

IN THE THICK OF IT.

A TALE OF 'THIRTY-SEVEN.

CHAPTER II.

HENRY HEWIT'S HOME.

When Harry Hewit left Frank Arnley, he went at once into the house, and after depositing the guns in the rack, entered the parlour and enquired of his mother if William were in the house.

"No, indeed," replied Mrs. Hewit, "I fear William is forgetting us, Harry; it is seldom he calls, even for a few moments now. Have you seen him to-day?"

"No," replied Harry, "but Howis came up the road as I came in, and asked me to send him out to speak to him if he was here."

"Howis? Is not that the man who lives beyond William's place?" asked Mrs. Hewit. "If so the less William has to do with him the better. He is not well spoken of by those who know him best. The times are troublesome, the political horizon looks dark and threatening, and there are fanatics amongst us who seem resolved to drive things to extremities, and thus set loose the evil passions of evil men, of whom there are always some to be found in every community. I hope with all my heart that if the worst comes to the worst, we shall all range on the right side—the side on which our fathers fought and bled—for which they endured unheard of trials, hardships, poverty, exile, aye, death itself."

Mrs. Hewit raised her eyes to her son as she ceased speaking, they were full of tears, and he bent and kissed her, saying, "Never fear for me, mother. My King and my Country next to my God and Heaven."

Mrs. Hewit had been a lovely woman, and still, though time and trouble had dimmed the light of her lustrous brown eyes, and touched her hair with grey, she was beautiful with the beauty of refined intellect and a noble and pious soul.

Her father had been a U. E. Loyalist—one of that persecuted and misrepresented band who endured all that men could endure solely for the sake of adhering to their King and the British Empire. Mrs. Hewit had heard from her earliest infancy the sufferings her parents, in common with others of like constancy, had borne; how the family had been broken up by those stern divisions which set household against household, brother against brother, and even, in some instances, sons against fathers. While with unshaken loyalty her father had remained true to the King, his brother had joined the insurgents, and, though bound to each other by the warmest brotherly affection, they fought on different sides.

At the close of the Revolutionary War her father, Mr Shirland, came to Canada, then an almost unbroken forest, and began that rough battle of life that only the pioneer knows. But his brother, Henry, was a man of honour, and as soon as the political ferment had subsided sufficiently to allow of the consideration of private affairs, he sent to Mr. Shirland his rightful share of their father's property, and out of respect to so honourable a man Mr. and Mrs. Hewit had named their second son, Henry, after him.

The portion thus received allowed Mr. Shirland to live in comfort and ease, and to give his only child, Alice, the benefit of a good education. And when she was sought and won by Monro Hewit, a man of education and ability from the north of the Tweed, her father did not object to the match, though the suitor was at the time but a merchant's clerk. He would not, however, consent to separation from his child, whose mother had died at her birth, but insisted that the young husband should at once enter upon the use of his wife's fortune and employ himself in the business pursuits of the district. At his death Mr. Shirland left his whole property to the care of his son-in-law, in trust for his two grandsons, merely stating how he wished it divided.

But the father did not live to see his sons attain manhood, and his last words left them in the charge of their mother, in whose judgment and care he expressed the fullest confidence. In this confidence

he was not mistaken. Mrs. Hewit did her duty by her sons faithfully and affectionately, and justly did her children prize her, though more than once she had been pained by William's evident reserve and neglect.

On the night in question Henry and his mother were just retiring to their respective rooms, when a low knocking at the kitchen door startled them. Mrs. Hewit, candle in hand, returned to the parlour, while Henry went to the door.

Opening it cautiously, for already the troublous condition of the times had made itself felt—perhaps more in the rural districts than in the cities—Henry found standing there, Edwards, a man employed upon the farm, and who lived at a little distance down the road. But before the man could reply to Henry's enquiry as to his untimely presence, another man advanced from under the shade of the trees, whom, though covered with dust, his hair disarranged, and his face, such of it as could be seen for the blood, deadly pale, Henry at once recognized as Frank Arnley.

"Oh, Henry," exclaimed Frank, "I am glad it is yourself. I was afraid of alarming your mother, and so asked Edwards here to give an explanation if she came to the door."

"But what has happened, Frank? Come in here; I'll have a fire in a minute. Come in, Edwards."

The hearth fire was soon blazing afresh, and while Edwards plied it with fuel Frank gave Harry an account of his fight with Howis.

"And you do not know what it was he struck you with?" asked Harry with some heat.

"I could not be certain, but it was either a shut clasp-knife or a pistol, but I think the latter."

"The contemptible coward!" cried Harry. "But here comes mother, sit round that she may not be alarmed by the blood, it is so congealed that I can scarcely remove it." "I have a patient, you see," he cried cheerfully, as his mother entered, "I may practise yet in spite of my dislike to the profession."

Though he spoke gaily, Mrs. Hewit was alarmed, and when she saw the wound and learned how long Frank had lain bleeding upon the frosty earth, she said a physician must be had at once as there might be danger of brain fever from such a blow. Frank tried to laugh away the idea of danger and a doctor, but it was an unsuccessful attempt, for in the midst of his raillery his head fell forward upon the table—he had fainted. Henry and Edwards at once placed him in bed, and leaving his mother and Edwards in charge Henry rode furiously for the doctor. Dr. Payson was an old friend of the Hewits, and on Henry's urgent appeal at once took horse and soon arrived at the house, when they found Frank still unconscious, though recovered from the faint. After bleeding him freely and applying leeches to the bruise, for it was more contusion than cut, the doctor pronounced his patient out of danger, even from the cold, which was more to be dreaded than the hurt, and said he would be all right in a day or two. But though the doctor laughed at the idea of further danger, Henry was so anxious for his friend that he consented to remain the night through, and when Frank awoke about the middle of the forenoon of the next day he pronounced him all right, though a little weak from loss of blood, and confused from the effects of the blow.

CHAPTER III.

THE TEMPTER.

On the night in which the incidents before related occurred, other events necessary to record in this history were transpiring.

A mile or more beyond the farm occupied by William Hewit, and a little aside from the main thoroughfare stood a house, dilapidated and neglected, surrounded by a farm in an equally uncared for condition. Loose shingles broke the regularity of the house-roof, each of the wide chimneys needed repairs, and more than one shutter of the numerous windows hung loose, the paths leading to the house were rough and ill-kept, there were no flower-plots, and the very shrubs and trees wore a miserable and forsaken aspect that chilled the heart of the traveller as he passed. There was no farm life visible with the exception of a few hens that scratched under the wide

verandah, and though the helpless condition of the driving gate, which hung upon one hinge, seemed to invite the curiosity of the neighbours' cattle and pigs, none of them ever got past a fierce blood-hound whose kennel stood half way between the gate and the farm buildings at the rear. This was the Howis domain, though in justice to its occupier, it is but fair to say that he had not been its master long. But it is not with the outside of this house we are now concerned. Within, a bright fire burned upon the parlour hearth, the room, well furnished and in good order, looked snug, and in that perfect keeping which only a lady's hand and eye can insure. Curtains fell over the window and shut out alike intruding eyes, if such there might be, and the pure light of the stars. A table was drawn up to the fire and near it, both on the same side, were seated a lady and gentleman. The lady was Emily Howis, the sister of him whose acquaintance we have already made, and the gentleman was William Hewit.

Miss Howis appeared to be about two and twenty, she was of more than medium height, of light and graceful proportions, her eyes and hair were of raven blackness, her complexion singularly fair, and at a glance you would call her handsome. And so she was, but there was wanting the deep warm light of woman's eye, and there was no tenderness about the lines of the mouth. She was dressed fashionably and her gown was of silk, yet, though it became her it did not attract there was not a single touch about it that spoke of love of beauty for beauty's sake, nor of sentiment of any sort. She was seated on the left of William Hewit, and held some papers in her lap, to which she referred from time to time.

William Hewit resembled in height and complexion his younger brother Henry, his features were handsome and refined, but there was a lack of firmness in the mouth, and a slight nervousness of manner that bespoke excitability of temperament. He was a fine young man, high-principled and industrious, had won the esteem of his neighbours, and, favoured by the excellent start in the world his grandfather's will had secured to him, might have won distinction. Seated at the table, his head upon his hand, his gaze rested upon Miss Howis with a troubled expression, as though he battled with conflicting emotions and was not quite at peace with himself.

From the moment of his first introduction to Miss Howis he had felt an unusual interest in her, which soon deepened into an all absorbing passion. He was aware, however, that such a connection would be very distasteful to his mother and brother, for little was known of the antecedents of the Howises, and Mr. Howis had by no means gained the confidence or esteem of his new neighbours, but was rather regarded by them as untrustworthy. Even Emily herself did not reach the standard that would be looked for in his wife; she was haughty and overbearing, and though always gentle and conciliatory to himself, William Hewit had not only heard of, but seen, many exhibitions of a spirit which contrasted painfully with the tender and self-sacrificing disposition which distinguished his mother. Moreover the Howises were known to be inclined to favour the violent measures which had already been mooted in connection with the agitated state of politics in the two Canadas, and on more than one occasion Emily had used her influence to persuade William Hewit to join her brother in his errands of sympathy with "The Opposition," as they cautiously termed it. At first his whole soul revolted from their views, and he had even withdrawn himself from their society for a season; but to gain William Hewit was to discredit the Government party in that district, and beside there were fine pickings on the Hewit property. By those wiles which designing women know so well how to use, Emily Howis had lured the recreant back to her side, had re-established her influence over his feelings, and was now more than ever determined to rivet his fetters.

To be continued.

No one can tell where the warmth and radiance that a generous heart casts around it stop. He might as well attempt to measure a sunbeam or mark the place where it falls.—*Greenwell.*