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HAWTHORNDEN

A STORY OF EVERY DAY LIFE

BY MRS. CLARA M. THOMPSON

CHAPTER XXVIII

EASTWARD, HO!

Though he had not forgotten his promise, Dr. Hartland had not confided to Rosine his plans for her, lest there should be some failure. Her grandfather, by the loss of his second wife, was left with only the companionship and comfort of the little blind boy who had been committed to him as a precious loan; and the Doctor designed, if it were possible, to bring back Mrs. Benton and her exiled husband to the home of her youth, for the sake of Rosine, who could then spend a part of each year in her two homes; as to permitting her to join them in Ingleswood, he had not for a moment harbored the idea. This removal was a part plan and proposal of Ned's, and he had even gone so far as to sound Mr. Hawthorne himself as to the feasibility of the plan, when he had gone to Hawthorne with Rosine to attend the funeral of his wife. It was a long suggestion on his part; the old gentleman had received it at first as an impossibility; neither he nor Philip Benton could endure a meeting, much less each other's constant presence; but Dr. Hartland saw that the thought was fixed, and the delight of the grandfather over Rosine's presence, gave him great hope. After his return to the city he made known the proposition to his father, with strict injunctions of secrecy, lest false hopes might be raised in his daughter's mind. The Colonel was, of course, highly delighted; he had been suffering since his son had told him that Rosine was yearning for her parents, and any suggestion that prevented a separation from her he hailed with joy, and proposed at once to write to his friend Benton, well knowing that coming from him it would have more influence than from any other source.

The letter was written after an interview with Benton's father, in which the Colonel descended largely on the great change there was in his friend Philip, the entire disappearance of the hauteur and pride that had marked his early days. Mr. Hawthorne was moved by the Colonel's arguments; the prospect of his dear daughter's presence by his lonely hearthstone enabled him, after a little struggle, to say to the Colonel that he would receive them both with a hearty welcome. Equipped with this invitation, Colonel Hartland set out for Ingleswood, and forthwith the following letter was despatched from Hawthorne, addressed to Mrs. Benton.

"Hawthorne, October, 18—

"My Dear Lucy: I am in your old home, and I write to you at this time, instead of Philip, for I am reminded more forcibly by you than of him in this fine old country mansion. Ned gave me so bad an account of your father's loneliness, that I ran up to see what I could do for him. I found him much prostrated with grief and very lonely, and I am authorized from him to give to you and Philip a hearty welcome back to your old home; he will receive you both with open arms and as he looked at me, tell Philip for me, that I know all he will say, but nothing ought to prevent the restoration of his wife to her father, and the sooner it is accomplished the better; it would also give you back Willie, and bring you near our beloved Rosine, who has won all our hearts, and grows more lovely each day.

"Let Philip consider it well. I know there will be trials in this step; will there not be also counterbalancing pleasures? not the least of which I father myself in the occasional glimpse you will get of your old tried friend,

ALEX. HARTLAND."

It is perhaps unnecessary to say, that Mrs. Benton's heart throbbed violently when she read this letter, awaking once more to a hope that had well nigh died out of her patient soul. Her husband noticed the superscription, and said, with a quiet smile of satisfaction, "Ah, Lucy, the Colonel finds me but a poor correspondent, and turns to you."

Often in the solitude of her own room she had shed many tears for her dear parent, left in his advanced age without child or companion; now there were no tears, but the letter rightened her by the excess of joy that leapt up from her heart, as she thought of going back to the dear old home. She did not give the letter to Mr. Benton until she saw an anxious look gathering on his face; he had observed by the variations of her countenance that it contained intelligence of importance, and as she looked at him without speaking, still holding the letter, he put out his hand, and took it. She watched the shadows gather on his brow as he read, and settle into a decided frown as he folded the letter, and went out of her presence without a word. She felt that her hope must give way to disappointment—that what she wished could never be—and with one struggle she gave up the wish, determined that her life should still be one continuous sacrifice. Weeks passed, and the subject was not named between them; indeed, her husband seemed to withdraw himself from her, as if she had been in some way a party to his dishonor. At length, when the time grew long, and the

letter remained unanswered; when she had made up her mind to say to the Colonel that, pleasant and dear as the proposition was to her heart, it was impossible—that day he came to her in the quiet autumn twilight. She knew from whence he came when she saw him ride into the yard; it was the eve of All-Saints, and he had been to the new grave of his little Jeanne in consecrated ground, and to the study of his pastor. "Lucy," he said, as he entered the little inner-room which was her sanctum. "I have come to tell you—we will go." The voice, the manner, every thing, was so strange that Mrs. Benton arose hastily, and went to him. "Yes, I am ready to go," he added, allowing her to lead him to a seat; "the agony of bringing my proud heart to be willing is over and—"

"But, Philip, my dear husband, why should you put such force upon yourself?" her voice trembled with the effort to speak without emotion. "We are not obliged to go; we have a pleasant, happy home here, you and I—" She hesitated, she could not advance with truth; her heart did long for her father and children. "Yes, Lucy, we are very happy here," he replied; "more of earthly happiness than I ought ever to have thought could last. I will say that it has been almost like a death-struggle to think of giving it up, but I have done it. Father Sheridan has helped me," he added; "without him I do not think I could ever have brought myself to the step, even for your sake, but he says it is plainly God's will. I have laid the whole matter before him from the beginning, like a map, and he has not decided without deep thought and earnest prayer. O, Lucy, can earth afford any comfort like the help of a judicious, pious director? I want to him at once after the first day and night of anguish—I have troubled him days and nights since—he has probed the matter to the very foundation, and this is his decision."

"And this all for me, Philip?" said the wife, overcome with the thought of the terrible sacrifice he was making.

"Not altogether, dear," he replied; "let us hope it is to be the final blow to my terrible pride, which can never be sure is conquered, till it can bear to meet those whom I have wronged."

"O, Philip," she exclaimed, clasping his hand in hers, "it would be so blessed to die among our own!" He did not reply; he could not meet the matter as yet, with any desire, it was a too fearful reading of the veil that hid him from the world. With the energy and determination of his character, he saw that the longer the matter was deferred the harder would be the end, and like a true man he went to work at once on the necessary preparations for their removal before the winter.

There were trials in parting, even to Mrs. Benton; she homes which they had made in the wilderness had many dear and precious associations, but particularly her regard for Dr. Nelson and the Leighton family, with more than all, her affection for Father Sheridan, who had been such a heaven-sent friend, made her leave Ingleswood, even with the prospect of a home at Hawthorne, a great trial; but Dr. Nelson had been led to aspirations for the priesthood, and was soon to make his preparations for the holy work at a Seminary of the Sulcisiana; she had helped him in finding his vocation, and their friendship was cemented by the most enduring tie.

She had been obliged to consent very reluctantly to Sobriety's marriage; finding her determined, she had promised her an outfit if she would wait till after the Christmas holidays, when she would be sixteen; all this, however, could be arranged with Mrs. Leighton, who would take a motherly care of the girl for the sake of her friend, for Marion's faithless course had made no enmity between the two families. Horatio Leighton never cared to see Atholton again, and in the spring was to remove his mother's residence to the capital of the state, which for the future was to be his home. Dr. Nelson's sister, Philomena, had been his little housekeeper for some months, though scarcely in her teens, and Mrs. Benton's proposition to take her east for her education was most gladly accepted by the brother. As the day approached when Mr. and Mrs. Benton were to take leave of Ingleswood, the faithful "Old Cap" seemed at once to become ubiquitous. Through the days of their preparation, Mrs. Benton met him everywhere, always with his mouth filled with tobacco, and his hand ready to help.

"Waal, I vow," he exclaimed, as he saw the row of boxes packed and marked, "this beats the Dutch; taking track for the east—heaps of truck to haul, let's see—one, two, three, four. I can't count a hundred, but I've got a brother as can; deary me," he said, looking at Mrs. Benton, "what mischief these gals make! I'll be bound this mornin' make I do with that right pretty gal."

staid ni a week, and came home crank and pert enough I tell yer—said she'd got religion, but I don't see it; talks like a spinnin'-wheel about the Pope and Nantechrist, sent all the Papists to the bad place you know. Then, I put in, and told her she'd full better take the chance of sum of them Papists than of Jim McKinnis, or any other seventh dayer. They used to have them fallers in York state; they kept my woman and all her sisters in a ternal brile all the time. I thought we'd got clear of the whole scrape on um when we came here; deary me, if that's what they call the march of civilization, the less on't the better."

The poor man having relieved himself, started a new quid into his mouth and went to work. Mrs. Benton talked to him of the expected tenant at Ingleswood, but Rice declared he never wished to know him, for the truth was, he no sooner made friends with one new-comer before he was gone, and another took his place. Rosine was almost wild with delight when she heard of the removal of her parents; her joy seemed like the overflowing of waters long pent in by restraint; apparently she forgot Marion and her misdeed; she took but little interest in Ned, declared, in any letters from abroad, and was absorbed in the one thought that she was again to be near her mother, laying plans with number with Aleck and the Doctor, all associated with dear Hawthorne. As to Aleck, Rosine's plans were the only matters into which he entered with any interest; his health was utterly broken down, his wound refused to heal, and mental anxiety was sapping the very foundations of his life; through his lawyer he had settled an annuity upon his wife, which could be withdrawn at his pleasure, but his heart was evidently ill at ease. Laura had again found refuge with Sister Agnes in the new House, that, Phoenix-like, had risen on the ashes of the older establishment. The Captain heard of her removal from his mother, but he made no sign; the time was coming, he plainly foresaw, when he should be obliged to resign command, and perhaps something might be given him by the government, in consideration of his wound received in fighting his country's battles. In his father's house he had always a home, but his life, ere he had reached thirty years, was growing wearisome to him. He clung to Rosine for comfort, as did every member of the family, and he was delegated to accompany her to Hawthorne, to greet her parents on their arrival there. He had been a part of a little contention in the Colonel's household, which of the three representatives of the male sex should have this honor, but a patient on the borders of the grave settled the question with Dr. Hartland, and government business pressed upon the Colonel; thus, much to the discomfort of the two left behind, the Captain was the escort. It was beautiful to behold the tenderness that had sprung up between these two; a deferential, respectful, gentle attention on his part, and a thoughtful, unselfish love on hers. She was the only one upon whom he ever smiled with one of those sunny, bright smiles, out of his clear blue eye, that had given him such attraction in his early youth; now those heart glances were very rare, and given in return for her loving assiduity for his comfort.

"Perchance he saw and felt the sympathy," she had for him, whose soul had such a scar."

They reached Hawthorne and to find the grandfather prostrate with the infirmities of age, and as Rosine soon discovered, borne down with anxiety about the coming meeting. With womanly tact, and the soft lady-like ways of her mother, she did much to smooth the path for the reception of her father.

The hour came at length when Philip Benton and his wife had left the railroad station, and were on their way across the bleak and bare November hills of her native town. Ah, those dear old stone walls, those precious home enclosures, strangers, in the land where she had dwelt, they came to her like long lost treasures, and filled her with unspoken joy. Her husband could not sympathize with her here; she knew that to him this hour was of untold sorrow, and she hid her joy, as the shade grew deeper on his brow at every familiar object. He nearly broke down as they came suddenly upon the entrance to a quiet, grassy lane, ending in a dense wood, where many years ago he had breathed into her ear words of love. She did not trust herself to speak, calm his agitation, but quietly let her hand slip into his, reassuring him, and strengthening him by her touch.

Never till that evening had Rosine felt her father's tears on her cheek; never had he so clasped her to his heart, and looked down into her eyes with such inexpressible emotion. Mr. Hawthorne was unable to rise even to meet his beloved daughter, and Philip Benton, who had nerved himself for this moment, waited only to embrace his children, when he sunk on his knees by the couch of the old man, exclaiming, "I have wronged you, sir, deeply wronged you, by the past; can you forgive me for Lucy's sake?"

"Rise, my son," replied the trembling voice of the father; "I judged you harshly—come back to me, come as a favor, and establish yourself as the head of my house. Lucy and you are all I have; my days can be but few, let me spend them with my children."

Mrs. Benton listened, and tears of gratitude bedewed her cheeks, for this dreaded scene ending in unity and peace. Mrs. Benton was soon as thoroughly domesticated as if she had never left her home, and her husband, without intruding in any way, gradually came to be the acknowledged master of the establishment; while Rosine and Aleck lingered among those beloved hills long after their tops were covered with white snow-wreaths. The blind Willie had taken a sudden fancy to Captain Hartland, and was his companion night and day. He had procured for him an alphabet and books for the blind, and assiduously set himself to teach the child to read; he also roamed over the fields with him, told him tales of war, and life in various countries; in short, made himself so necessary to the boy, that word about returning to the city grieved him to the heart. Letter after letter had come from the Colonel and the Doctor, urging their return, and threatening on the Doctor's part, after the first of August, if it right to wish our friends to belong to us, instead of God? The doctor did not reply; his heart was too sore to argue, and he loved Rosine to well to wish, if he could, to shake the slightest outpost of her faith.

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TO BE CONTINUED

THE MAN WHO CUT THE GRASS

Father Hamilton leaned back in his chair, not paying strict attention to his sister's talk. In fact, his thoughts, like his eyes, wandered from the people that grew close to the veranda to some lilac bushes in full bloom; from them to the thin, lame, poorly-clad man who was cutting the grass; and to one of his small nephews perched high in a tree, well out of the way of his anxious mother's vision. When he turned again to his sister, he tried to repress the smile on his lips and the mischievous gleam which had come into his eyes.

Mrs. Burke saw only that her brother was more serious than usual, and thought the moment an opportune one to mention something she had been longing to tell him, but which it was not easy to intrude upon his habitual good humor. Allowing her crocheting to fall to her knee, she looked straight into his face.

"John," she said impressively, but in a very low tone,—"John, do you see the man who is cutting the grass?"

"I do," Father Hamilton admitted; and, laughing a little, he added: "Well, Philomena, who and what is he? A French count in disguise, or a leader among the bolsheviki? He looks the second part, if legs are the badge of the first."

"You may laugh as much as you like, but he is unusual," Mrs. Burke insisted in an aggrieved tone. "So was your last housemaid—so very unusual that you were poorer, if not wiser, for her sudden, entirely unexpected departure." Father Hamilton teased. Mrs. Burke has been mistaken in judging him to be in a tractable mood.

am earning heaven with my stump. And he laughed as if constant pain were a pleasantry.

"I hope you raised his wages at that juncture." Father Hamilton said with another teasing smile. To him his sister's ever-shifting but enthusiastic admirations were an unending source of amusement. "Bernard was injured by an automobile about twelve years ago, so he told me when I questioned him. He never complains," Mrs. Burke said, after a pause, still ignoring her brother's sceptical attitude.

"I once heard a shrewd old Irish woman say: 'It's aisy making saints,' Father Hamilton remarked dryly; and having grown weary of the praises of a man in whom he had no particular interest, he began to describe to his sister certain alterations which were being made in the church and parish house; and Bernard, his leg and his sanctity, were forgotten even by Mrs. Burke. Late that night Father Hamilton was called to St. Francis' Hospital to administer the Last Sacraments to a man who had been found on the street in a dying condition. As he passed through a long ward, he noticed a thin, dark-skinned nurse, who was very tenderly soothing a fever patient. When he returned, the same nurse was giving a dose of medicine to an old man in the last bed. The nurse chanced to look up just as Father Hamilton passed him; and, to his amazement, the priest recognized his sister's servant, Bernard. As soon as he reached the corridor, he turned eagerly to the Sister who was showing him the way.

"Who is that man—that nurse, Sister?" he asked.

"Bernard, we call him. His last name is peculiar. I have forgotten it."

"Is he employed here?"

"Ob, no! He is a volunteer nurse, but very skillful and very kind to the patients. He is always on duty from ten at night until five in the morning, every other day. We have two other volunteers on this floor, but they come only two nights each week."

Father Hamilton said no more. He was wondering whether he would tell his sister and bear with her self-congratulations. As it happened, he was unusually busy throughout the following week, and did not once see her or think of Bernard. A distinguished European prelate was to spend a few hours in the city, and there was to be Solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the Cathedral, followed by a reception, open to the public, in the Bishop's parlors; and, to Father Hamilton's dismay, he was intrusted with all the necessary arrangements. His reward came on the great day, when he was stationed so close to the foreign prelate throughout the reception that he had ample opportunity to study his princely courtesy and his simple kindness.

As the long line of men, women, and even children, rich and poor alike, filed past His Lordship, each one kissing his ring and each receiving a little friendly word, Father Hamilton saw Bernard patiently awaiting his turn. He was dressed with scrupulous care in the shabbiest of old black suits, and his face, always pale, was whiter than usual. Father Hamilton found himself watching him curiously. To his amazement, when Bernard knelt he kissed the prelate's ring and afterward his slender fingers; and before he could rise His Lordship laid both hands on Bernard's thin, bent shoulders, and the two looked straight into each other's eyes. The prelate helped him to his feet, and Bernard moved on. Not a word had passed between them, and those who were awaiting their turn noticed only that the land man was a little slow.

Half an hour afterward Father Hamilton happened to be alone with the distinguished guest, and his curiosity emboldened him to say, as deferentially as he could: "Your Lordship, I thought that during the reception you recognized a poor fellow in whom I am interested. Bernard they call him—a one-legged man with a white face and very black hair."

"You know him?" the other exclaimed, eagerly.

"I know him slightly."

"What can you tell me of him? How does he live, how does he fare?"

"I know only that he does outdoor work for my sister three afternoons in the week, for twenty dollars a month, and that he nurses at night in a charity ward in one of our big hospitals—nurses gratuitously. And I know too, that he goes daily to Mass."

The bishop's mobile face was a study of conflicting emotions.

"Bernard is my brother," he said. "As a boy he was as other boys, only more mischievous, if possible. He loved fine clothes and fine horses, was an expert swimmer and rower, but not at all pious. It was a sermon on the words, 'Go sell all thou hast,' that changed him. Our father and mother were dead then, and he had his portion. He gave it away, and gave away friends and kindred, too. A year later he was hurt in London in saving a child from a swiftly going automobile. That was twelve years ago, and I knew no more until I saw him today. He—he is happy. I saw that in his shining eyes." The speaker paused before he continued, in a changed tone: "You understand that you are not to mention this to any one? Bernard would not wish me to say a word. I tell you, because I am going to ask you to send me word of him from time to time, if only once or twice a

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