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HAWTHORNDEN

A STORY OF EVERY DAY LIFE

BY MRS. CLARA M. THOMPSON

CHAPTER IV. PRAIRIE LIFE

We shall pass over the first trials of the strange new home on the prairie; the dreary heart aching for absent ones, and the oppressive home sickness. The season of the year was unfavorable to contentment in a region so far removed from society, and from all external privileges, both social and religious. It required all Mrs. Benton's unwearied love and single heartedness, kept alive by her firm faith, to make the trail endurable; but

"Come what come may, Time and the hour runs through the roughest day."

A streak of light came with the dear home furniture, and in the breaking up, Colonel Hartland, with true tact and refinement, had selected such articles as he knew would be most prized, and forwarded them to the prairie home. The precious books which they had never hoped to see, one or two of the most beautiful and familiar pictures that had adorned their city home, and strangers of all the piano. "It was kind of the Colonel, but where were they to put it?" was Mrs. Benton's inquiry. Marion gave her first smile as she ran her fingers over the keys, and soon found a place for it. But more precious than all, were the long letters from dear home heartily for the blessings of the mail, than they were fixed in some far off land, away from all that has hitherto made life's comfort and hope.

The new home was in the midst of a vast rolling prairie, known in Illinois as the "Grand Prairie," from its superiority over all others in extent of surface. Away to the north east, in the time of which we speak, the vast wilderness of grass stretched itself for more than a hundred miles without a settlement. On the south, at the distance of three miles, was a narrow strip of timber, the tops of the huge trees visible on the horizon from the door of Mr. Benton's cottage. Three miles to the west was the village of Athlaca, in whose territory the boundaries they were included, and which boasted two stores and eleven houses besides a long building once used as a warehouse, but which had risen to the dignity of a court-house; Athlaca by a change of county lines, having become shiretown of the county of W—. About the village, log cabins were scattered on the prairie, and through the adjoining timber land, so that in the town proper there were perhaps three hundred inhabitants. There was neither school-house nor house of religious worship of any kind in the region, though Campbellites, the prevailing sect, held forth occasionally in the court-house. Unused to manual labor, Mr. Benton passed the winter in what was to him hard work, making preparations for the coming spring. He had no assistant but Harold, who worked most unwillingly, for he had a strong distaste to farm work; but he did, early and late, his evenings and an occasional excursion with his gun being his only recreations. Letters came from Rosine regularly at first, and written with all the affectionate freedom of her nature, but gradually the mother's eye could detect a more formal wording, less of sentiment and warm out-gushing feeling, and more of fact and circumstance. Father Roberts, the friend and pastor, did not forget his absent children, but sent them many an encouraging word and expression of Christian sympathy. Sister Agnes too, with her blithe, happy nature—a nature made more sympathetic by her own sorrows—cheered many a lonely hour for Mrs. Benton with news from the House of the Infant Jesus, and now and then a bit of intelligence from Rosine or Willie. Mrs. Benton wrote more freely to her than to any other person, but for this vent to her overcharged heart, she must have sunk under the burden of her cares and trials. Marion was wretched, and wandered about the house while she assisted her mother in their household duties, with an air of sullen discontent. She continually mourned over the contrast between her position and that of her sister Rosine, and wondered what was the use of living, if they must live thus. Harold, proud and high spirited, hated nothing in his situation, but the manual labor which his father exacted from him. He did not mind being out of the world; to wander over the prairie with his horse and gun was pleasure enough, but to bend his neck to toil as a farmer, was utterly distasteful to him. Mr. Benton was all tender deference to his wife; there was even an awe and reverence in his demeanor towards her, a contrast to his former self-reliant assurance of being obeyed; he was also gentle and forbearing with Marion, but stern and sometimes harsh with his boy. The memory of his own unrestrained self-will and pride rankled in his bosom, and when he saw the same spirit in his child, he felt that it was his power, and right that he should curb it. He failed to sympathize with the wound he had himself made in the breast of his son. This misunderstanding between

father and child was a constant source of anxiety to the mother, who saw the noble nature of her boy in danger of being turned into gall and bitterness. It was after an outbreak between them, when Harold had declared he would serve in this way no longer, and the father had threatened severe measures, that Mrs. Benton, not daring to go between them, had retired to her bedroom, when the following letter from sister Agnes was brought to her. It was like the voice of an angel.

"House of the Infant Jesus, Feb. 18—  
"My Dear Lucy—  
"Thank you for writing me freely. No, it cannot be wrong that you should have the sympathy of one who has known and loved you so many years. I am concerned with you about the dear children. What you told me of Marion made me a little indignant; what you wrote of Harold grieved me. As you say, a mother should never come between father and son to interfere; but is not Mr. Benton's a mistaken idea of duty? If Harold could be sent away to some business or trade, would it not be to his advantage? and yet he is so young to leave you. Good Father Coté is in St. Louis, and that is not so far from you but he might help you. You remember how grateful he was for the kind hand in cholera times. If I were you I would write to him, or see him, which would be better. I am confident he would rejoice in an opportunity to do you a kindness; and if Harold were at St. Louis, under his care, your anxieties would be lessened. A few years will change both father and son, and they will come together again with different feelings. I can understand that the two natures must chafe and irritate each other continually, thrown together so entirely. With regard to Marion, I find it difficult to speak as I wish, because I am a little angry with her that at her age she should not better appreciate her mother's trials, and appreciate her self-absorption. Dear child! a little sternness on the part of her father would be a real blessing to her. Anything like a cross is so new, but she is young, and will be wiser by and by. It was well you kept her with you, for her nature would hardly bear the parting that dear Rosine meets, without becoming utterly selfish. Perhaps if you could, for her sake, overcome the repugnance you feel to making the acquaintance of the people about the prairie, you might find something to interest her. Your plan for a Sunday-school for the Catholic children is admirable; it would be such a blessing for them, and as a source of comfort to you. Marion would be a help to you there, and be doing herself good by teaching others. You will all be happier when your good Bishop sends you a priest; God grant that time may not be so distant. Rosine I see occasionally; the family of Colonel Hartland occupy most of her spare moments. I am not afraid of their turning the dear child's head with worldly amusements, for she comes to me with the same sweet loving way she always had toward you, with her little troubles. She is very prudent, but I gather from what she tells me, that Mrs. Hartland overlooks all her lessons; this may account for the slight reserve and formality you noticed in them. When she mourns for you, as she does sometimes inordinately, I try to teach her to live in the present hour by the performance of every duty, and to trust for the future in the tender care of the Good Shepherd, commending her earnest wish to be restored to you, to the prayers of our Blessed Mother.

"Your father and Willie called here this week for the last news from our dear House is prosperous, the last collection was very large, but a mass of sin and wretchedness lies all about us unrelieved; only today three unfortunate girls were brought to me, the eldest scarce sixteen; their stories would make your heart ache. But my household calls to me; tell me all that interests you, for it is all precious to your affectionate sister.

AGNES.  
As Mrs. Benton folded this letter, her husband entered the room to which she had retired. It was dusk, she could not see his face, but she knew by his step and manner that he was in a state of excitement.

"Where is Harold?" was her first inquiry.  
"In his room," replied the father.  
"I have sent him to bed, with the promise of a flogging in the morning. I have tried all other means, this is a last resort. I should have finished the matter tonight, only I did not dare trust myself."

Mrs. Benton approached the door as though she would leave the room, as though she would leave the room. "Don't go to Harold tonight," he said, with something of his old authoritative manner. "I wish him left to himself. That boy's pride and willfulness shall be broken; one of us must be master, and I intend that point shall be settled forever tomorrow."

"And will you settle it by brutal force, Philip?" she said gently, "and break the last link that binds you to your boy. Consider, my dear husband, Harold is no longer a little child, and if his will is ever subdued, it must be by the blessing of Divine help on his own efforts."

"And in the meantime, Lucy, you would have me submit to his insolence?"  
"Phillip," she replied, her voice trembling with emotion, "it is you that are willful now. You know of— she hesitated—" you know that"

late years you have been so absorbed in business, that Harold has been left during the time when whipping might have benefited him, and now do you expect, by one chastisement, to subdue what it takes a lifetime to govern?"  
At the mention of his absorption in business, Mr. Benton sunk into a seat, his proud, haughty manner vanished, and his head bowed upon his hands.

"I meant no reproach, Philip dear," said the wife, sinking on her knees beside him, "you know I would not be so cruel; but pity this dear boy, by the memory of the past."

"Yes, Lucy," he said, bitterly, "what right have I to punish him, who got free myself by a mere act of friendly compassion? O God! would that I had died in early childhood. I hope Harold and Willie may both go before their manhood. To live, marked with such a stigma as I have brought upon them! Why did you come to me? Without me, perhaps, in time they might have recovered from the disgrace; with me it clings to them forever. Good God! what shall I do?" he exclaimed, in a despairing tone.

"He saveth to the uttermost, dear Philip," replied Mrs. Benton in a low voice. He did not reply, while she led him in thought to the fountain of all comfort, soothing his spirit with the solace of her own bright faith and trust. At length, when his emotion had somewhat subsided, she ventured to return to the subject. "You will recall your decision that I should not see Harold tonight, will you?" she said, pleadingly.

"Yes, Lucy, and my promise to him also—go," he said without looking up.  
In a moment Mrs. Benton was by Harold's side in the low garret before mentioned. The boy had thrown himself on the couch, not having removed his powder horns from his belt, nor his boots from his feet. His gun lay on his pillow, and his head rested on it, his face downward. He was not weeping, but hardening his heart against his father, and he did not look up or speak as Mrs. Benton laid her hand on his head.

"Harold, my boy," she said gently. "It's of no use, mother," he replied somewhat petulantly, "no use, to talk. I wish I dared," he added, his voice trembling with anger. "I shall do it," he continued, turning around to his mother and raising his hand earnestly, I shall do it, if father flogs me. I would have done it before, but for you," he added, his voice softening almost to tears.

"Done what, Harold, my darling son?" she inquired, holding his reluctant hand.  
"Cleared out—runaway—to California—to sea—anywhere, but where father is. I believe he hates me!" he exclaimed with a flash of his dark eyes, which showed too plainly that hatred was seeking a home in his breast.

"Harold," replied his mother, "you are wicked, rebellious. God is displeased with you, I am displeased with you. You said you would try to do better; would not answer again, and thwart your father's wishes."  
"I did, try mother, I did—but to be taken hold of, and talked to as if were a dog! Father almost swore at me, and said—"

"Hush! my son, I don't wish you to repeat your father's words to me. You know your duty—obedience—submission. Ah, Harold you have forgotten the promises you made to Father Roberts the day of your first Communion, to be a comfort and not a care, to be a dear mother in her banishment from home. I expected better things of you." She paused a moment, then continued, "Shall it be you, my first born son, my pride, my joy, that shall be the one to break my heart, and lay me in the grave?"

The boy started from his pillow, threw his arms about her neck and whispered, "No, mother, I will bear it, I will bear it. Only let me be a comfort to you. Forgive me, I have done very wrong, forgive me, do any thing you wish, only forgive me."  
The morning after this conversation, Harold did not appear at the breakfast table. Mr. Benton looked haggard and worn, as if sleep had forsaken his pillow, but he despatched Marion for her brother. She found him unable to lift his head, his whole frame burning with fever. He had tossed all night on his steepled couch, unwilling to disturb his mother. "He must be brought down stairs," said Mrs. Benton, when she had visited his chamber, "the air in the garret is stifling."

Mr. Benton arose without a word, and soon appeared with Harold, whom he carried as gently as a woman, and laid him upon his own bed. In a few moments, as his mother sat fanning his hot brow, his face suddenly became deadly pale, with a purplish hue about the mouth and eyes. He accompanied with a chilliness which shook his whole frame like an aspen leaf.  
"It is fever and ague," said his father; "the night air has done its work."  
"Yes, papa," replied the boy, manfully, his lips quivering, "I disobeyed you when you told me not to stay out in the dew. Will you forgive me, and punish me as you think best?"  
"You are punished sufficiently, my boy," said the father, turning away to the window.  
The mother sat by her son many days, as chill and fever succeeded each other; he grew at length so weak that Mrs. Benton was anxious for medical advice. As she was con-

sulting with her husband on the possibility of sending ten miles for the nearest physician, they were saluted by a man on horseback, who rode up to the outer door without dismounting, and rapping with the heavy riding whip, shouted, "Stranger! after the manner of the country. Harold's eye brightened as he recognized the voice, when neighbor Rice was ushered in.

"So you're doney, my fine chap," he said, shaking Harold's hot, parched hand; "but come, pluck up, you needn't be any ways scared, it's nothin' but the ager shakes. My woman has 'um to kill, but hers is mostly dumb-chills; wust kind, cause they're all inside on you."  
"What does she do for them?" inquired Mrs. Benton, anxiously.

"Why, she tuk heaps of track, quenean and marcery, morfine, and yarbs of every natur, till I lit upon the yarb as did the business, the red centery plant. Sure hit, now I tell you; powerful good for them chillis. I'll have some along to you. What's that mighty poety young un of yours, Mrs. Benton?" he said, when he found Harold did not appear. "I allowed she'd be the homesickest gal in these diggins."

Mrs. Benton called her daughter, and as she saw the wondering gaze the neighbor cast upon the piano, she proposed Marion should play for the amusement of their guest. Marion went about the task rather unwillingly, while Old Cap laid his head down on the instrument to listen, and Mrs. Benton with a satisfied air, and said in a tone meant to be final, "Was, I reckoned your man was a parson; but bless me, it's nigh dew fallin', and I must get along. Don't go tur sendin' for no doctor's truck; the less on't, the better. I'll send the yarb along."

As he was closing the door, he was reminded of the errand that brought him, so he must come back into Harold's room, leading a dog, which, he kept the youngster company.  
The puppy was a noble fellow, a cross between the greyhound and bloodhound. "The young uns call him Turk," he said, somewhat confused by Harold's overwhelming thanks. "You must keep him straight, youngster. I reckon it is with dogs as with chaps; if they ain't liked young, they'll show their teeth, and won't budge when you tell 'em."

Harold colored painfully, the color seemed to extend to his father's cheek and brow. Mrs. Benton hastened to change the subject, by speaking of the proposed Sunday school for the children of the foreigners, thinking his kindness of heart would lead him to assist her in getting them together. She was not mistaken in her venture. He proposed to speak to the parents' itself, adding with true American, not to any Catholic priest, "We ain't no farmers here, it's all one; Dutch, Irish, Germans, or Yankees, and as to the Catholic part, I reckon it's better 'n no religion. They used to have them doins down in York State, and I never heard tell no harm come on 'um. You may have my six young uns for all me, to get your hand in."

Mrs. Benton thanked him for the encouraging words, gave him some small books for his children, and went away much pleased, reporting to Athlaca news that "them Bentons grand folks, but dreeful good hearted, all but the old man, who was a reglar Injun."

TO BE CONTINUED  
A WILD IRISH GIRL

She came on board at Queenstown. The passengers from Liverpool had crowded to the side of the steamer to see the newcomers embark.  
The girl in the tugboat below did not notice the curious frowns regarding her. A slender, grey-clad little thing was this new passenger. Heavy, black-brown hair was braided behind her shapely head. Genuine grey blue Irish eyes shone from under straight dark brows. Her mouth was very rosy and very sunny; her nose ever so slightly "tip-tilted"; her cheeks held the soft, rich bloom one sees on a sun ripe peach.

"Here, Mr. O'Brien, take this, and this, and this!" those on board heard a fresh young voice, with just the most delightful brogue, cry out as she piled wraps and baskets and tin trunks pell on an old gentleman who was coming up the plank and looking as if he would like to rebel if he dared. "Now, Rick," she said turning swiftly as the whistle sounded and holding out two skin-brown hands to a black-haired, black-moustached, grey-eyed young fellow who stood beside her—"now, Rick, goodby."

He caught both outstretched hands in one of his own and drew her almost fiercely to his side. Bending swiftly he kissed the bright, innocent lips upraised to his—one long, tender, passionate kiss. Then, as if fearing to trust himself further, he pushed her towards the plank and walked rapidly away.  
She came very slowly up the ropes, looking back at every step, her face like sunshine and rain. She bent over the ship's side, her eyes lumin-

ous through their tears, her lips smiling to hide their quivering. "Goodby Rick!"  
Then the boat and Rick were gone, and the fashionable, lively London ladies were amassing around the deck and making lamentable blunders with their passenger lists.

What is more beautiful than Queenstown harbor when seen from a vessel Atlantic bound? Hundreds of bright shining boats dot the sparkling water, and among them all, gigantic and repositful, lies the guardship Revenge. The ships lie at anchor under their network of rigging.

And sloping up from the water's edge, steep and rugged and majestic, rises the beautiful old rock built City of Queenstown, and against that sombre, jagged background, over the narrow, irregular streets, tier on tier, ledge on ledge, rise handsome mansions, all bordered in ivy and set in a wilderness of flowers.

Dinner hour came and the passengers flocked down to the saloon. The first day on board all are curious and diffident and each contemplates his vis-a-vis almost in silence. There is consolation in knowing how soon restraint rubs off and that within three days little will be at a premium.

The pretty little Irish girl came to dinner without her elderly escort. She sat next the captain and he introduced her to those near him.  
A look of genuine interest flashed into her eyes as she heard the name of her vis-a-vis, Allan Palmer. He was a tall, fair, aristocratic looking man, slenderly built, with hands shapely and white as a woman's, cold, slightly supercilious eyes, and a tawny, drooping moustache.

Nora Shield was friendly with everybody in the saloon within an hour. The most confirmed old hypochondriac on board forgot his ailments in her presence, so bright was the girl with health and unfailing spirits. She was always willing to help, always ready for fun. She would sing old ballads by the hour in that fresh, bird-like voice of hers as we sat on deck.

The young fellow all adored her, but of all her admirers none was more attentive than Allan Palmer. He carried her rugs and steamer chair; he walked the deck with her by the hour.  
The girl was so directly his opposite she seemed to excite in his languid serenity something like genuine amazement.

It was their third night out from land and about 10 o'clock. She slipped her hand from her escort's arm with the assertion that she was going below to her music.  
Half an hour later, recollecting a magazine she had left on her chair, she slipped from the bright, music-filled saloon; up the companion way and out onto the deserted moonlit deck.

The smoking-room was lit up, the windows open, and half a dozen gentlemen were lounging within as she fled past it.  
Hurrying back her attention was riveted by one word—her name lightly spoken by a fashionable New Yorker.  
"And so, you're struck at last. On pretty Nora Shields, too, Palmer. You've good taste, my boy. I'm smitten there myself."

"You are immensely mistaken, my dear fellow," murmured Allan Palmer's smooth voice—"immensely. I can't afford to throw myself away on a wild Irish girl, though she is a deucedly nice little thing."  
"She's a jewel of a girl, sir," declared the rough old captain bluntly. "Gentlemen, you ought to see how gentle and womanly and sympathizing that child can be when she slips away from your amusements and goes down among those wretched steerage passengers, taking them dainties at her own expense. A jewel of a girl, a jewel that requires polishing. A very rough diamond. Come out on deck, Stewart."

And before she had time to move they brushed past the girl where she stood rigid, paralyzed in the shadow of the smoking room.  
They paused a few feet from her to light their cigars, and she could not move until they had passed on.  
"Will you ever be in earnest about women, Palmer?"  
"Yes, puff, puff—" as soon as I get back from New York. There's a girl coming from Europe—I forgot just where—to visit my mother. She wrote me a dozen pages about her, but I didn't read half, of course, one never does. "Sweet girl graduate," and that sort of thing, you know. She is anxious to visit America and my mother was a friend of her mother's. See? Homely or not, of course I'll marry her, for she is hairless to fifty thousand pounds. Think of it—"puff, puff." "With so much loose paper of mine in the hands of creditors, I can't afford to be particular. Come on."  
Day by day the passengers began to look from Nora Shield and Allan Palmer to each other with amazed, smiling significance. For it was plain to the most observant that, however much against his will, the languid, aristocratic fellow passenger was falling in love.  
In the girl herself many new charms had been discovered. She spoke French like a native. She played Mozart and Beethoven like a master.  
It was the night before they landed, and of all the feverish, restless men on board, Allan Palmer was the worst.  
"Danger lies in woman's eyes," nodded the old fellows to each other, over their claret.

"A very good match for her," agreed the ladies. "She must be poor, sh' dresses so plainly."  
"Lucky dog, Palmer," growled the young chaps enviously.  
When Nora Shields appeared, from the companion-way a trim, pretty figure in light-fitting blue serge, Allan Palmer went eagerly forward, and drew her hand within his arm. She smiled a little to herself at his air of quiet proprietorship.  
"Miss Nora!" after a nervous silence,  
"Well?"  
"We land tomorrow—the first time I will have been home in five years. Don't let that landing be a parting. These ten days have been the shortest and happiest and most miserable of my life."

"Slightly paradoxical," laughed Miss Nora.  
"I tried not to care for you," he went on unheeding, "I didn't particularly at first. But fate has been too strong for me. I'm in love with you, Nora, and want you to be my wife."  
She stopped at the vessel's side in their slow saunter, and the childish, piquant face, framed in white, fleecy folds of the nubia she wore, looked up at him in quiet decision.  
"Tomorrow you shall have my answer, Mr. Palmer. No, not tonight—tomorrow."

In the handsome parlor of a brown-stone house on Fifth avenue, sat Allan Palmer, at 8 o'clock of a bright summer afternoon. His mother, a kind, placid old lady, came forward to fervently embrace her handsome, nervous son.  
"Up so early, dear, after that tiresome voyage? Ah, there is a carriage. Visitors—don't go, Allan."  
"Miss Shield," announced a servant at the door.

And a slender, graceful girl in an exquisite carriage costume of black and gold came quietly into the room.  
"My dear Miss Shield—my dear Nora. What a pleasant surprise. Where is Mr. O'Brien? When did you arrive? Let me present my son, Allan, Miss Shield."  
Miss Shield just inclined her graceful head under its delicate, foamy plumes.

"Mr. Palmer and I have had the pleasure of crossing the Atlantic together."  
And then, as he came swiftly forward to welcome her, his thin, cold face grown radiant, his mother—rightly surmising the situation—beamingly and diplomatically withdrew.  
And when he pleaded eagerly for her answer Miss Shield quietly folded her mesquinette-kid hands in her silken lap.

I highly appreciated last evening, Mr. Palmer, your Ophelia-like offer, but I remember that though I was a deucedly nice little thing, still that I was a jewel that required polishing—a very rough diamond, in fact. And you could not, of course, think of throwing yourself away on a wild Irish girl. It was dishonorable to listen, I admit. But, rising and holding out one slender gloved hand, "we'll shake hands and cry even. Anyway," with a swift, bright blue and a happy smile, "I couldn't possibly have said yes. Because in December the man I love with all my heart is coming to make me his wife. For," laughing archly, "he has no objection to a wild Irish girl. I am going to marry Rick. What a lovely city New York is. Good afternoon, Mr. Palmer."—Church Progress.

BETWEEN TWO STOOLS

It will be a long time before the history of the Great War can be written and a much longer time before the meaning of that which has passed into that history will be adequately or rightly interpreted. But already, as the smoke of the immediate conflict begins to clear away, certain things stand out in plain view. In the religious history of the great struggle, nothing is more noticeable than the complete failure of Protestantism as a system. This is seen not only by its critics, but in the frank admissions of its friends, in the statements of those who are favorable to it, and who are writing in its authorized publications.

The Biblical Review, published by the University of Chicago Press, is certainly a representative spokesman for Protestantism of the "liberal" school, and that is the dominant school in all Protestant sects today. Recent issues of this publication are filled with articles calling attention to the lack of any real hold by Protestantism upon the masses of the people, and particularly upon the young men who have recently returned from the front. One of the clearest of these is an article entitled "Christian and Jew at the Front," by Rabbi Lee J. Levinger, chaplain with the American Expeditionary Forces in France. Rabbi Levinger is aware that his host in these pages is a Protestant and his article is all that politeness demands of a guest, but the failure of Protestantism is made evident just the same. The gist of his sketch is precise of the amount of unanimity of purpose and unity of spirit which were exhibited by the chaplains of our forces, the frank respect for one another's positions and the very generous desire to be helpful to those of other faiths than their own. He points out the undoubtedly broadening influence of contact with men of other religions, this influence affecting both the chaplains and the men, though each in a different way. The effect upon the men was to destroy bigotry and prejudice and to give each one a new perspective. As he says:

"When a Jew from the East Side of New York, who had never known

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The Saint stands before us in her girlhood and her womanhood as maiden, wife, mother, widow, and nun, a living, breathing, loving personality, thoroughly sweet and thoroughly good, yet thoroughly human.