

Mr. Benton's delirium at length fixed itself in memories of those dreadful last days of their sojourn east, and it was like going over those harrowing scenes again to hear his self-accusing words. There was only one way in which he could be at all quieted through that fearful night. Mr. Benton held his hand in hers and repeated again and again the fourth penitential Psalm; he would follow word for word; but the moment she paused or varied in her repeating, the delirium would return, he would snatch his hot hand from here where it had rested quietly, and toss his arms about wildly. In less than three hours Sobriety returned, bringing Leighton with her, having dispatched Mr. Rice for the Doctor.

Mr. Leighton watched and waited through that severe illness, when a precious life hung on a thread of wondering at the wife's endurance of a fatigue that told on his stout frame.

The Doctor, with whom our story becomes familiar as we advance, was an intelligent man, with six years' experience in the west. He had moved to Athlaca from the distant town where he had lived, attracted by the solicitation of the head of the newly established see of Chicago. The Reverend gentleman was a personal friend of Dr. Nelson's; he recommended Athlaca as the place where the Church would soon be planted. The physician watched Mr. Benton with assiduous care, and by the blessing of God on his skill, the lamp of life, which at one time sunk in its socket and almost went out, was revived.

The Doctor gave his opinion that excessive toil in a western climate would be disastrous to his patient, and recommended a change of occupation with returning health.

"I want to help you, Mrs. Benton," said Leighton, coming from the window; "will you tell me what I can do?"

"If you would," she said warmly, "spare my dear husband the agony of preparing the last resting-place for his child."

"Where shall it be?" inquired the young man.

"In the grove of locusts that Mr. Benton planted this spring,—in the opening toward the house, where I may see it from my window."

Mr. Leighton selected the spot in the enclosure where the first rays of the sun would find the narrow home of the clay so precious as the germ of immortality, and there he dug the tiny grave. A few days after, at sunset, Philip Benton with his family and the friendly Leightons stood gazing into that lone burial-place. Silently they knelt around that quiet grave, with prayers whispered in their hearts to Him whose playing eyes regardeth the sorrows of His children.

A long month of suffering consequent upon Marion's fever and exposure restrained Mrs. Benton in the expression of her grief for her little comforter, and as her daughter grew better, trials came in a more dreaded shape. As the season advanced the whole region of Athlaca, with many other townships, was visited with numerous and sudden deaths from conjunctive fever. The village postmaster, a Campbellite preacher, and the quack-doctor who had just hung his sign in Athlaca, were carried off by the scourge in a few days. Mr. Benton felt secure by his separation from the haunts of men; but excessive toil and exposure to night dews predisposed him to a disease originating in miasma. Mrs. Benton had gone with her husband to the newly made grave, and assisted him in placing a wooden cross he had himself carved, as a headstone. Their conversation was of the past, but more of that.

"Happy harbor of God's saints, That sweet and pleasant soil Wherein no sorrow can be found, No grief, no care, no toil."

The naturally proud tone of the husband was subdued to the gentleness of a child, as he for the first time made known his determination to follow his dear companion in the way of the cross, to confess his sins and amend his life.

They lingered long near the charmed spot till their garments were saturated with the night dew. Marion was aroused from her first slumber that night by Sobriety standing by her bedside, lantern in hand.

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CHAPTER XI. HOW OUR FAIR FRIENDS FARED AT THE FAIR

The long advertised day for the great fair for the establishment of a home for disabled seamen found the extensive hall chosen for the exhibition beautifully prepared for the occasion. Fluttering banners with strange and brilliant devices, mingled a bowyer of flowers and graceful evergreen wreaths that fair fingers had arranged. Fine old paintings and choice groups of statuary from the private residences of the patrons adorned the radiant scene. Articles from every quarter of the globe beautified the tables, while bevy of lovely girls and scores of attractive women gave brilliancy and beauty to the assemblage; and the centre of attraction in this captivating picture to all eyes, was the flower-tables, which formed a perfect green retreat, a bowyer of freshness and perfume, elevated from the surrounding attractions upon a broad platform carpeted with fresh green moss. In the midst of the elevation, in the basin of a fountain curiously wrought in Italian marble, sat Neptune, in a chariot of bronze drawn by sea-horses, holding in his right hand his trident, from which, as well as from the shell trumpet which his son Triton, who stood beside him, held to his mouth, issued fine streams of water, that fell back into the fountain, sprinkled with spray a world of aquatic plants in full flower, that bordered the jet d'eau. The evergreens mingled their subdued color and balmy fragrance with the gorgeous hues and exquisite perfumes of neighboring flowers. Etruscan vases of magnificent proportions were graced with choice camellias, while numerous vases of less pretensions were abundantly filled with the most rare and delicate blossoms, and masses of cut flowers awaited the selection of the purchaser, and the delicate fingers of the attendants to be arranged into bouquets to suit differing tastes.

Mrs. Hartland, as prime mover and first manager of the fair, had carried out her plan in spite of obstacles arising from Dr. Hartland's objections, and persuaded the Colonel to request Rosine to accede to her wish that she should stand at the flower-table, with Laura Marten as leader. He was in his heart delighted with the prominence thus given to his favorite, and thought she was too young and simple-minded to be hurt by it. While he believed he would not go to see Rosine quizzed by all the idle young men who would naturally follow in the wake of Laura Marten.

Rosine, when the plan was proposed, desired to decline the position, feeling that it would be a public declaration of her intimacy with Laura, and she had begun heartily to wish herself free, not only as the device of her best friends, but to quiet the reproaches of her own heart. But moral courage was at first lacking, and when she did find confidence to say to Mrs. Hartland that she would rather some one would take her place, that lady only replied with astonishment that it was too late to make any alterations in their plans, it would be a virtual breach of promise to resign a situation unless it was absolutely called for by inability; besides, the Colonel would be so disappointed. After this conversation Rosine accepted the position, as her destiny, and began to look forward to the day even with pleasure. She was startled by the abrupt farewell of the Doctor, as he stepped into the carriage, in which Laura was already seated.

"I suppose you call this renouncing the pomps and vanities of the world?" he said curtly, as he closed the door.

"That's for me," replied Laura, laughing, "you see I am in mourning." She was arrayed in a black dress of gauzy material, which with the red coral ornaments on her neck and arms, set off the brilliancy of her complexion, while among her raven curls flashed a wreath of carnations and green leaves, composed of garnets and emeralds. Rosine was dressed in white muslin, without ornament of any kind, save a wreath of green and white flowers in her golden locks. Mrs. Hartland bustled about in a stiff black moiré antique, the matron of affairs, and at length settled herself among a rich display of East India goods.

We shall not attempt a description of a fair, as a matter of business; they have become, with all their accompaniments, an institution in church and state, and are as familiar as the daily newspaper description of them (under the various names of festivals, tea-parties, fairs, and so forth) for the amelioration of the condition of the human race can make them. We shall only endeavor to interest our readers in the employments and enjoyments of Laura and Rosine.

For the first half-day Rosine was as unnoticed apparently, as her best friends could wish; she merely assisted Laura in selecting and arranging bouquets as they were called for, and towards evening crowds of gentlemen thronged the flower-table, attracted by the continued fire of good-natured jokes and repartee, with the familiar, confidential manner which Laura maintained toward those she desired to retain near her; a manner that much as the male sex may affect to despise it, is so pleasing, so flattering to their vanity, and coming from a pretty woman, in most cases it proves perfectly irresistible.

An instinctive desire to witness Rosine's debut into the world, as Dr. Hartland had chosen to call her position at the fair, seized him after the carriage drove away, but he stoutly resisted, determined not to show any interest in the matter. But the wish returned toward evening when his last patient was visited, and he was obliged to pass the hall on his way home. A wonderful good opinion had Edward Hartland of his powers of self-control, nevertheless he found his way through the throng about the door and into the gallery, where he could witness the performances without being himself observed.

It was the bewitching time between daylight and dark; many of the afternoon crowd had dispersed, and the evening multitude had not yet gathered, when Laura Marten listened to the oft-repeated request of one of her numerous band of admirers, and consented to promenade through the hall. Rosine blushed painfully as she heard this assent given to a stately looking gentleman, who had devoted himself to Laura most of the day; she begged her friend not to leave her with the whole care of the table, but she pleaded fatigue, pointed to the few persons remaining in the hall, promised to return very soon, and finally took the gentleman's arm and went off among a heavy admiring, who followed her even here. Rosine's diffidence would not have been so great, had she realized how entirely alone she would be left after Laura's departure; not a person inquired for flowers for many minutes, or looked at her with the slightest interest. Left so entirely to herself she at last took a seat, being much fatigued, and soon became absorbed in watching Laura as she walked and chatted, first with one, then with another; quickly losing her arm from the first gentleman at a request to arrange a flower in the button hole of a coat, casting her bewitching, fascinating, intoxicating glances right and left, coquetting with one, talking seriously with another, still clinging fondly to the arm of her first companion, still Rosine began to wonder if the secret she had confided to her could be true—could she be engaged to Lieutenant Hartland?

TO BE CONTINUED

TONY, THE ITALIAN

When the train stopped at New Bedford, Mr. Metzler was standing on the platform of the first Pullman—a tall, fine-looking man, whose early struggle against poverty had given him a fellow-feeling for the lowly.

With an amused but half-compassionate interest, he watched a fat old man, and two giggling girls, burdened with baskets as well as suitcases, who hurried off the day-car and rather shyly accepted the very shy embraces of those who were awaiting them. When they were gone, three women, three children, a traveling salesman, and last of all a thin, shabbily dressed old Italian got on the train, with an incredible number of strange boxes, bags, wraps and umbrellas.

Mr. Metzler watched them file down the car and saw that the women, the children and the salesman found seats with some difficulty. There was none left for the poor old foreigner, less fit to stand than any of the others. Evidently all unaccustomed to travel, he clutched the back of a seat with one hand, and with the other held fast to his belongings—looking up and down the aisle and into strange faces, bewildered and helpless, even afraid.

Acting on a sudden, kindly impulse, Mr. Metzler stepped into the day-coach and touched the Italian on the shoulder, saying in a whimsical but very gentle way:

"Tony—of course your name is Tony—there's plenty of room in my part of the train. Come with me. You'll be first to death if you stand. The old man was grateful, but shy. "I—I—my name is Tony, but I—" he stammered.

Seeing that Tony was strongly tempted at the prospect of a seat, but awed by the evident wealth of his benefactor, Mr. Metzler relieved him of one of his bundles, and, taking him by the arm, led him towards the stateroom of the adjoining car. Before they reached it he had begun to wonder a little uneasily whether his new-made Italian friend would be quite welcome there.

He opened the door, and, pushing Tony ahead of him, said apologetically:

"Seppe, this man could not find a seat in the day-car, and we have twice as much room as we need; so I brought him here—bag and baggage."

The man to whom he spoke was young and handsome and faultlessly dressed. He looked up from the magazine which he was reading, and laughed heartily—the lengths to which Mr. Metzler carried his democratic tendencies being a joke between them; but at once moved to make room for the old Italian, helped him find place for his belongings, offered him a cigar, and closed a window that he might not be in draught. These things done, he promptly re-opened his magazine, and for a time, at least, forgot Mr. Metzler and his guest.

For a few minutes Tony watched him, fascinated. His beauty may have caught the old man's eye, or he may have been won by his undentable charm; but soon he shyly turned from him to the more friendly Mr. Metzler.

Mr. Metzler had no intention of allowing Tony to be ill at ease or lonely; so, with unobtrusive tact, he made the old man feel at home, and reassured him that he was interested in him, until little by little Tony became first communicative, and afterward confidential.

"Yes, I'm going to New York," he explained in reply to a question of Mr. Metzler's. "I live a long way from here—in New Bedford. It's a hundred and fifty-three miles—a man told me it is. I never was in New York before except for a few days just after we landed. It was hot there and rainy and noisy and crowded, and we didn't know where to go or what to do. Rosy—that was my wife—Rosy and the children and I, we didn't none of us like it. We were homesick, and we didn't know what to do. And then we saw a man we used to know in Naples, and he lived in New Bedford, so we went there. I haven't been in New York since. I never wanted to go back; I never did until two or three weeks ago."

"I don't work in no factory, never did, Rosy, she didn't like factories. I have a store of my own—a grocery store. It's a little grocery, not much good. I can't afford to keep many things; but it's always neat, if I do say so. I don't make much money I never did; somehow, I never knew how. And six months back two young American fellows, they opened a grocery store on the corner near me, and they sell lots of stuff, real good stuff, and they sell it awful cheap; and now I ain't doing hardly nothing at all. You see, when a man's old like me, why it's hard for him to make a living these days."

Seppe, as the friend had called him, continued to read his magazine. He heard what was said, he gave no sign. But Mr. Metzler was touched by the old man's story, and talked with sympathetic interest of the little grocery store, suggesting a possible way of making it succeed. Tony was shrewd enough to have but little confidence in Mr. Metzler's business sagacity. Still, Italian-like, he was deeply grateful for his friendliness, and opening his heart yet wider, he explained, slowly and cautiously, the reason for his trip to New York.

"It's so expensive traveling is; and we weren't happy there, and I thought I'd never go back. But—but you don't know the beginning, so you couldn't understand. You see, we had six children, Rosy and me, and they got diphtheris. Doctors, they cost so much that we didn't get one in a hurry. We thought they'd get better soon. And they all died—but Jo, the baby. That was two years after we went to New Bedford, and Rosy took on terrible, and she never did no good afterwards. She just grieved and grieved for our children. And I grieved, too; but the way she grieved was that she got thin and white and had a cough, and she didn't hardly ever laugh no more. And Rosy she'd been one to laugh all the time. The way I grieved was to get cranky and hard to get on with, except to Rosy. I was always kind to Rosy. And then three years and seven months after the children died, she died, too."

"Jo was ten years old by that time, and I didn't know what to do with him; and I didn't talk to him much, and I beat him sometimes. And some years it was hard times, and we didn't have much to wear, and we didn't have much fire in winter. And Jo, he didn't like the way things was at home, and he missed his mother, and he thought, after a while, he was too big a boy to be beaten; so one day, when he was fourteen and nearly a half, I got mad, and I— I beat him pretty hard. I guess I said things, too, about him not earning his keep. And Jo, he ran away; and that's all I know about him. He never came back. I've been on the watch for him day and night ever since. I thought maybe when he was old enough to understand he'd know I hadn't meant nothing. I've saved every penny I could, so if he ever comes home sick or dead broke I can help him. He'd be pretty sure to come if he got sick, wouldn't he?"

Tony looked appealingly at Mr. Metzler, who acquiesced with great heartiness.

"There's no place like home for a sick boy," he answered; but with no hope that the runaway Jo would ever return.

"Jo is nearly thirty,—nearly thirty," Tony murmured irrelevantly. "Nearly thirty?" Mr. Metzler echoed, with sympathetic interest.

After a pause during which Tony stared at the old man's feet, and Mr. Metzler and his friend stared at Tony, the old man furtively wiped his eyes with a handkerchief, and then looked at Mr. Metzler. Seppe quickly reopened his magazine; but Tony had forgotten him and paid no heed.

"I started to tell you why I'm going to New York, and somehow I got off the track," he went on. "It all happened this way: Three or four weeks ago I saw our name in the paper, under the picture of a young man. Our name was there, and Jo's first name, only it was in Italian. Rosy and me, we were always good Americans, and we called him Jo. And those two names were printed under the picture. And—and I can talk American all right, but I can't read it much, but I know our names when I see them. The names was in a paper that a customer left on the counter; and when another customer come in I got him to read what it said about that man; and it said that he is a fine singer, and everyone in New York like him, and pays big money to hear him; and he said he is going to sing there three nights a week all this month. I got every customer I had to read that to me, until I knew every word; because Jo, my boy Jo, he was a singer. He sang in the choir at St. Anthony's Church when he was little—a fine choir, it was loud—so loud you could hear it two squares away. Rosy she taught Jo to sing, too, like an angel, Rosy could. And the more I thought about

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Eugene Quessel, of Montreal, was suffering from kidney trouble—and had suffered for five long years. This is his letter:—

"I could not sleep nights and on some occasions could hardly walk. I had been treated by some of our best physicians but without relief. I lost over 15 pounds and was very weak, and friends who knew me before were astonished. One day I met one of our leading hotelkeepers, who had been cured by your famous Gin Pills. He advised me to try them. I bought two boxes and before I had used one box I felt a big change. Before I finished the second one I was completely cured, and I can assure you if I had only known what I know now, I would not have spent one hundred dollars for nothing—when two boxes of Gin Pills cured me."

Gin Pills are the finest preparation for kidney and bladder trouble ever produced. At the first warning pain in back or side, get Gin Pills. They work like magic, reducing congestion, soothing, healing inflamed, emaciated tissues, building them into normal and active condition and relieving pain. At all druggists and dealers. 50c. Money refunded if not satisfied. Free sample on request.

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