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HAWTHORNDEN

A STORY OF EVERY DAY LIFE

BY MRS. CLARA M. THOMPSON

CHAPTER XXIX.  
REPENTANCE AT LEISURE

Edward Hartland remained only two days at Hawthorndean. Rosine no longer hesitated to return with him; she felt that his old grief, so newly revived, needed the comfort of her presence. He had told her so. Dr. Martland added his advice to the urgent persuasion of Mrs. Benton, and the pleadings of Willie, that Captain Hartland should remain in the country; Rosine too, hoped he could make himself contented at Hawthorndean for awhile, for Ned had told her that it would never do for him to go back to his aimless life in the city; therefore she helped Willie's pleas and her parents' arguments, though she would miss Aleck so much. On getting back to the city, they found the letters waiting one for Dr. Hartland from Harry Greenwood, and one from Marion for Rosine, by the same steamer, besides a package, and a farewell note from Dora. The Doctor insisted upon reading his aloud, before she broke the seal of hers. "There was never any thing in Harry's letters," he said, "which she might not hear," but before he had finished the second page, he stammered and paused, and was at length obliged to say: "Well, Rosine, I am mistaken this time, I must not read you all of his." He had blundered upon something quite serious with regard to Marion and her husband, and which Harry particularly requested him not to speak of. They had met abroad, "she has and the butler," in the French metropolis. Marion had soon made herself known to Mr. Greenwood, they were at the same hotel. A few weeks had passed in very pleasant social intercourse, the young man being delighted to meet one he had come so lately from those who had loved them most occupied all his days, but his evenings were mostly given to his new friends and their gay circles. He had already made the discovery that life for the bride so young, so beautiful, so brightly, and fond of pleasure, could be a prospect of nothing but wretchedness. She seemed light hearted and happy with the world, but he had twice brought her husband to her, after an absence of three days, in a state which required weeks of constant nursing to make him presentable; and he knew there must be a sad heart-ache under that veil of cheerfulness; "there was a feeling of indignation against such a sacrifice," he added, "through the cycle in which they moved." Young Greenwood wrote with the ardor and enthusiasm of a soldier, about his wish to protect this lovely young creature from such a brute.

Dr. Hartland stamped his foot and bent his brow as he read this, and straightway took himself to the library to answer the letter without delay, not waiting to see what Marion would say for herself, in her letter to her sister. She told of her delightful life in Paris, of her meeting with Mr. Greenwood, and of her talks with him about home friends, and the flattering remarks he was pleased to make of one of her near relatives; of his kindness and attention to herself, which she attributed solely to his regard for her sister; she did not once mention her husband, and the quick sight of reader discovered a vein of effort through the letter, as if she were conscious of the fact that she was making something, that increased Rosine's forebodings of ill; this troubled her so much, that she forgot for a long while Dora's note; this calmed her, gave her a look beyond and above this life to that haven of rest, for which even the youngest and happiest, if thoughtful withal, are not without longings.

"Navy Yard, January, 18—"  
"It is better that we do not meet at this time, my dear Rosa; I know you will not doubt my love in leaving thus without a last kiss. My child, it is a great suffering to break ties which are like bands of iron, and now I wish to shun all that can remind me of the past; you will forgive me—no shall meet again, I go to offer to my dear Lord the remnant of my days. Of those I leave, there are two that I specially commend to your prayers and to your love; I need not tell you who they are. I send you my much-loved crucifix; it is the last earthly treasure from which it is hard to part. Commending you, my beloved, to the prayers of our Blessed Mother, I am ever yours in the dear faith."  
DORA GREENWOOD.

Dr. Hartland's reply to the letter of Mr. Greenwood was sharp and caustic. Dora had said to him, in that last dreadful interview, "You will love Harry still, and counsel him," and now he thought only of this request. For Marion he had no pity; he misjudged her in his bitterness, and he warned his friend of her arts, related to him the story of her marriage, her faithlessness to early vows; he rebuked Stapleton to his heart's content, but still blamed the wife through all; cautioning Harry to be on his guard; not to consider himself fire-proof; but to remember that older and wiser heads than his had succumbed to a pretty woman; assured him that there was no more dangerous condition for a young, enthusiastic fellow like himself, than an interesting woman who lived unhappily with her husband. Mr. Greenwood was very indignant when he read this letter; he felt the injustice toward Mrs.

Stapleton, was very angry with Ned for accusing her of art; indeed, but for the good common sense and fidelity to truth, which were among points of his character, the letter of the Doctor would have had an opposite effect to that which he intended. He threw it from him in great displeasure, but the closing sentence drew his heart back to his right honest friend, when he said, "I counsel you, as a man older and more experienced than yourself, but I counsel you for love, Harry, the love I bear the dead as well as the living, to whom I have promised, under all circumstances, to be your friend." A second reading of the letter calmed him, he tried to look at the matter from Ned's standpoint; the third reading, which he resolutely made, brought him to his right mind, and caused him to own to the monitor who kept constant watch over the citadel of his heart, that the warning was not without its purpose. Only the previous evening Marion had sought his protection from the face of her husband, who was raving under the influence of the fatal cup, and he had helped her, pitied her, and shielded her, and when she had calmed him with words of thanks, and confided to him a portion of her terrible trial; and the censorious world of Paris, though he knew it not—especially the American portion of it—were already making their comments. It seemed unmanly, almost ungenerous, to leave a woman in this unprotected position, so abruptly, too; but fortunately for his purpose, he received a second and urgent call to Rouen, which he had once refused, why, he could not tell; he would reconsider, he would at any rate do right. His determination was strengthened when Mrs. Stapleton sent for him again that evening, her husband still brutalized and violent. During that interview he told her of the necessity of his departure on account of his business, which would call him home in a few months, and he had already lingered in the capital longer than he at first intended. She clung to him with fearful eyes and throbbing heart, and in utter dismay begged him to tell her what to do. Dr. Hartland was in earnest about her using her arts to fascinate Mr. Greenwood; whatever her faults, she had not sunk to that. She had a conscience which, though it had not hindered her from wronging her lover, was quite too active as yet to admit a thought unworthy of her as a wife.

The atmosphere of the life she was leading, the society in which she now mingled, might in time break down even these barriers; but she was too freshly from her mother's hand to look upon positive vice with any thing but horror. She desired a protector, she was afraid of her husband, and left to the mercy of his illings in a foreign land, it was most natural she should look for help to one who had known and loved her friends at home; but the very call for protection made the position of protector a dangerous one, and the warning was not in vain. When she inquired of him so earnestly what she should do without his help, Mr. Greenwood suggested that she should take the first sober, reasonable moment of her husband to urge a return to her own country; there she would be among her friends, and he might be restrained by their presence.

It was in the midst of the festive scene of the gayest of cities that a kind Providence brought to Marion's heart the truth that she had left her father's house, where there was plenty, and filled herself with husks. She found her slight hold upon the man with whom she had vowed to journey through life already loosening. Her youth and fresh loveliness, her vivacity and ready wit, had charmed him for awhile, but his nature was too entirely sensual to be held long by any tie, and she awoke from her short dream of wealth and ambition, to find that the apples of Sodom are bitter. She saw her influence waning with her husband even in his sober hours; he was always then a gentleman, but she could see that her wishes were not all that they had been to him in the early days of their marriage. Their tour was not half completed, and she had often declared her willingness to live abroad; but now, after the advice of Mr. Greenwood, she set herself to persuade Mr. Stapleton to an immediate return to their native land.

She had never before suffered; the long, lonely nights of watching were new to her; the fearful scenes of that chamber of drunkenness were a terrible opening of the bottomless pit to her terrified soul; and she stood alone, yes, alone in the world; upon her own indomitable will rested the responsibility of her position; she had, as Ned had twice told her, made her own bed, and on it she must lie!

Hardhood and firmness were natural to her, but now she was filled with quaking fear, when she heard the shuddering screams of her husband resisting the devil that haunted him. Such were her days and nights, while she watched and waited, feeding him, by the advice of the physician, with the fire that was consuming his life-blood; still fostering hope that if she could but bring him back to friends, all this would be changed; but when the paroxysm was off, and she ventured her proposition, he received it with good-natured indifference, and patting her on the cheek said he had not shown her half of Europe; he couldn't think of bringing her home yet. Poor lone heart! she had gained the object of her ambition, riches without stint, the capacity to make a show to any extent, every thing that money could buy; followers, but no friends. That

was a winter of unmitigated disappointment and mortification; her own quiet home, at Ingelwood, and the earnest love of Leighton were already objects of bitter regret; and yet she wore the hollow smile when her husband was in a condition to enter society with her, and was courted and admired in a way that once would have flattered her. There were horrible moments, when she almost resolved to cast from her the fear of God and man, and take the intoxicating pleasures held out to her as the best the world had left, and sink into a vortex of dissipation, revolving thought, and conscience, and hope in the whirlpool around her; but the prayers she had learned at her mother's knee she had not forgotten, and her guardian angel still bent over her in love; and in time the good God sent her hope from another source, and the fountain of true womanhood was opened in her heart.

The last bell had rung, and the appointed man was preparing to remove the plank from the side of the Great Western, which lay at the wharf at Liverpool, when a young man came running down the quay, giving a leap from the wharf to the ship's side.

"You came plucky nigh being left, my young chap," said a man in coarse cloth, with his hands deep buried in his nether garments, and his back, coarse hair hanging over his shoulders; "that's a poor lookout for a smart piece like you; it'll do for us sturdy folks, but the like of 'you ought to have plenty of time."

"Yes, it was a risk," replied the young man, diligently brushing his hat, which had fallen on to the deck in his successful jump. "I ought not to have waited, but I never can see a big boy beating a little boy without interfering, and I stopped to separate them."

"The big boy would call you a fool for your pains," replied the man, smiling. "I won't do to stop the fight always; I tried it not long ago between a man and his wife, and got the worst of it."

The young man said no more, but picking up his portmanteau, passed on. The passengers were in the usual confusion, children running hither and thither, and nurses in eager pursuit; women pushing and crowding to get the most comfortable seats, and men with wives and baskets, and sometimes babies in their arms, wandering about to find their own state-rooms. The steamer glided swiftly through the channel, and the young stranger stood almost alone in the stern of the boat taking a last look at Albion's chalky cliffs as they receded from his sight. His rovelia had quite as much to do with the land to which he was going as to the one he was leaving behind; a touch startled him out of his musing, and he felt a soft hand laid on his shoulder. "Why, Mr. Greenwood! how fortunate that we should meet here!" exclaimed a familiar voice.

"Mrs. Stapleton!" he said, with astonishment, taking the offered hand; "so you are going home at last?"

"Yes," she replied, sadly, casting down her eyes. "I wanted to long since; I have urged it again and again; it would not be now, but circumstances render it absolutely necessary." She spoke hesitatingly, and with deep emotion.

"I do not see Mr. Stapleton?" said the young man, in a tone of inquiry, looking around on the group which had assembled to enjoy the evening air. "Is he quite well?"

"He is in the gentleman's saloon, a little better, perhaps, than when you saw him last," she replied, blushing crimson. "But I am so glad to meet you; I decided this voyage much, although I long to be at home. I have not been out of Paris since you left, except for a few days; but I am so rejoiced to be going home!"

"Not even sorry to leave the Louvre?" he inquired.

THE POPE AND THE POIU

"Madame will wear her blue foulard, without doubt, and her black hat?"

"I will wear nothing of the sort. How often have I told you, Marie, that there is no sense in your suggesting what clothes I am to put on when I, myself, have perfectly definite ideas on the subject? I will wear the gray."

"But, madame, for driving in the Park, the blue is so becoming, so smart."

"That will do. The gray at 3 o'clock, and that hat you say looks like a woman of sixty. Now you may go."

There are times when I am obliged to put Marie in her place. Blue foulard, indeed! Just to go driving in that dullest of spots, Central Park! The woman was out of her head!

Yet I was fond of her. She had been left me by poor dear Julia Harrington, with the request that I look after her—incidentally putting up with her masterful French ways—and I have grown to feel a real affection for the creature, although at times, like the present, her ownership of me irritates, and I often contemplate making a change. But the memory of dear Julia invariably obtrudes, and I always relent. Now I have the feeling that Marie is fastened to me for as long as either, or both, of us shall live.

However, I would not wear that blue foulard, if for no other reason than to show her that I still possess some shreds of character.

Promptly at four fifteen we started forth, Marie looking as only a French maid could look, and I probably a mere dowdy frump in her eyes. Nevertheless, gray becomes me. It lends to brighter my hair, and goodness knows something is needed to make those drab wisps less dull! I detest colorless hair, just as I detest colorless people.

It was a heavenly day, a day full of the sweetness and tenderness of spring. The trees were already green and the forsythia was out—although that gave me no pleasure, for I dislike its sickly yellow, and untidy habit of growing in every direction at once—and there were quantities of children and their nurses riding donkeys—the children I mean—and a general air of good-will seemed to pervade everything and everybody, for I saw no face which did not bear a smile, and that is "going some" these days I assure you!

Marie is fearfully shocked whenever I use slang. She says it is not come in fast in one of my stations. She never forgets and says "years" instead of "station." But then she is French.

As we rolled gently along—Gifford in wonderful chauffeur and knows my peculiarities as to speed—some where in the upper driveways of the Park I noticed a soldier, a French soldier, by the road, his hands in his pockets, his head raised, as if listening.

He was just a common polli, a boy, one of the many who for one season or another are here in this country. The sight of his blue uniform, as he stood against the green of the Park, brought back a memory of that other green park and their nurses riding donkeys—will and from which, four years ago, I had been obliged to flee, in such a hurry.

"Do you think he would care to drive with us, Marie?" I asked, the War and all its horrors suddenly coming over me once more with renewed vividness.

"But yes, madame—unless he is too proud. They sometimes are. My nephew once refused to drive with the Comtesse de—"

"Never mind your nephew. Tell Gifford to stop and ask that boy if he would like to go with us. He would give me any pleasure."

As we drew up, I opened the door myself and leaned forward looking into the soldier's young, and old eyes. They were the eyes of youth, but heaven, how old! His face was a mass of scars, as if someone had tried to make mince meat of it and had been stopped before the job was thoroughly accomplished. His poor right hand bore so little resemblance to what a hand should be that, after it, he therefore changed the subject by saying, "I noticed a Catholic priest as I came through the cabin. I was rejoiced to see him."

"Do you know who he is?" she asked.

of that; but as time passed he talked freely, and I will try to tell you what he said with as much of his own simplicity as I can remember; putting it into English for you out of his somewhat halting French.

To begin with I asked him his age. "I have twenty-three years, madame. I went into the army when I had but nineteen. That seems a long time ago—but one does not pass the time very quickly in the army; it appears longer when one is fighting. And now, in your so beautiful city, the days go by and I find it difficult to believe that I have already lived here for a whole month. Yes, it is beautiful, but—well, it is of course not Paris. Madams will forgive me? I have found much kindness here, much brotherhood—and now I am waiting for a ship which will take me to England."

"To England?" I queried, puzzled. He smiled a twisted smile, which took some of the repellent ugliness from his face and gave one an idea of what it might have been before he was so cruelly wounded.

"It is a long story. If madame has the patience?"

"But I do so want to hear. Please go on."

"Madame is very kind to take the interest. When I came out of the hospital for the last time, there did not seem to be very much to do. I have been wounded fourteen times—not, you understand, fourteen separate times, only five times have I been in hospital—but after all that, one begins to wonder what there can be for one so—how shall I say?—so mended. And the last time, when I stood upon the steps in the sunshine, I thought—'if the good God does not show me the way, I shall have to stand here until I die, and that would be a pity.' He must have heard me because, almost at once, two friends of mine, two Italians beside whom I had fought, appeared from around the corner. 'What are you going to do?' they said. 'Nothing—what can I do? My father and mother are both dead. My village is dust. I have no home. My sisters have been taken by the Germans. There is nothing left and I have no place to go to all.' 'Why do you not come to Italy with us?' they asked, and as it did not matter where I went, I said, 'Yes, I will go with you, and perhaps in your country I will find work to do, work that a man with but one hand can do.' You see madame, it is not easy to get work for just one hand alone. They always want men with two."

"I had been discharged from the army. I could be of no more use there. Oh, yes, I have my pension—forty of your dollars a year—and I still draw my pay for one year after my discharge, so you see I have a great deal to be thankful for! And I have something else, something that was given me by a very great man. Madame is interested? I thought so! But wait! Madame shall hear all about him if she will have the patience, and I assure you he is a very great man, indeed, so great that few are allowed to see him at all. But I have seen him!

"We walked to Rome. It is a long journey. Madame has been to Rome? Ah! It is a large city, and very wonderful, like Paris—but not so beautiful or so—Pardon? Madame asked about these, my medals? Oh, they were nothing. They give them to so many! But yes, naturally, I am proud of them, but—well, I do not like to speak of them. It was nothing, nothing at all. I—oh, well, if madame insists, I will give this for—for just knocking down two of my comrades. Madame thinks, perhaps, that I am joking? But it is true. I saw a shell coming, and so I knocked Paul Pillotti and John Baldo flat upon their back. What good did that do? I jumped on top of them, you understand. Madame does not yet comprehend? It is so simple! I caught the shell. It is that which has given me this ugly face. But I was telling madame about Rome, and that is more amusing than medals."

"I found a little work to do. I lived with my two friends and was able to pay my share of the lodging and food. But often we went hungry. One becomes accustomed to going hungry if one is a soldier. However, after I had been in Rome for some time, I began to wish very much to see the city. It was all the place I had read of in my school books. So one day I went to the Vatican."

"I had always wanted to see the Vatican and I had always wanted to see the Pope. When I was a little boy I dreamed about going to see the Pope, and now I was in the same city with him, I commenced wondering how I might accomplish it."

"My friends said, 'You are mad! No one can see the Pope.' But in spite of that my desire grew. It seemed to me, as I thought more and more about it that I must see the Pope. I began to believe that I had walked all the way to Rome just for that and nothing else! I could not get it out of my mind; so, as I say, one fine day I took myself to the Vatican determined to do everything possible to procure an interview with His Holiness."

"There was a man standing guard on the steps. He had on the clothes of a king. But he could not frighten me. I went up to him and said: 'I wish to see the Pope.' He looked at me; then that man smiled and began walking up and down. So I walked up and down beside him. I said: 'I wish to see the Pope.' He smiled again. 'You cannot see the Pope, he is against the law. The Holy Father does not receive common French soldiers.' 'But,' I replied, 'if the Holy Father knew how much I wished to see him, I am sure he would receive me.' You see, madame, I had

the so strong desire to clap my eyes upon His Holiness that I was very insistent, and I kept marching up and down, up and down beside that man so beautifully dressed, trying to keep step with him, which was difficult, his legs were so much longer than mine! Finally, 'Monsieur,' I said, 'if the Pope knew that I—' Then, suddenly, the good God sent me an idea! 'Monsieur,' I repeated, 'if the Pope knew that I had saved the lives of two of his sons, and that I had been given the Croix de Guerre for it, do you not think that he would be willing to see me?' Ah! That was a wonderful idea, sprang! That man stopped himself, then turned me about by the shoulder. 'What is your name?' he demanded. I told him. 'Where do you live?' he asked, and I told him that also. Then he asked me many questions, and finally, I left him and went back to my friends and recounted all that had arrived to me. They laughed at me, madame. They said I was a fool; that one might as well expect the good God Himself to send down a flaming chariot, in which I might ride to heaven, as that His Holiness would receive a common polli who had given his name to one of the Vatican guards! I was a donkey to even dream of such a thing!

"That is what they said, madame. But you see I had dreamed of it, I had wanted to see the Pope all my life! It had lived with me, a great desire, and since I had come to Rome, it had grown until it seemed that, if my longing were not satisfied, I should lose my mind!

"Well, they said I was a fool, so I tried to put the thought of seeing the Pope out of my head altogether. I worked hard, and a month passed. 'Then one day a messenger came to our home, came—and asked for me! Imagine my astonishment, I who had never received a letter in all the time I had been in Italy. Who was there to write to me?' He paused a moment, a whimsical, wistful smile playing over his poor twisted lips. I glanced at Marie. She was sitting forward, holding tight to the window frame as he bounced grotesquely whenever we took the bumps a little too fast. There was an eager look in her eyes, which she tried to hide as soon as she caught me watching her, but her interest was too great.

"Go on, monsieur, go on!" she murmured breathlessly. Then she remembered her manners and once more subsided into her corner.

"Ah, but yes, madame, I will continue. Madame is interested now, eh? It is not such a stupid little history after all? It has its points, yes? Well, as I was saying, I was astonished. I opened that letter with trembling fingers, and I suppose that my face showed my surprise, for my companions said: 'Sapristi, but he is clumsy through fright!' And I was frightened, madame, understand more so than ever before in all my life! There is nothing in a trench to frighten one like a Pope!

"When at last I was able to look at what I held in my hand, I saw that it was a paper with a great seal at the top, and on it were printed words which told me to come to the Vatican two days later to see the Pope privately. At first I was so bewildered that I did not believe it was true, and thought there must be some mistake. But as I gazed upon that big sheet of paper, I began to realize that it was for none other than myself. Then, of a truth, I became frightened, indeed! I did not want to see the Pope! I told my friends so. I said that, after all, it must be nothing much, this see a Pope. The Holy Father was not a very handsome man, and I believed I would send a letter to His Holiness explaining that there had been a mistake; that his invitation had, extraordinarily, got into the wrong hand. No, I did not care to go; I would stay quietly at home—and read about the Pope in the newspaper!

"But my friends tore their hair! They raged! They swore, cursing me for a ninny. Per Bacco! But I must go! It was a command. I could not disobey. It was as if God in His heaven had sent the angel Gabriel to summon me before the Throne! Was I mad? Had I lost all my mind? Not so? I was a fool! I must certainly would have to go, there were no two ways about it!

"Your see, Madame, I had what you call, 'colicet,' of an appalling coldness, and it was with very slow steps that, finally, I did drag myself there.

"And ah! What I found! If I had been frightened before, now my legs were shaking so I could hardly stand upright. My mouth was so dry that I thought I never would be able to tell them my own name!

"There was a tall gentleman who met me at the door. He passed me on to another gentleman, who gave me yet to another. I thought I would never be through with those gentlemen! But, finally, I was taken into a little room, very high and with a beautiful window at the end which looked like the gates of paradise. And as I stood there, trembling, a figure all in white came through the door and I almost wept, madame, because he was so unlike a Pope and so like my own dear father! And he talked to me just as my father would talk. He put his hand upon my shoulder. He asked me questions about everything: about my father and mother; my little sisters, my brother who was shot at Ham; about my medals; my friends whom I had saved when the shell came—everything. And he spoke so gently—just as my

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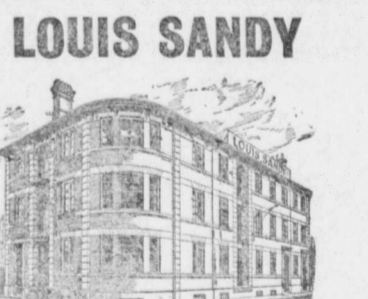
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