

# IN THE THICK OF IT.

A TALE OF "THIRTY-SEVEN."

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada in the year 1889, by Sarah Anne Curzon, in the Office of the Minister of Agriculture.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A CONFESSION.

On leaving the Governor, Harry struck off at once into a side-road, hoping thereby to make a detour and get before the fugitives, for such the rebels had become. For two miles he urged his horse to his best pace, and was turning an angle of the road when he saw a man lying across his path, but whether from fatigue or wounds he could not tell. Hasty though his errand was, Harry could not do less than obey the common dictates of humanity: he therefore dismounted, and on turning the prostrate form so as to reveal the features, he was shocked to find it no other than Captain Stratiss apparently dying from his wounds. Notwithstanding that the circumstances under which Harry had always met this man had been of a compromising character, he had contracted a sort of respect for him from the fact that his manners and habits were those of a gentleman, and his nature appeared to be less coarse than those of the men he was associated with: even his dissipation did not seem to spring from the mere love of sensual indulgence. On the present occasion, therefore, he was anxious to learn the extent of the disaster that had befallen Stratiss. Examination showed that a rifle ball had pierced the left side, and blood was flowing from the wound. As Harry stanchd the flow, a sigh escaped the wounded man's lips, and he opened his eyes with a vacant stare, at the same time ejaculating in a faint voice, "Water! Water!" Harry flew to a creek he had passed, and filling his canteen, carried water to the sufferer, who had again fainted. Under Harry's ministrations, however, he once more revived, and, as his recollection returned, animation lit up his features, and gazing earnestly on Harry, he said:

"Mr. Hewit, you are the last man to whom I have a right to look for any kindness, for I helped to do you a great injury."

"Never mind that now, Captain Stratiss," replied Harry, "but tell me how severe are your wounds, that I may help you."

"I am done for," exclaimed Stratiss. "My life is fast ebbing; but let me tell you while I can that I never meant you should hang, even if I had to let out your friend at my own risk, to save you."

"You mean Frank Arnley!" cried Harry in great agitation. "Tell me where he is, and my poor stricken mother's blessing shall be yours as well as my own."

"He is in Todd's shanty, a prisoner. It is all Howis's work, who hates you with the malice of a fiend incarnate, and if you do not rescue your friend before he gets up there, he will shoot Arnley if only to hang you."

"Good God!" exclaimed Harry, "wherefore should he vent his hate of me on an innocent boy?"

"It is because he is innocent and fair, and is therefore a living reproach to his own black heart. It was Howis, Egan, myself, and another or two who dogged your footsteps after you left the mill the night you threw our arms into the swamp-hole, and who captured Arnley after he had left you. Give me more water," he continued, "for I have more to tell that is blacker still, and I am going fast."

Harry helped Stratiss to more water, and supported his head as in broken words he proceeded:

"Dr. Leslie is a friend of yours, and no doubt you respect his daughter also: there is a plot to abduct her under cover of the confusion caused by this rising."

"What! What is this you say!" cried Harry in the utmost alarm.

"That beast Egan loves the girl, and has his plans laid with old Todd to kidnap her and shoot the father, rifle the house,—the plunder to be old Todd's pay,—and trust to the disturbances of the

times to cover the crimes. But the times will be settled enough soon. I told them how it would be, the blockheads."

Scarcely able to restrain himself sufficiently to consider what to do for the dying man who had done him such a service by his confessions, Harry said, more in order to gain time to think than because he wished to know:

"Then why did you join them, Captain Stratiss: would not the other side have suited you better?"

"I joined because I was a lost man: friends, character, hope, ambition, all fled before the blast of fury that rushed over my soul when I learned that she whom I loved was wedded to another. It was not her fault. But I killed him! I killed him! And from that moment have been an outlaw in my own country, and have sought distraction or death anywhere that bullets were flying or some dare-devil scheme was to be carried out. More! I thought to do my country one good turn at least, by helping to annex Canada. She is a splendid land: she can rival any country on the face of the earth, and I wanted to rob Britain of her, for my rival was a British officer."

"God forgive you!" cried Harry, indignantly.

"God—God—I have cursed God—and now—," the unhappy man threw up his arms and fell back dead.

At that moment Harry was conscious of the approach of some persons from behind, and a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, while a gruff voice with a strong Dutch accent said "What you do here, yong man? Ish dot man dead?"

"You see what I do here," said Harry, "I am comforting the dying," as he turned and saw a strong stolid-looking man, accompanied by a younger, whom he took to be his son. "This poor gentleman was wounded in the fight this morning, and is just now dead; if you will bury him decently I will pay you well."

"Let me see der shilver," said the man, who was evidently a farmer in the neighborhood.

Harry drew forth his purse and handed the man a liberal allowance, which seemed to satisfy him, and he promised to perform the last sad rites for the unhappy Stratiss.

"And now," cried Harry to his horse as he sprung into the saddle, "it's you and I for it: you must do a good day's work to-day if you never do another. And God defend my Alice and her father from the enemies they know not of."

It was late that night when Harry turned his jaded steed down the wild road that led to old Todd's shanty, and as he issued upon the banks of the little lake a piercing shriek burst upon his ear, followed by a second and a third in quick succession.

(To be continued.)

## DEEDS.

Beneath the sun our every deed  
Drops, but to germinate, a seed  
To grow, bud, blossom, and to be  
Part of our immortality.

We shade our eyes, and gaze afar  
To where their full fruitions are;  
And what will be their potency then,  
When we have left the haunts of men?

The word unkind, the impure thought,  
Like Sodom's fatal apples, fraught  
With poison, on the earth remain  
To bear but bitter fruits of pain.

The smile, the act of charity,  
Though small as mustard-seeds they be,  
May sweetly blossom as the rose,  
Until the earth's last blossom blows.

And tremblingly our footsteps tread  
The path that leads us to the dead,  
To leave behind with earthly strife  
Our deeds—an everlasting life!

May He who guides the steps of men  
In ways beyond their mortal ken,  
Our deeds draw upward—as the sun,  
The flowers,—till our days be done.

ACUS.

# A College Romance.

FOR CHRISTMAS.

Among the lady graduates of a particular university were two who ran each other very closely in the race for honours.

As far as could be surmised, in the papers they had given in for their B.A. exam., their claims would very nearly balance, for, if Minerva's definition of the Utilitarian Theory of Obligation would be sure to average ninety-nine marks in the hundred, and her brilliant handling of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics gave her well-founded assurance, Hermione, on the other hand, might hope for victory on the score of a perfect Paleontology Paper, and an especially lucid pronouncement on the Darwinian Structure of Apes.

Not until the results were actually out was it known that Minerva was victrix by half a dozen marks, and that Hermione had unexpectedly tripped on her much vaunted ape question.

It was a serious matter to both the young lady graduates, for Minerva proposed to put her honours to a practical use in obtaining an important position, and Hermione, for quite another reason, was equally anxious to come out well. Well she certainly had come out, but not first.

The graduating class of the year was not a very large one, and the members had been thrown a good deal together both in and out of college.

There had been some rivalry between the men and their fair fellow-students, but it had always been carried on in a friendly spirit; and it was agreed at the close that the whole class should exchange photographs, as a proof of mutual good will before parting.

Minerva, in her cap and gown, with the rabbit skin lining of her hood showing modestly over her left shoulder, and grasping firmly in her hand her valedictory, made an imposing picture—for she was "divinely tall," and had large features and fine dark eyes and hair, which, if not too abundant, was yet dark and silky, and was drawn away from an ample forehead, that the peak of her trencher only partially concealed.

Hermione was less stately, but had more of piquant sweetness and youthful rotundity. Two dimples played at hide and seek in her softly moulded cheeks, and a nose of imperfect form that just escaped the reproach of *retroscé*, with laughing, long-lashed eyes and waving hair, made her photograph very attractive, though not nearly so much so as she was herself.

Yet both young ladies were dissatisfied, and considered that the photographer might have done better, or else the position or the light was in fault, or the cap or gown was unbecoming, and the particular expression not such as should have been permitted.

"Surely," objected Minerva, "I never looked so strong-minded as that. It's enough to frighten—one." She was about to say "a man," but checked herself.

"And, O dear! look at my nose. Isn't it aspiring?" said Hermione, almost weeping between smiles which she could not quite repress.

"The cap looks so comical in a picture. It gives me such a little manny appearance. I shall feel like laughing and crying whenever I look at it."

But to Mr. Peverly Dart, Honour Science Man and Gold Medalist, who received the two photographs by the same mail, the result was more satisfactory.

"Fine girl, Miss Minerva," was his comment when he opened the case, and had laughed a little at Minerva's resolute appearance. "Very fine girl, indeed! Looks for all the world like a general or statesman. Judicial aspect—Commander of the Blue, if there is such a thing. Went little Dipsey go wild over it?"

But, at the sight of Hermione's dimpled, smiling countenance, his face assumed quite a rapturous expression.

"The sweet, dear little creature," he exclaimed, ecstatically. "That was just how she looked at the convocation. I have her before me now when old Gregory capped her, and all the fellows clapped and stamped. There was no girl there that could hold a candle to her. There never was or will be."

From which you may infer that Mr. Peverly Dart, while pursuing his studies in arts, had not suffered either classics or science to exclude the softer emotions of a course, not openly included in the curriculum, but in which, nevertheless, he had at the same time graduated. He was indeed very much in love with Miss Sweet, and the possession of her photograph, at which he had for some time past been aiming, was only preliminary to the attainment of an object much more coveted, which he hoped, and yet scarcely dared to allow himself to count upon in the future, namely, the hand and heart of the fair original. His particular friend and fellow-graduate, Mr. Dipsey, or "Dolly," as Mr. Peverly Dart sometimes called him, from his diminutive stature, light hair, blue eyes and infantile expression, had made no concealment of his admiration for the imposing Minerva, who openly permitted and even encouraged his attentions. But Mr. Peverly Dart had locked up his secret in his own breast, that is, he had never divulged it to the object of his adoration; but had confined himself to such shy advances as were within the limits of his small stock of courage. He had often envied Mr. Dipsey his assurance, but had not been able to imitate it himself. Now, however, he determined to make a bold stroke. He incited himself to courage by telling himself that he was a man, a fact which was apparent for itself from a certain hirsute appendage which had recently appeared upon his upper lip, that he had just received the promise of a good appointment, which would lead to something still better, that cowardice was despicable, and that if he did not make