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HAWTHORNDEN

A STORY OF EVERY DAY LIFE

BY MRS. CLARA M. THOMPSON

CHAPTER XXV.—CONTINUED

"O, yes, I did," said the Colonel, in a soothing tone. "It was Tom's first appearance on the street; he was driving down here, and was all right; Marion being nearest, he assisted her into the sleigh with his usual gallantry. He cuts a dash with his Indian driver and footman in livery, and you had a charming ride I know, didn't you?" he added, turning to Marion.

She began at once to expatiate on the splendid equipage, the attention they attracted on the street, and to say that the gentleman would call tomorrow, it being now too near the dining hour.

"I'm glad it wasn't you," whispered the Doctor to Rosine; which simple speech renewed the blushes that had faded from her cheek, and she wished that she could have been most heartily snatching her hands away, before the Doctor was aware of her intention, she was out of the room, and up stairs, weeping bitterly, and thoroughly homesick for her mother's heart to rest upon. It is easy to plant a thought in the heart of another that will mar their happiness for life, and which all their efforts cannot root out; but through the course of self-discipline Rosine had been taught by the Church, she had learned that evil thoughts, though they may "assault," they cannot hurt the soul that has learned the true secret of daily life, the constant offering of even the small trials and temptations, to be united with those of our dear Lord. With an earnest desire to do right above even the wish to be happy, Rosine set herself deliberately to think out the way to rid herself of the impression Marion had left on her mind by her ill-judged comments.

Between me and Doctor Hartland, she said to herself, "they would always be Dora, my dear Dora, and his unconfessed but certain love for her, which I have often seen in unguarded moments." She knew he had Miss Greenwood's miniature, for once in a moment of confidence he had taken it from his bosom, to show her how much Dora was in her youth like Harry. This was enough; as to her own heart she felt she was free. One half-hour's quiet meditation, and with a short petition to her guardian angel for help, she retired to the library, where she immediately forward with her old mistressy way to Ned, and asked him to go with her after dinner to the Orphans' Home, of which she had just heard the destruction.

The Doctor looked at her a little sharply, then quizzically, but was only too happy to obey her behest. The Colonel had given each of the girls a note that morning, to procure material for a new dress for the proposed party, and as Rosine held tight to Doctor Hartland's arm, hurrying over the slippery sidewalks, she said, "Ned, I want to ask you something."

"I'm always ready for anything you may have to say," he replied. "Do you wish to know why I was glad you did not ride with cousin Tom?"

"That was not my question," she said, "but I should like to know. Isn't he nice?" "I'm sure he looks well."

"He was brought up a gentleman, but is a slave to vice. Father says he hasn't a bad heart, but I don't know how a man can make a fool of himself with drink, and not have a bad heart, but they say he has reformed!"

"And if he is reformed?" said Rosine, gently.

"You know I believe in probation; and as not many years since he was oftentimes in the gutters of this Sodom, I prefer to wait awhile before trusting pure girls in his society. He's worth a million at least, and father's his only relative, so I suppose I must endure him, and you must meet him. I only wished to caution you."

"Thank you, Ned; he isn't married, of course?"

"No, Heaven forbid," said the Doctor, "he is a confirmed old bachelor, almost as old as the Colonel. But you had something to tell me, and we are almost at the Home. Rosa, did Sister Agnes ever ask you to join the sisterhood?"

"No, indeed, never," replied she, in a tone of wonderment; "what could put that into your mind? It is not my vocation; I have too many friends, and love them too well."

"Yes, it is a very unnatural state," said he, shaking his head, "contrary to nature."

"Now, Ned, there is no use in you and me contending about this matter. I believe it to be a state higher than nature, to which not many are called. You do not believe me?" she added inquiringly; "as he did not reply," you have been reading those miserable books of escaped nuns."

"No, Rosa, I leave that for the divines; I credited the nonsense slightly, till I was called to one of those same escaped nuns in the way of my profession. But here we are at the very corner, and I have not yet heard your question."

having a new dress for the party; I want to give this note to Sister Agnes—nobody will look at me?"

"I shall, for one," he replied, as they stood at the scorched entrance of the only wing that remained of that once noble structure; "nevertheless I will deny myself with you this time, and lose the sight of you in a new dress."

Rosine found herself amid a scene of suffering when she entered the large second floor, where she had once seen all those tiny beds with their dainty coverings, several of the Sisters being disabled, Sister Agnes most of all. A relay of nuns from another religious house were already on the spot, tending and nursing with their gentle care; and Miss Greenwood was there, making herself generally useful. Dr. Hartland knew this when he assented to the walk; he had met her in the morning, but he was not prepared to find Laura in close counsel with Dora. His face assumed at once a cold, proud look, as he bowed and passed on to the beds of the stricken ones, leaving Rosine to greet her friends as she pleased. The Doctor found Sister Agnes in a bad way; she had exerted herself since the morning for the others, till the wounds, that might with quiet have healed rapidly, had already produced a marked fever. The physician ordered at once a separate apartment for her; but she resisted, saying she required no more than the other Sisters, and must be where she could look to her flock. The Doctor refused to argue the matter, but calling in the counsel of Father Roberts, who had come to give the last sacraments to one of the nuns whose long expected death had been hastened by the fright of the previous night, together they carried the day, without argument, and the Sister Superior was removed to a room by herself. Rosine left her gift in the hand of her pastor, and Dr. Hartland added a note of equal value.

"I wish we could give up the party," she said as they hurried home again; "it does seem dreadful to think we may be so gay, when perhaps Aleck is at the same moment being fired from the Castle; and then the money could be spent for the poor orphan."

"I see," replied the Doctor, laughing, "they mean to have you among them yet; all your thoughts are there. But tell me, did that woman give you any news from Vera Cruz?" His tone grew bitter as he spoke.

"Yes, Ned," she said, without appearing to notice his manner, "she has had letters today, and Aleck bade her not to be anxious if she did not hear again for weeks, as the siege might commence any day."

The false woman did not tell you that Le Compe was there, wearing her poor husband, whom she so cruelly wronged, into the grave by his presence? There was no reply. Rosine was both angry and grieved, almost frightened, at the thought of Lieutenant Hartland in constant contact with Le Compe; but she had less and less heart for the party, and was quite relieved when the Colonel said that evening, that he was sorry for the girls, but he thought they must give the matter up altogether. Marion was quite annoyed at this result, but the constant attentions of Stapleton partially satisfied her; she was always ready for a ride or a walk, or a game of chess, in which she was such a proficient that Mr. Stapleton was led to declare in the presence of the family, that he could not have believed a woman could have played so sharp a game.

"You are old enough," replied the Doctor, catching at his words, "to know that they play at any game better than we, good or bad. Did you ever see a man who could flirt like a woman, or lie like a woman, or cheat like a woman, if she chooses to try her hand at these things?"

Stapleton was cowed for a moment, he was afraid of his Cousin Ned; but Marion's face burnt with crimson, and she retorted, "You are dreadfully cynical, Ned. I should think your acquaintance among the ladies had not been at the best."

"I have seen some pretty poor specimens," he replied slowly, looking at her intently from under his raised eyebrows, and with that penetrating glance from which she shrank.

Matters went on thus through the winter; concerts, a few private dinner parties, with an occasional dance, served the young girls for recreation. Cousin Tom made himself useful in many ways, with his good natured, indolent habits, and his heaps of money, and he had contrived to find "not altogether dull," as he told his outside friends. Rosine did not divulge to her sister the failings of his past life, which the Doctor had made known to her, but she shrank from him, and was always reserved, even when it came to be an almost every day occurrence that he dropped in after dinner and stayed till late in the evening. The sisters never talked over Mr. Stapleton, though Rosine had at times been reminded of what Doctor Hartland had told her, by a freedom of manner on his part which she felt that her sister should resent, and she was questioning in her mind if it were not her duty to speak, when a remark of the Colonel's decided her.

"Marion," he had said laughingly, "if you were in the market, Tom is not too old to try his hand; you know men are never too old to hope."

"Ah," she replied, with a mock serious tone, "but twenty and fifty; the difference is too great; besides,

I shan't think of such a thing without Mr. Leighton's permission."

This just had brought the blood to Rosine's cheek, and fixed the firm resolve in her heart. The time came when they were alone, preparatory to retiring for the night; she hesitated, but Marion was before her.

"I declare," she exclaimed, throwing herself into the large arm-chair, where Rosine and Laura had often sat together, "if I were in the market, I would set my cap for Mr. Stapleton; I rather like him, and I know—" She hesitated, while Rosine put her hands over her face and burst into tears.

"You silly child, what is the matter?" said Marion, leaning over her sister, and speaking coaxingly.

"Marion, it is perfectly frightful," she sobbed as soon as tears would let her speak.

"What is frightful?" asked Marion.

"Why, to hear you talk in this way. Are you not solemnly engaged to Mr. Leighton?"

"To be sure I am. Have I denied it?"

"Then how can you speak, or even think of another in that way?"

"One cannot help one's thoughts," replied Marion, snidly.

"Cannot help one's thoughts!" exclaimed Rosine. "Why, sister dear, are not wicked thoughts indulged, the very root and fountain of wicked actions?"

"Well, suppose they are, I haven't said I want a man, or that I would break my engagement; I was only imagining what might have been. You preach morality to me, my little saint, but don't you think I can see how that small heart of yours flutters between the attractions of the architect, when the letters come from abroad, and the more tangible attentions of the physician, who is close at hand?"

"I will not hear this!" said Rosine, rising in great anger, her lips quivering with emotion. "I came to warn you of danger, but all I can say will be of no use. I am only repaid by insult!" and taking her candle, she left the room without another word.

Marion would not recall her impudent words, although she was a little pained by their result; they burned down deep into her sister's heart, and for the first time they closed their eyes to sleep alienated from each other.

After Rosine had gone away, her sister took up a letter which that day received from Mr. Leighton, and reread it. It ran thus:

"Athlaca, January, 18—  
"My dear Rosa:  
"Your long absence and infrequent letters dishearten me. I do not go about business with the courage I would if you were by my side. Don't think I would deprive you of a moment's happiness where you are, I only wish to share it. Who is this 'Cousin Tom,' of whom you write so freely? Is he a young man? You see already I am anxious at that point, not but I trust you, but dear Marion, how can I help envying the man who can sit by your side and chat with you, while I, who have the best right, am exiled? You ask for news. I have just come to Athlaca from S—, and have only heard that Sobriety had been detected in efforts for a clandestine marriage with her Cousin Dan; the girl is not yet fifteen, and your father thought it should be stopped; but she is shrewd enough to elude us all. As a magistrate, I gave my opinion. Fifteen is quite an old bride in those parts."

"Dr. Nelson is as pious as ever. Father Sheridan told him in my hearing that he should have been a priest—I think so too. He has no tie in the world but his little sister sister Philomena, who visits your mother, for whom the young thing has conceived a strong affection. Who could help it? Were it not for your mother, my separation from you would be unendurable, but she always gives me strength and hope. 'Old Cap' casts his 'pity' at me every time we meet, says I look 'out up,' which is the truth. When may I come for you, my Marion? My circumstances warrant our marriage whenever you will name the day. Tell me when it shall be, dearest. Your faithful,

HORATIO LEIGHTON."

As she closed this letter, two tears dropped started to Marion's eyes, but she dried them instantly, and as hastily thrust the letter into a drawer, and went about her toilet for the night. She was not in an enviable state of mind, although she knew from her womanly instinct, as well as from words to which she had that day listened, that she could, if she chose, be mistress of the golden store pertaining to Thomas Stapleton, Gent.

No direct offer had been made, how could he so insult her, when he knew of her engagement? She tried, as she slowly brushed away her long hair, deliberately to consider her case in all its bearings upon that which was her goal—worldly advancement. Here was an opportunity that the west in those days could not afford her, an establishment in any city of the Union, an establishment with an inexhaustible fortune, and nobody with any claim to it but herself! Ah, what wonderful things she could do with it!—and she fell asleep dreaming of convents and churches in the distance, which she was staining her eyes to look at, but could not see for the dark pall that hung between them and her weary gaze.

The sisters met as usual in the morning, but Rosine, although she tried to forgive, still carried the

sting of those unjust words. She could not hide the disturbance from Dr. Hartland's observant eye. He came to her immediately after breakfast, where she stood leaning against the window frame after the family had left the room. He put his arm across her shoulders, and said kindly but jocosely, "Quarrelled, Rosa?" She did not reply, but he saw her burning cheek, and the tear just ready to start, and he added, more seriously, "Can I help you, dear sister?"

"Thank you, Ned, I am foolish. Marion hurt my feelings early last night, when I meant it for her good."

"Preaching to your elders, eh?" he replied, turning her about, and sitting down by her side in the recess of the window.

"No, not preaching, Ned; I feel a little about Marion, as I did about Laura in the early part of Aleck's absence, and—"

"It is the same game over again," he said, sternly. "I hate it, so do you; all right—you spoke to her about it? Noble sister! I should have done it, only she is our guest, and I should certainly get very angry if I undertook it, and say something she would never forgive. Have you ever told her of Tom's former habits?"

"I have told her nothing, Ned; only remonstrated."

"Yes, but I should not so much have cared for that, if she had not accused me of the same thing." Rosine looked frightened the moment the words were out of her mouth, and heartily wished them recalled.

"Accused you, Rosa—accused you of flirting? With whom, pray? Me, of course. Ha, ha, ha!" he added, laughing heartily; "that is too funny I suppose she can't imagine any bond that of lovers between you and me; she can't think of any other love than that; but we understand it perfectly, don't we, Rosa?" he said, leaning over her.

"Yes, Ned, perfectly; I think."

"Then we need not trouble ourselves about others. But perhaps she thinks I keep you from lovers. I hope I may, from such as Tom Stapleton."

"But she accuses me of carrying on a flirtation between you and Harry Greenwood."

"What does she know about Harry?" he exclaimed, turning and gazing at her with his piercing glance.

"Nothing," replied Rosine, casting down her eyes under his gaze; "only she knows that I am glad when you get letters from him, and read them to me."

"A great foundation upon which to accuse you of a flirtation. Upon my word, she is very impudent, and I shall tell her so, if she tries to make a head of me between you and me."

"She cannot do it," said Rosine, bravely; "no one can."

"Thank you for that," he replied, taking both her hands in his; "thank you, Rosa, you have not said such a sweet word for this long time. I thought, once, only for one little minute, that such a hedge was growing. It was the day the Asylum was burnt, when you snatched your hands from me in such an unsteady manner. Was that hedge some of this young lady's planting? I thought so, but as Rosine made no answer; "and now, once for all, whoever says a word to mar or destroy the perfect brotherly and sisterly feeling between us, is our enemy. Isn't it so? I can't allow any man to marry you," he continued, laughing, "without a clear understanding in this matter."

Rosine smiled through the lingering tear drop that hung on her eyelid, and determined that nothing should ever mar the comfort of her sisterly intercourse with dear brother Ned.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE REBEL

John Holden's history, like that of most of those of his manly, can be very briefly told. It is set in New York City. He was born in a quiet, respectable neighborhood, during the palmy days of the old Seventh ward. There he toddled about a child, and played top and marbles and ball as a boy. He was entered as a pupil in the Ward Public School. His father, though a Catholic, and as men went, a good one, was of the opinion that such a place of education best tended to material success. There the boy learned to pride himself on what he called his independence of character, which led me to not infrequent disputes between him and his equally strong-willed paternal relative. Even in matters of religion, the lad began presently to do a certain amount of "thinking for himself."

However, there was no serious fault to be found with John Holden, and he practised his religion faithfully enough, though it might have been noted with but little leaning towards its more spiritual side, and but a scant appreciation of its profounder mysteries. He was a fairly good looking boy, straight and well built, of a medium height and with features that showed some strength and an unusual obstinacy.

He was nearing thirty when that narrative which forms the subject of this story. On a memorable day for him—it was in late March and winter and spring were still at odds for the mastery—the young man felt in his veins the vitality of nature striving to reassert itself. He never forgot the appearance of the sky that day, clear and mellowing away into faintest yellow deepening into orange,

over the North River. He stood on the steps of his pastor's house after he had rung the doorbell and waited for the door to be opened. He passed across the threshold, apparently a loyal son of Holy Church, and came forth a rebel.

In the plainly furnished, almost ascetic, parlor of the presbytery, he had a serious altercation with his pastor on a matter of vital importance. The two men stood and faced each other, the gray-haired pastor stern and resolute, with no thought of yielding one jot of the Church's teaching to this young man, who came to demand that the laws be abrogated for him. John Holden grew more and more obstinately set in his opinion as he listened to the stern, incisive words of one whom he had hitherto yielded at least outward obedience. He took no note of the crucifix hanging on the wall, with its lesson of obedience unto death and its abrogation of all rights save that of doing the will of the Heavenly Father.

The polished metal of the figure, high in relief above the dark wood, caught a gleam from the sun that was sloping downwards to its death. That ray of light intensified the agony in that face and figure which forever sets at naught and makes contemptible men's puny rebellion against "the Power Supreme that wills."

With face flaming red and eyes that flashed defiance, John Holden flashed forth from the pastoral residence without even the courtesy of a farewell and walked the streets with a fierce energy which attracted the attention of many an idle observer. He was a man possessed with a single idea. It burned into his brain; it set his nerves tingling; it flashed through his orbs of vision. It was only when darkness fell upon the great city that he made his way home. He saw the stars come out, multitudes of them, dumb witnesses since the hour of creation of the immutability of God's laws and of the value of truth and stability. He saw the lights gleam out over the river from ferryboats and tall vessels lying at anchor in the docks, or from shops and dwelling houses. The people that he passed, men and women, appeared to him like dim phantoms, and he pondered in a dazed sort of way if any of them were rebels.

A rebel—that was what his pastor had called him—he, who had prided himself so highly on doing his whole duty in every respect, and who had often been quoted, or had quoted himself, as being an argument for education without religion.

When he reached the boarding-house where he had a very comfortable bachelor suite, since his father and mother had long since paid the debt of nature and the dwelling in the Seventh ward had been sold, the dinner was far advanced. The other boarders, who sat at small tables in groups of four or six, looked up when he entered and respected, and of the sweet and smiling. Several marriages young ladies regarded him with wistful interest, but he scarcely returned their greetings and sat down alone at his table, mentally congratulating himself that his fellow-guests had dined early and gone their way. He gave his order curtly and almost mechanically, so much was his mind in a ferment. Anger, astonishment, predominated. He repeated over to himself the arguments of the priest and fiercely controverted them, applying to his pastor the commonplace term "Tiresome old formalist!"

No one knew positively, or at least for long after, what was the nature of that dispute, or what, precisely, it was that John Holden wanted to do. Some would have it that he had asked permission to join a secret society, which would have been very useful in business and which he believed was not yet specifically condemned by the Church. Others surmised that the matter under discussion concerned one or the other of those business deals of which modern finance is so fond. Again it was believed that it all originated in Mr. Holden's attitude towards a certain young woman who was known to be a bigoted Protestant and with whom he might be contemplating matrimony. Of course there were various other theories, and according to the mind of the theorizer the newly made rebel was applauded or condemned.

One thing alone was certain, that John Holden gave up altogether the practice of his religion. He was never seen in church. He neither frequented the confessional nor approached the altar. Otherwise his life flowed on very much in its accustomed channels. He attended to business more sedulously than ever and with his usual measure of success. After the perturbation of the first few days he ate his three meals with his customary relish and acted pretty much in his ordinary way, only that some of his fellow boarders found him more moody and irritable than he had ever been before.

Mr. Holden presently inflicted a severe disappointment upon the various young ladies in the house with whom he had been wont to exchange many pleasant words or to play a social game of cards. He chose from the circle of his acquaintance outside the house a young lady of excellent financial prospects and of good appearance. He presented himself one Sunday evening at her father's residence. He was dressed with unusual care, but his ordinary assured manner was nervous and perturbed. When he left the house that evening it was as an engaged man. Miss Gertrude Bennett had accepted him. He stood outside on the pavement and was, as should have been, a very happy man.

He looked down to the end of the street, where dimly he could

perceive the river lying dark and grim, save for lights on the ferry-boats and tall vessels in the dock. To his mind occurred, that spring afternoon when he had quarrelled with his pastor. He began to walk rapidly to drive away the remembrance, which haunted him with troubled persistence. The old arguments that behad used then came back to his mind, and those few remarks with which they had been controverted by the priest. He remembered his own indignant declaration that he was as good a Catholic as anybody and his pastor's answer:

"You may call yourself a Catholic or anything else you like, but you are a rebel at heart, sir, I tell you; you are a rebel."

"A rebel then I am, and a rebel I will remain," John Holden said, hardening his heart and raising up his eyes to the vault above. There was a fierce defiance in his tone, a hot anger in his heart, and he almost fancied that he had said the words aloud. He looked around with his habitual caution, but the street bordered on either side with brownstone dwellings, with their railed basements, were cold and silent. The few passersby never so much as glanced at him. So that it was clear he had not spoken his thoughts aloud. His face, turned towards the sky, wore an angry scowl; but the stare, deep set and burning in clear blue of the firmament, looked scornfully on that worm of the earth and his poor defiance. They seemed to say:

"For your brief moment of time you may strut and swagger as you will, but then you will pass on, and we shall look down on other atoms."

After a time the man's thoughts forced themselves into another channel. He recalled how delightful had been that evening in the Bennett household. Gertrude had been looking so well. She was not a beauty, and he was not sufficiently infatuated to endow her with that quality. But she had a certain cleverness and a certain kind of attractiveness and she was assuredly very fond of him, as he reflected with complacency. The softness in the sparkling eyes and the tremulousness in a voice that was habitually hard appealed to his vanity. He felt a very satisfactory degree of affection for her, in addition to the advantages that were to be gained by the marriage. Her father had a high standing amongst the commercial men and vital influence in the domain of business. He had also accumulated wealth, a large proportion of which would go to Gertrude. As it was, being pleased with the match, he had promised a very substantial settlement on his daughter.

He liked the prosperous young business man, who seemed to possess such sterling qualities, and he was particularly glad that the prospective son-in-law had made no trouble about religious matters, as so many Catholics would have done. He did not even insist on being married by a priest. He left everything in the hands of the prospective bride, which, as the father reflected, was the sensible thing to do. He had complimented John on his independence of character in refusing to be under the thumb of a priest. That somewhat doubtful compliment came back to the young man now in the midst of all his warm sentiments, his pleasant recollections of the sweet and tender things Gertrude had said and his own vows of everlasting fidelity. It was like an icy blast from the river that caused him to turn up his coat collar. It was like the breath of those departed, some phantom that walked near to mock or warn him, or some stirring in the blood from the long line of Catholic ancestors. He shivered, as with cold, and it was a cold that penetrated his very marrow.

It was also a cold that remained with him through all the years of his married life, outwardly prosperous, but densely gloomy as they were. It began at St. Thomas, which delighted the heart of the bride and all her relatives, to the third and fourth generation. The old Catholic warmth of feeling, of rich and fragrant piety, were wanting forevermore. John Holden had but few relatives and these stayed away from those sad nuptials in silence which deeply mortified and enraged the bridegroom. Also a brother, with whom he had always been on good terms, turned his back on him in a public place.

The couple had no children, which circumstance left an aching void, a deep regret, in the heart of John Holden. It helped, no doubt, to make him irritable, moody, irascible, and as his wife confided to her mother, simply unbearable at times. His independence of character and devotion to his own will, which increased with age, made him a household tyrant, of whom his wife often bitterly complained.

It does not take long to tell the story of a life. John Holden's business affairs prospered; he inhabited a quite palatial mansion, which only a certain simplicity of taste on his part prevented from being sybaritic. He made new friends and had entirely cut adrift from the old. The Faith which had at first tormented him gradually died or lay dormant. He was honest and upright in his commercial dealings. He ate and drank and slept with comparative ease of mind. He was careful and abstemious in his diet, and temperate to a degree. He used to boast that a drop of strong liquor had never passed his lips. In fact, no strong were his natural virtues that every-

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