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HAWTHORNDEN

A STORY OF EVERY DAY LIFE

BY MRS. CLARA M. THOMPSON

CHAPTER XXII

HORATIO LEIGHTON TAKES A STEP FORWARD

Our western friends have been neglected; we shall forget that they have been, unless we bring them before us now.

Ingleswood had put on the charms of home; the forest was being cleared, and cultured fields were growing rich with beauty, and cultivated people were slowly finding out the country.

Horatio Leighton, in this rising town, was a rising man; he had already been chosen to the State Legislature from the district where he lived, and his name spoken of for the office of State Attorney, and finally he was selected and duly placed in that office.

As he said this, he dismounted and took up the reins. "Indeed, Mr. Leighton," she exclaimed, "I am quite competent to drive over this bluff, and must is a word I bear from nobody but my father; it is quite provoking to be treated like a child."

"Perhaps I am foolishly careful," he said, as if to excuse himself, at the same time reining his horse to keep near her side; "but you know I would not cross you, except there were danger, and you must let me lead your horse down this steep bluff."

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"The road grew rough and somewhat precipitous; deep indentures marked the whole length of its course, where the careful drivers of heavy teams had chained their wheels in descending. From the brow of the hill, far away at the base of the bluff, stretched the rich fruitful miasmatic bottom lands of the river, now covered with the vivid green of the young crops, and the rough cabins of the inhabitants, scattered without regularity over this fertile region, poisoned by its excess of vitality.

The beautiful Illinois, with its clear limestone bed and its sparkling waters, now subsiding after the spring rains, rolled through these tangled fields, scattered from the prairie land and oak openings where our friends resided, by the steep bluff which our travellers were slowly descending. About half way down the bluff Marion discovered, among the young green of a maple, a young honeysuckle, wreathing its golden coils round the trunk and among the branches. It attracted her attention, for she wanted the flower a little, but she wanted like to restore a more amicable state of feeling; she was somewhat sorry for her proud mood, it would be difficult to say which motive influenced her the more, but she exclaimed, as if to herself, in a tone of disappointment, pointing to the branch, "O, how beautiful! I saw one like it last summer, and this is out of reach, as that was."

Without a reply, quick as thought Leighton was under the tree, it was still out of reach; but he stood upon his saddle at the imminent risk of his neck, and brought away a long wreath of the sunny flowers with his riding-whip. The clouds were broken up by this act of gallantry, and Marion smiled sweetly, hanging the festoon gracefully over her hat.

"Scentsless, like all the prairie flowers I have seen, but quite brilliant," she said, forgetting the tight rein while arranging the wreath. Down went Primus, ploughing with his knees and neck quite a furrow in the descent, throwing Marion entirely over his head. Her foot was loosened from the stirrup, but her dress caught by the pommet of the saddle, preventing her escape. In a moment Leighton was on the neck of the horse, pressing his weight upon the fallen animal, while he extricated her dress, and with his help she soon limped to a moss-covered log by the roadside. "I am not hurt," she said, in answer to his pleading look and anxious queries, "but essentially frightened. Aren't you sorry I did not break my neck?" she added, looking up archly through the tears that had started into her eyes after the first fright; "but you don't look a bit triumphant," she continued, laying her hand on his arm. Leighton clasped the delicate fingers within his, and bending over her, whispered words that caused her to look away, and suffused with a conscious blush the cheek which a moment before had been blanched with fear. He sat at her feet on the soft turf and urged his suit, telling her with all the vehemence of his nature what he would do for her sake. It was the first tale of love to which Marion had listened, but even then she was measuring his capabilities.

"He would win a name," he said, "a name that should be honored in the whole country, and she must help him." Her drooping eyes and softened lips betrayed the fact that her heart was not untouched, but she held back from giving the assurance of her love with her lips. "Horatio," she said, after a pause of terrible length to him, "I do not think you ought to talk of marriage, your mother, sister and brothers depend upon your exertions."

"Trust me, dearest," he replied quickly; "in a few years I will show you what I can do, and my brothers will be old enough very soon to care for themselves."

"I think we had better wait," said

matters were, he thought a few quiet days of waiting would, in the end, spare Dr. Nelson's feelings; and with this the young man was obliged to be satisfied.

The silence with which Marion and Leighton commenced their ride, so unlike their usual gay chattering, seemed to the young man's heart ominous of evil. It was a delightful June morning, the tender verdure of the forest, the soft hazy clouds floating across the serene sky, were suggestive only of peace; but the perfection of inward peace rested not on Marion's brow, she looked and felt exceedingly unamiable. The horse on which she rode had, according to Leighton's prophecy, twice tripped, but she held the bridle rein very tight, and assured herself there was no danger.

"You are offended with me, Miss Marion?" ventured young Leighton, wearied with the short answers and unconcerned tone of his companion.

"Nothing so serious as that; but you ought to know by this time that I don't like to be crossed in little matters."

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Marion, quite decidedly; "I hate long engagements."

"But I should lose all stimulus for exertion if I could not have your smile and voice to urge me on; I cannot go forward unless I can sometimes come to you as my own, and rest my weary soul in your love and confidence. I should never try for a name for my mother or sister, they would hardly care whether I gained position or no; but for you as my own, I could move heaven and earth to win distinction."

Marion listened with a pleased ear; it was charming to think that the one she really loved in her heart of hearts was ready to strive for that which he held to be her own, and that he would seek honor, and wealth, and fame, only because of her. She would be his lover of strength before all; and her father had often prophesied that Leighton would be a great statesman; already he was high in office, no long time would elapse before he would be in Congress, and then! Her first desire was to be somebody, and to her republican tastes, what could be a more enviable position than the lady of one of the Cabinets at Washington; perhaps, but we will not tell all the burning visions that darted through her aspiring mind. Her lover pleaded nobly, and after many arguments and questions on her part, that would be quite disgusting to a simple, romantic girl, who was so old-fashioned as to think that love, after all, was the great desideratum in such an affair, Marion was induced to give her consent that her father should be consulted, and the matter left with him.

Many of the bright hours of that sunny day sped by before either of them remembered that they would be expected at home. The horses had quickly gone to grazing, and were found with little delay; Leighton insisting on a change of steeds for the return, to which Marion made no objection. A few words of love, and a more tender care-taking than usual beguiled the way, to these hearts that might have been so thoroughly happy, but for the worm of ambition, that had fed secretly upon the choicest flowers. Mr. Benton was not surprised by Leighton's declaration; he had marked the progress of events, and was quite correct in his impression as to the position of both hearts; this was why he had, with almost a woman's tenderness, bidden Dr. Nelson quietly wait.

Marion had an undefined sensation of fear and reluctance, when her father called her the next morning, and said, in a very grave tone, "My daughter, Mr. Leighton came to me today, by your permission."

"Mrs. Benton arose to leave the room. "Lucy, my dear," he said, turning to his wife, "I have nothing to say to Marion that you may not hear." But the mother excused herself; she was distrustful of her daughter's motives, and she was not a little distressed by her evidently ignoring all differences of faith in one who was to take for life, but here her own example had been faulty. Mr. Benton continued: "You wish my sanction of your engagement; is it so, my child?"

Marion blushed and hesitated. "Not exactly, papa," she said at length; "I thought perhaps you would think it best not to have any positive engagement at present."

A shade of doubt, mingled with a little severity, crossed the brow of the father at these words, but he did not immediately speak. "Let there be truth here," he said at last; "truth to yourself, and to one who wishes to be your nearest friend. There must be no trifling; you have known Mr. Leighton intimately for many months; you can have time, a definite time—a week, a month, longer if you wish, but after that your connection with Mr. Leighton must be either an acknowledged engagement, or he must be to you simply a distant acquaintance."

Marion was silent; here was a view of the case she was hardly prepared to receive, though in her heart she intended, if everything prospered as she hoped it would, to marry Horatio eventually. She had no wish to be positively bound for the present, she liked playing the game of fast and loose too well for that; and besides, she would prefer a loophole of retreat in case any thing should disappoint her in her ambitious hopes concerning Leighton; and yet she loved him as well as half those who wed, love the partners to whom they have promised to cling till death do part, but she loved her own will and her own advancement first. She had hoped her father would make some little objection, something that would give her an opportunity to leave matters as they had been for the last few weeks; to feel that she was bound to consult Leighton's feelings in her daily conduct, especially in her intercourse with Dr. Nelson, to yield her will to his sometimes—she did not relish these thoughts. Her father knew her well; in the deep recesses of his own spirit he read her character in the record of his early and later life; he saw her probable course if she were left unchecked; he read her ambition, her love of power, her delight in triumph. After a silence of some moments he took from the book-shelf a well worn manual of devotion, and turning to the service for the sacrament of matrimony, he said, speaking a little sadly, "My child, here is your guide; if you can from your heart respond to those vows and promises and feel that you are desirous at some future day to enter into them with Horatio Leighton, remembering always that matrimony is a sacrament, representing the union of Christ and his Church, not a tie to be put off and not a pleas-

ure, then you have a right to engage yourself, otherwise you have not. Your acquaintance with gentlemen is quite limited, but it seems to me there must be in the heart of the woman who really loves, a distinctive preference to all the world, known or unknown. Confide in me, my daughter," he added, drawing her to his arms, "you shall not find me severe."

She rested her head upon his neck. "How can I promise to leave you and mamma?" she whispered through her tears.

"That is not to be considered, my child; it is the course of nature that children should go out from their parents in this way, it is right they should do so; you are the only home-daughter I have. I can not tell you what it would be to part with you, but that must not influence your decision in the least. The only question is do you love Mr. Leighton with a love that will bear all the trials of life? Could you bear with him poverty and disgrace?" he added in a low voice, pressing her hand. "Could you bear for Horatio what your mother has borne for me?"

Marion was quite overcome, disgrace was something she could not connect with the name of her lover; poverty! the very thought of it made her shudder. Horatio could not have been so rich, she would help him, strive with him, but this must be accomplished; and this low satisfied her slumbering conscience.

"I don't know," she said when she had recovered from her emotion, "that I could bear poverty well with any one, if I loved them over so dearly. I have a morbid dread of poverty," she continued, blushing and turning away from his earnest gaze. "I feel that I am willing to help Horatio with all my powers to be what he can be, a wealthy man, honored and respected. His present position is elevated as well as lucrative, and in time he may rise still higher."

"Ambition! My beloved daughter, let it not be your bane as it has been mine. God grant you may not meet with some dreadful blow before you learn that all this world can give the most aspiring is hollow and unsatisfying in itself."

"But, father dear," she replied, kissing the cheek against which she rested, and speaking in the coaxing manner of her childhood, "it is right for a man to be honored, respected, and rich, if he can be honestly. Isn't it?"

"If he sacrifice no principle in the pursuit of these, he may prosper," replied her father; "but Marion, your father is ambitious, and Leighton is too much like you in this respect; in our country a man of his abilities and character has nothing to hinder him from taking his seat among the most distinguished."

His daughter did not reply, a glow of satisfaction filled her heart at this confirmation of her opinion of what must be; she knew her father to be a man of superior judgment, clear-headed, and well posted in the ways of the world, and his way helped her to a decision, for she saw that there must be a decisive reply to the great question now pending. The difference in faith did not weigh with her, she crushed all misgivings on this point by the thought that mixed marriages are not forbidden by the Catholic Church, though she well knew that she refused to sanction them by the nuptial benediction, which she gives her more faithful children. In less than two weeks her engagement was known through the region of Athlone, bringing from the vicar of Athlone, the remark that "Old Cap" the remark that "he allowed these things would fill that night on the prairie; a young chap's hands don't shake like Leighton's did for nothing."

Doctor Nelson bore his disappointment like a man, although he withdrew himself at once from his intimacy at Ingleswood, to the grief of Mr. Benton and his wife, for they had become warmly attached to the young man; nevertheless the friendship remained unbroken, and the Doctor's lonely log-cabin was often brightened by visits from these, his two best friends; he called nowhere else, except in the way of his profession, and at the study of his pastor.

The poor child of suffering, Alice Leighton, during the autumn following Marion's engagement, without any apparent cause, from what appeared to be almost an entire restoration to health under Doctor Nelson's treatment, sunk into the old senescent ways, and made no effort to arouse herself from the lethargy which crept over her. Her mother in vain sought the cause of this change; the Doctor too was at fault; even Mrs. Benton wondered, as she saw her from day to day grow more reserved to herself, whom she had chosen for her confidant. She had for a long time been studying the ground of her faith, and was approaching that point where the wailing cry of the soul is, "Lord, give me light." Doctor Nelson having been well-grounded in his faith from childhood, afforded her much help; but all at once she left consulting any person either physically or spiritually, and shut herself up as it were to her own thoughts.

Mrs. Benton and the physician had many times consulted together with regard to this change, and were making various efforts to bring back the pleasant smile and the warm interest in matters about her, when suddenly Mrs. Benton was summoned to her bedside.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE WANDERER'S RETURN

By Rev. W. B. Hannon in The Missionary

After a sharp and frosty morning; the cold sun of the winter noon found me seated in my little sitting room before a cheerful fire.

The doorbell rang, Margaret, my housekeeper, went to attend it, and after a short time she ushered into the room a young man well known to me, who lived in a distant village, but who, with his widowed mother, was a regular attendant at church. He informed me that a French gentleman required me as soon as possible.

"He has lived in the mission for a time, but is not known as a Catholic. It is a long, sad story, Father," said he, "but you will get all the particulars in due time."

On the outskirts of a small village, situated in a lively pastoral neighborhood, lived the subject of my sketch. He dwelt in a picturesque cottage near a gorge, surrounded by ivy-mantled timber and underbrush. In rainy weather there was a rushing and foaming of the water, making its way in cascades and pools from the nearest hill into the valley. It was a beautiful prospect to behold the scenery as viewed from the hill, shadowed in various places by broken clouds, and rendered still more lovely by the chequered appearance of the rippling timber, and the variety of hues that were observable along their wooded sides. The interior of the cottage was no less interesting than the landscape that lay around it.

A bookcase, with the edges of the shelves gleamed, contained a considerable number of works of French and English authors, and strange to say, quite an array of Latin books on theology. The residents were a father and daughter. The master of this pretty little home was somewhat past the meridian of life, and was then dangerously ill. He had purchased the cottage two years before and felt quite happy in that sequestered spot.

The daughter was a young lady, about eighteen years, and appeared a refined and somewhat unusual type of beauty, with a trace of southern blood in her veins.

The neighbors at first had gossiped much about the stranger, but as the new-comers paid their bills punctually and were very civil, though strange in manners, the nine days' wonder of the retired village or hamlet ceased, and the worthy strangers were no longer the subject for the prattle of the people.

The vicar of the parish called on the new inhabitants, for every one living there was reckoned a parishioner. The Anglican clergy formerly looked upon every inhabitant, even Catholics, as coming under the jurisdiction of a clergy of the State Church. This assumption is becoming too inconvenient nowadays, owing to the number of Nonconformists, unbelievers and Catholics.

The vicar presented his card to the trim little French maid, who thought that he was M. Le Cure and told her master of the visitor. The parson was pleased to think of such an addition to his parish, which was mainly composed of yeomen, whose ancestors held the soil for generations.

The neighborhood retained the old religion longer than most places, through the ancient family that had been the Catholic landlords up to sixty years ago. The church was one of the gems of the thirteenth century and still retained some fine glass and a chantry. In fact, if the plain communion table of Elizabeth's reign had been removed and an altar substituted, the whole fabric would be like what it was ere the Reformers tore down the altar. The vicar had a private regard for the ancient edifice, although many abuses were said to be perpetrated in its name.

The new comer seemed to be a man of education and travel and was therefore a long-desired addition to the community. On the whole, the parish clergyman was pleased with his visit and looked for an addition to his congregation, although the stranger was noncommittal as to his religion.

Sunday passed and no sign of the new-comers was seen in church, and the same was said at the village Bachel. The ladies of the "Dorcas Sewing Circle," led by the vicar's wife, arranged to call on the young lady of the cottage. The yokels of the parish would not have the heart to refuse a contribution for church charities to such a handsome looking young lady.

The visit was well timed, and the ladies were accorded a warm reception by the stranger. They managed to glance at the surroundings when the hostess was engaged catering to their comfort. The floor was handsomely carpeted and the visitors could not fail to observe on the walls some nice water colors, landscapes and a Madonna and Child by one of the old masters; also a remarkable picture of a foreign looking lady with crinolines and the lace and ruffles of other days. They talked of the charming landscape and scenery, but lamented the absence of the sea, which would be a grand setting for the neighboring hills.

The vicar's wife, as a baptized position in church affairs, tried to sound her young hostess on the question of her religion, but all the baits thrown out failed and she summed her up as an unbeliever or a Papist.

Invitations to prayer meetings and sewing circles failed to secure the attendance of the young mistress of the cottage, and she was given up as irreconcilable. The father and daughter were good neighbors and

genial acquaintances. So they were not ostracised, and gradually their spiritual isolation ceased to be spoken of.

If the folks at the parsonage knew that their young acquaintance of the cottage had met Frank Bradshaw, they would have put their ill success in religious matters at his door.

He happened to be at home from London, and at the little railway station, when the strangers arrived, and seeing their plight with luggage and the non-appearance of the conveyance from the "Golden Lion" Hotel, he offered his assistance to the gentleman to place the luggage in the station master's office until it would be sent for. He took some small parcels and a large wrap from the young lady and volunteered with the chivalry of his race to escort them to the cottage, which was well known to him.

The father felt instinctively drawn to the young fellow, and the girl expressed in her own way her thanks for the kindness.

On arrival at their new home, they found their maid installed and everything in order, and invited the young man to visit them in a few days. Nothing loath, he came in about a week, when he knew that they would be settled, and they showed signs of pleasure at the renewal of acquaintanceship.

Discussing village gossip, Miriam, as we shall call the young lady, asked if he attended the parish church. He informed her that he was a Catholic and could not do so. The father was listening attentively, and Frank observed a change pass over that gentleman's face as he gave his reasons for being a recusant.

Miriam then told him that they were not adherents of any religious body, although she had read a good deal of French Catholic literature.

"It seems to me, Mr. Bradshaw, that there is something in your creed that satisfies the aspirations of the mind or, as you would say, the soul, although my good father is strangely disturbed when it is mentioned."

Frank thought of Newman's sermon on "Faith," that the injunctions of conscience are always clear. Conscience commands, praiseth, blames, promises and threatens, and bears witness to the unseen. It is more than a man's self. He may destroy and silence it, but very rarely can he emancipate himself from it. He can disobey it, he may refuse to use it, but it remains!

"Strange," thought the young fellow, "but I imagine that Miriam's father knows more about religion than he leads one to suppose. Why, I am a lost sheep in the eyes of the villagers and parishioners, and need not sit in judgment on this family. The vicar has too much sense to quarrel with them, I know, but the rest put me in the same purgatorio as those religious young men." Thus reasoned the young man as he left the cottage.

As he passed through the village, he threw back his head and felt proud of the record of his race in the penal days. More than one valiant confessor of the faith had come from his mother's family.

On a subsequent visit to the cottage he found that Miriam was alone; the father had been called away on some business. Among the topics discussed between the young people was that of the Catholic church. The girl had seen my little church since their last meeting and contrasted it with the grand churches on the Continent.

"What matters the material edifice," he replied. "We have the same Sacraments and Sacrifice as that of the greatest Catholic cathedral and churches in the world in that little, unpretentious building."

She gave expression to some of the tenets of the unbelievers and heretics of every age, and his timely arguments showed her how unreasonable her assertions had been.

"Way, you are a dauntless champion of the Church, and I must thank you for putting me right. I have a fair mind and have been misled like many more. Who would think that the humble little church in the gem mill town contained such unimaginable treasures?"

He informed the girl that he would be returning to college next day, but that if she desired, he would introduce her to his mother before he went.

"It will be a little relaxation for you to meet her sometimes and she can return the call. Both of you are evidently not in the shabby aristocracy of the district. She is a pronounced Catholic and you are supposed to be an infidel."

"How kind and charitable they are to us," laughed Miriam, "and indeed, sorry that you are leaving and will certainly be glad to meet Mrs. Bradshaw."

Frank's mother, who knew his good sense and discernment, felt that the strangers must be above the ordinary when her son took notice of them.

The meeting between the ladies at first was rather formal, but by degrees the girl perceived the qualities of the older lady and a mutual exchange of confidences was the result.

The Bradshaws had a well-stocked library of religious and secular authors and the young girl availed herself of some novels and a copy of Wiseman's Lectures. The friendship between the families increased and Frank managed to return on a few occasions at the week-end. Meanwhile Miriam read the Cardinal's lectures and felt fascinated and convinced by their reasoning.

Her father showed his annoyance when, on a rare occasion, she called

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