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HAWTHORNEAN

A STORY OF EVERY DAY LIFE

BY MRS. CLARA M. THOMPSON

CHAPTER VII.—CONTINUED

"Flattering!" whispered Laura to the Lieutenant. "Thank you, Mrs. Hartland," she said aloud. "I think my black face would be too obvious in so conspicuous a place, unless you will let me have Rosa's fairness by way of contrast as my assistant."

"How foolish, Ned, for you to put such notions into Rosine's head," replied Mrs. Hartland. "She will be only one of scores of girls of far greater pretensions than she. It will give her ease and self-possession; why, when I was sixteen, I presided at the dinner-table for a large company of gentlemen. I heard the Colonel only yesterday declare his pleasure that her shyness was wearing off."

Rosine blushed painfully at these personal observations, and Ned remarked that blushes were very becoming, if she would only confine herself to blushing in the right time and place.

Laura kept up her chatting with Mrs. Hartland, and her tender glances and speeches to the Lieutenant, till the rain, which had been threatening all the evening, poured in torrents, and she was obliged to remain for the night. Fascinating and exciting, even to plain, stiff Mrs. Hartland, were her brusque manners, and piquant talk, in spite of the occasional sense of being shocked by something not quite lady-like.

Rosine was perfectly confounded by this announcement—made, too, under the bond of secrecy. "Why must I be a secret?" she said, when she had a little recovered from her first astonishment. "Isn't any one to know it but me?"

"Not at present," Laura replied. "My father is abroad, and I should like his consent before we make it public."

"But the Colonel, and Mrs. Hartland?" suggested Rosine. "Alek is to be ordered to the South Seas; he wants to marry at once, but that is out of the question; and on the whole, why should we selfishly distrust the old lady (begging her pardon), till he comes back. We can enjoy ourselves without blemishing any one, and Mrs. Hartland decidedly objects to her boys falling in love with anybody but herself."

"Strangers!" said Rosine, overwhelmed by her volubility. "I'm sorry you have told me—not that I shall tell; but if they should ask, I should surely betray myself. I could not help showing that I knew something, even if I did not speak. I'm sorry you told me such a dreadful secret."

upon her friend. The knowledge of the clandestine engagement was a continual thorn to Rosine, bringing the stinging blush to her cheek whenever, during Laura's absence, she felt the Lieutenant's gaze fixed upon her. That gentleman was, however, little at home, during these days, pleading business at the Navy Yard, in preparation for his departure, as a reason for his absence. In about two weeks Laura returned. The X—, the man-of-war of which Alek Hartland was First Lieutenant, was to sail in three days. The young lovers met often during these days, and Laura, to avoid suspicion, was induced to spend one evening at Colonel Hartland's. It was at the close of this evening, wherein, emboldened by the absence of his mother and the Colonel, and the apparent occupation of the Doctor with Rosine over a difficult translation, Alek had manifested more love like attentions than usual toward Laura, that Dr. Hartland took his brother seriously to task.

"Alek," he said, after Laura had gone away and Rosine had retired for the night, "do you mean to marry Laura Marten at some future day? Your attentions are certainly most devoted."

"No, I do not mean to marry Laura Marten at some future day," replied the Lieutenant, repeating the tone and words of his brother. "Then you are acting the part of a scoundrel. Don't you see the girl is up to her eyes in love with you? and you encourage her fondness. At the word 'scoundrel,' the quick blood mounted into the fair forehead of the Lieutenant, and he started from his seat; but in a moment a smile passed over his face, and he was again seated, quietly replying, 'It is not for a long time, Ned. I'm going off soon, and Laura's heart won't break with a week's courtship.'"

"That's true," replied the Doctor more calmly, as if sorry for his harshness; "in most cases, I would not see this going on a day longer, but there isn't much danger of Laura; this is a fashionable flirtation, which she understands to perfection, is most abominable in man or woman, hardening the heart like lying or stealing, or any of the mortal sins. I know it is tough, Alek, when a woman woees as hard as Laura does you—but, if you are all right, I don't know as I'll concern myself about her."

CHAPTER VIII. WESTWARD, HO!

We left our friend, Mrs. Benton, full of anxiety for her sick boy, with only one of her own sex to sympathize or help, except her daughter; indeed, it was eight weeks after her arrival on the prairie before she met a woman, neighbor Rise being the only one who called, except on farming business. The people of the region, especially the Yankee portion of the inhabitants, had taken a fancy that Mr. Benton was proud and rich—two of the poorest recommendations in a new country—and Mrs. Benton was supposed to partake of the same qualities. Kind-hearted women there were, but they kept aloof, lest Mrs. Benton should not welcome their advances. This state of things was broken into by Rice, after his visit to Harold. There was an assembled crowd of three men and seven boys in the Athlaca post-office, when Rice declared that, "That Missus Benton was just the slickest kind of a woman; such a down-hearted thing too; not a bit crank or set up. To be in on that big prairie with that sick boy, and a young two-year-old that looked as if she would drop to pieces, and nobody but that pootty gal that didn't know how to do nothin, so hit a finger; it was hard, he reckoned."

Harold Leighton, the youngest of the listening men, reported testimony of Mr. Rice to his mother, a kind, large-hearted New England woman, and forthwith mother and son rode over to the prairie farm, to offer assistance and neighborly sympathy. Mrs. Leighton was the lady of the village, and her example was soon followed by Athlaca society generally. Mrs. Benton thus had an opportunity to propose the Sunday school for those for whom it was intended. Much to the surprise of Mrs. Benton, Mr. Leighton kindly offered to provide a room for the meetings of the children, and to assist in bringing them together, so that matters were started quite prosperously, and it did them all good; particularly did the exertion arouse Mrs. Benton from the morbid state of dissatisfaction into which she was persuaded to leave his home, or cross a neighbor's threshold. He said he was like Cain, branded with an ineffaceable stain, and his wife ceased to urge him, when she saw every new effort only aroused the bitterness of remorse that still rankled in his bosom; but Mrs. Benton responded to the offered friendship of her neighbors, as well as she could with her poor aching heart, for the sake of her children. She found the Leighton family quite companionable. Mrs. Leighton was

one to be loved and respected; the possessor of vast energy and physical strength, she had led a busy life, years before, a widow with five children dependent upon her labors in the main for their support. She could have struggled on in hopeless poverty and dependence at the east, but this was contrary to her nature. The west opened a vast field of progress to herself and her boys; she only hesitated on account of her daughter, who had been crippled by one of the unfortunate accidents of infancy. Harold was a well-grown lad at the death of his father, and he had urged the removal, promising always to care for his sister. He inherited his mother's progressive qualities, and was eager for a broader field than his native city opened to him. Their choice had fallen upon Athlaca, through a friendly neighbor who owned large unfenced tracts in that region, and who prophesied great things of the glory and renown of the country town that was to be.

Young Leighton had prospered, as all industrious, ambitious, capable, healthy young men must prosper in a new country. He is already taken his place as attorney in the country courts, lawyer of the village, besides owning and cultivating a large tract of land; his name, too, had been proposed as representative to the state legislature; in short, he was popular. With acuteness, honest principles, great physical ability he began already in his early manhood to be known all over his adopted state. He had an ambition for Athlaca as the town of his choice, and was delighted to welcome to it such inhabitants as the Benton family. He had several times been over to the prairie farm on business, but the proud master of the house had not brought him in contact with his wife and daughters. The proposition of the Sunday-school, although he was of no creed, and called himself a Protestant, coming as it did from Mrs. Benton, he seconded with all his energy. Churches and schools he knew attracted the better class of emigrants, therefore he lent to the proposal the weight of his influence, and some times his presence.

Spring had come, welcome spring! How welcome to the heart of Mrs. Benton after the dreary blackness and desolation of the winter! The grass began to shoot up all over the blackened surface of the prairie, and bright flowers appeared, but she listened in vain for the chirping of the robin; the scene was too desolate for his social, humanly loving nature. Harold's neck still galled under the yoke of incessant farm labor, although Mr. Benton was more lenient, and forbearing with his son, occasionally there would come a frown or a threat, that cut like a dagger-thrust. The mother comforted her boy by promise of exertion on his behalf as soon as the way could be made clear. Her thoughts often turned to Sister Agnes' suggestion respecting good Father Coté, who was in St. Louis; she would have ventured to address him, but her husband would not consent that she should beg a station for her present priest, he would have no objections to placing Harold in his care in any honorable employment where he might earn his bread. There seemed little prospect of this, but Mrs. Benton hoped and prayed on.

Marion had made the acquaintance of Mrs. Leighton's invalid daughter, a girl about her own age, but in a measure helpless. The intimacy of Marion's part was violent and absorbing, no home duties must prevent her almost daily ride to poor Alice. Mrs. Benton was glad to see her daughter's interest drawn out of herself, but she was not altogether pleased to have her so absorbed with a stranger, to the neglect of her home care, and especially the love and care of her little sister. When reasoned with upon the matter, Marion behaved like a martyr who had been martyred by some superior force in the performance of religious duty. Her visits to Alice brought her put down among her meritorious works of self denial, whereas the ride on horseback across the unbroken lawn, the exhilarating breeze of spring time, the motherly embrace of Mrs. Leighton, and the glad smile of the invalid, were of themselves pleasures, to be sought moderately, but not to the neglect of first claims. Mrs. Benton dreaded the moping ways of the early winter, and she hoped time, experience, and conscience might teach her the right, with not too much interference on her part. Her father questioned in his own mind the propriety of Marion's course, but he had never thwarted her, and he felt it too late to begin. She returned one night with a message from Mr. Leighton to her mother; he was to start in two days on a business expedition to St. Louis. He had heard Mrs. Benton often express a wish to go to that city, and he would be happy to escort herself and Miss Marion, if she so desired, on the part of Mr. Benton, he gave his consent for the journey, except that Harold should go in the place of his sister.

This was a terrible trial to Marion; she had anticipated so much pleasure in the jaunt, and unused to being denied anything, she betrayed by her putting and dissatisfied countenance the inward workings of her rebellious spirit. She did not fully appreciate her father's objections, but she knew that her feeble little sister was not in a condition to be left wholly to the care of her father and brother. Her mother observed the vexation, but made no comments upon her ill-humor, only reiterating her charges about Jeannie.

The journey was very delightful to Mrs. Benton; it would have been almost unalloyed pleasure, but for the anxiety for the little one left to the care of her reluctant sister. The relief to the eye and to the heart, from the unbroken surface of the prairie to the sheltering arms of the broad oaks and walnuts, the sharp bluffs and rich bottom lands through which their route lay, can only be appreciated by those who have dwelt for months where no tree rears its green head, nor hill nor dale diversifies the monotonous scene. Young Leighton was an agreeable and enterprising companion, but though occupied with other thoughts, Mrs. Benton could not but observe how often the young man's conversation was connected with "Miss Marion," and a new cause of solicitude was given to her meditations.

Our party reached St. Louis the third day, just as the sun was setting; the weather was mild and the season advancing in all the luxuriance of a western spring. At the time of which we write the Catholic Church was almost unknown in the United States out of our large cities. St. Louis, however, from its early settlement has ever been a paradise for Catholics, abounding in churches, Religious Houses, and all those precious accompaniments which the Church, our Holy Mother, brings in her wake. Mrs. Benton readily found good Father Coté, and was received with all that outgoing hospitality and warmth for which he was ever famous. Did he remember her? When did he forget any one, especially one who had aided him with his orphan charge in those dreary cholera times, when help was most needed. With delight he showed her the result of his years of labor, in a splendid church, and a spacious and well arranged orphan asylum under the care of Religious. Mrs. Benton playfully asked him if he had yet found the gold mine. "Long ago," he replied; "I have worked that mine many years; it lies in piety, prayer, and hard work. I know of no other mine that will bring forth the gold of heaven, and I have influenced them to right—I can do nothing now!"

"You are doing, Philip," said the sweet, consoling voice of his wife, softened by unshed tears, "you are daily doing all that you can for them. Harold is more submissive and yielding, and expresses great grief at the thought of leaving his dear mother, and this lesson of severity, almost the first in her life, will have its effect on Marion, and Jeannie clings so sweetly to her dear papa. O," she added, placing her hand upon his head, which rested on the table where he had bowed it almost in despair, "I was never, in all the last years of our life in town, so happy as now; you are restored to me, free from those terrible business cares, and the entanglements of trade."

"But to bring you here," he said, interrupting her; "you, who have never before known any thing but plenty and friends, to this poverty and solitude!" "Poverty and solitude are better with you, dearest, than wealth and friends without."

TO BE CONTINUED

PATSY'S NAMESAKE

By Anna C. Mingo

The oft given warning of her old colored nurse should have told Patsy Lancaster that something would surely befall her, when, starting with her cousin, Marcia Mattingly, for Louisville, she deliberately turned back to reach a spring of holly, set in red berries, for the lapel of her coat.

"Dear yoh nebaw tab lud, an' yoh min' me!" "That was how the warning ran, and Patsy always said: "Surely I will mind you, Aunt Rachel!" "I hope Aunt Rachel didn't see me turn back," she now said to her cousin, as the automobiles started for the station.

"I heard them say something about 'In-choon,'" suggested the saleswoman. So to the tea room started the searching party, led by the distracted mother. There, finishing his second plate of ice cream, she found him, and as she snatched him to her bosom, she sent forth such a volley of denunciation against the kidnappers the heart of the girls were filled with horror. "Arrest them, officer!" she commanded. "I'll show 'em if they can kidnap Patrick Moran's boy! I'll tanch 'em, and others like 'em not to go about stealin' honest people's children! Arrest 'em, I tell ye!" It was in vain that Patsy and Marcia attempted to plead to their innocence of intentional wrongdoing; for, appealed to, Patsy, junior, declared they had lured him off with the promise of a feast, and were planning to take him to their home, where he should be given a bicycle. "Ye'll have a bicycle, mamma!" cried the mother. "Thanks be to God and His Blessed Mother for protectin' ye from the snares of the Evil One!"

"Wait a little, my dear husband," said the mediating voice of the wife; "try Marion again; she would be the last to forgive herself, if Jeannie were to be taken from her, so estranged."

"O, dear mamma," exclaimed Marion, falling on her knees by her mother, "don't talk of that, I could not bear it."

"But we must all look at it as among the probabilities. Her tender constitution cannot long endure this climate, we have only to make her few days as happy as we can, perhaps I have been wrong," added Mrs. Benton, "in not leaving the child more to Marion; it has been a pleasure to keep her near myself, knowing how soon I must resign her."

The delinquent daughter could bear it no longer, her pride succumbed, she confessed her selfishness, only begging that her father would not think she had been cruel. "When you win her love, Marion," he said, a little of his usual tenderness toward her creeping into his tone, "I shall believe you; till then you need some power to curb your inordinate self-seeking. I will take care of the pony; the rides to the village must be curtailed till I see some amendment."

Marion retired to her room, feeling the weight of her father's severity, but she could not but acknowledge to herself that there was justice in it. "It is all my fault," said Mr. Benton, as his daughter went out; "my own youthful follies reproduced—pride and selfishness. Harold's wilfulness and rebellion, and Marion's self-indulgence and self-seeking, are but the deflections of my own nature, and now, at this late day, can I do anything to remedy the matter? I," he added, bitterly, "who spent all their early years in efforts to be rich—to be successful where other men failed. O, it was for this I sacrificed honor and conscience, and my children's name, and the time when I might have influenced them to right—I can do nothing now!"

"You are doing, Philip," said the sweet, consoling voice of his wife, softened by unshed tears, "you are daily doing all that you can for them. Harold is more submissive and yielding, and expresses great grief at the thought of leaving his dear mother, and this lesson of severity, almost the first in her life, will have its effect on Marion, and Jeannie clings so sweetly to her dear papa. O," she added, placing her hand upon his head, which rested on the table where he had bowed it almost in despair, "I was never, in all the last years of our life in town, so happy as now; you are restored to me, free from those terrible business cares, and the entanglements of trade."

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older, they declared there had never been such a girl. Darling, romantic, full of mischief, she upset every tradition of what a girl of her lineage should be and then made love so cunningly to her critics, they had to forgive for her escapades.

"Now do be careful, daughter!" Her mother never kissed her goodbye, without those beseeching words, and Patsy always promised—and then forgot.

"What could you expect, when you gave the girl such a name?" Thus the aunts and the cousins to the mother, when some adventure of Patsy's set the countryside talking.

The cousins reached Louisville and as the morning passed, and nothing befell, Marcia's fears began to lift. It was time for luncheon, but Marcia lingered at a counter where ladies were displayed.

"Patsy, come here, please!" she said. "I'm here, lady!" a pipin voice at her side answered. Turning quickly, she saw a boy of about ten years looking at her, with wondering eyes. His right to the name of Erin's patron saint none could call into question.

"Is your name Patsy, too?" asked Marcia. "Sure!" he answered. "Oh, Patsy, here's a namesake of yours!" cried she, to the approaching girl. The boy looked from one to the other, while the saleswoman with an expression of scorn, folded up her lace.

"How perfectly lovely!" cried Patsy, and she would have embraced the chap, but he wiggled out of her hands. Patsy, junior, was not what you would call well groomed. One leg of his knee pants fell down to the top of his half faced shoe, which, with its companion, showed hard usage. His coat was too small for him, and his waist was decidedly soiled. His cap was old, his hands were bare.

Noting all this, Patsy, senior's, heart melted. "You poor little chap!" she cried. "Are you going to have any Santa Claus?" "Had the floorwalker been locking, he would have noted and properly interpreted the shrewd expression that came into the little face.

"I dunno," he said, with an appealing upward glance. "Have you no mother?" asked Marcia. "I just lost her," he replied. "And where is your father?" "I dunno where he is," and he dropped his eyes.

"Is this not an awful condition!" cried Patsy, senior. "Oh, you poor little child! All alone in the world! I know you are hungry, aren't you?" "You bet, I am!" he said, with sincerity. "Come, Marcia, let us get luncheon, before he dies of starvation!" cried the girl.

As a restaurant was connected with the shop, they were soon ordering a repast, and the manner in which the boy attacked the food, left no doubt in the minds of the girls that he was in truth famished. "We must take him home with us, Marcia!" declared Patsy.

"But what will the folks say?" suggested Marcia. "They will say that we did what was right! They would not have us to leave this child alone at Christmas time, with only the streets for a home. How would you like, Patsy, to come and live with me in a nice big house, where you could have plenty to eat and wear and everything to love you?"

Patsy, junior, did not answer. His mouth was filled with food, which may have accounted for his silence. "And you shall have a pony to ride—" "I'd rather a bicycle!" observed the boy. "Then, a bicycle it shall be!" promised she, while she added to her cousin: "Isn't he the darling?"

Now that Patsy did not that morning present as neat an appearance as should have been the son of the industrious Patrick Moran, foreman of a big construction company, and his equally energetic wife, was due to the fact that his mother, his silence, him from a band of street companions on her hurried way downtown; and while he was regaling himself on the bounteous fare his unknown address had provided for him, he was frantically searching for him, aided by floorwalkers and the house detective. She was stopped on her mad career by the lace clerk, who told of two well dressed young women going off with a boy, answering to her description.

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