

HAWTHORND E A N.

CHAPTER XXVII.—Continued.

MARRIED IN HASTE.

THE marriage was very quiet; the ceremony at the church, the leave-taking, and the drive to the steamer which was to carry them to the old world. Rosine could not restrain her sobs as the last roll of the carriage resounded through the hall; she rushed to her own room, and threw herself upon a couch, exclaiming in the bitterness of her grief, "O, if I could but wake and find this only a horrid dream! But my poor father and mother! I ought, yes I really ought to go to them at once." She dried her eyes, and with something of Marion's energy and determination went to the library. Dr. Hartland was alone, looking very savage. "Ned," she said, entreatingly, "do help me. I ought to go to my parents; think of their grief and loneliness—five children, and not one left to them. O, do help me, dear brother to do what is right; will you ask the Colonel?"

"Ask him to please to send you off?" inquired the Doctor. "Well, I suppose I can live without you, Rosa; I have done it, but the Colonel and mother, I don't know—"

"But, Ned," she pleaded, "this will kill my dear parents; such a grief will wear them into the grave. I must go, I must go!" and she fairly broke down again.

"Either you shall be restored to them, or they shall come to you, my dear child," he said, soothingly; "it is but right you should be restored to them, desolate as your going would leave this house. It has been one of the best blessings to us all that you came," he added, rising and rushing to the window, as if something unusual was passing in the street—"something shall be done," he continued, "only let me see you smile as you used to do. This affair of Marion's has aged you as well as herself; positively, she looked twenty-five when she left the house."

"Yes, it has weighed me to the earth," replied Rosine; "but O, if I could only believe that she is not already wretched! to think too, that she should have gone so far without even one word to such friends as Father Roberts and Sister Agnes."

"By-the-way, Rosine," replied the Doctor, "I saw Father Roberts in the street yesterday, he has received a late letter from Harry; it seems the young man has fine offers to remain where he is, and like a dutiful Catholic, probably wished his good confessor's opinion; I gave mine pretty strongly off-hand. The priest agreed with me, that we have not so many such souls in this country, that we can afford to lose one."

"Perhaps Marion may meet him abroad," said Rosine, looking up quite like herself.

"Hardly," replied the Doctor; "butterflies and bees rarely mingle."

They were interrupted in their conversation by Colonel Hartland, who came hurrying in, agitation visible in every motion, with a letter in his hand. "Good news for us all!" he cried. Aleck will be home before many days, he sailed the middle of May."

Eagerly they noted each day as it went by, and when at last anxiety had begun to take the place of hope, he did come, but so changed! Nothing remained of the former cheerful, happy, almost boyish face of Aleck; nothing but the tender eye and its drooping lid; a fixed sternness had settled about the mouth, and deep wrinkles were imbedded in the thin sallow cheeks; the bright brown locks were shorn of their lustre, and silver threads were scattered about the temples. He looked older than his brother. Here was a mission for Rosine, a sister's mission, to bring back to the scarred heart of the brother, trust and faith. Diligently she worked at this task through that long summer, waiting for her own restoration to her parents quietly and hopefully, and in the mean time working constantly at that work which the good God had placed directly in her pathway.

There was no word of Laura from the lips of her husband through all that long time, not even in the abandonment of a visit to her grandfather, which Rosine made in company with Captain Hartland, the Doctor hoping that the mountain air of that region might restore his exhausted powers. Twice since his return, Laura had essayed to go to him, but had fainted in the preparation; she had also written two notes, which had been returned to her unopened. Dora could not help her, for the Commodore had been stricken by disease, and was more exacting than ever, not suffering his daughter out of his sight. At length Laura ventured her last effort, she wrote to the Colonel an imploring note, begging him to use his influence to gain for her only one interview; it was a humble, beseeching letter, and Colonel Hartland's heart was softened; he called Aleck to his private room, and gave him the note.

The young man only glanced at the first sentence and threw it from him. "Base woman!" he exclaimed, "if she torments me thus, I will take legal measures to be rid of her; if she would leave me alone, I would be content to remain as I am, to save her from shame. Why should I care for her shame?" he added, grinding his teeth. "She gave little heed to it when she gave herself to dishonour—to infamy."

"Then you have no doubt of her criminality?" inquired Colonel Hartland.

"There, sir, is our wedding-ring," he replied, with unmitigated scorn in his voice, drawing the bright circle from his finger—"our wedding ring! given over to the villain to whom she had given herself! Infamous! Do you think I wish to bandy words with her?" he said, striding across the floor in his wrath. Colonel Hartland said no more.

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 Inglewood, he had not for a moment harbored the idea. This removal was a pet plan and proposal of Ned's, and he had even gone so far as to sound Mr. Hawthorne himself as the feasibility of the plan, when he had gone to Hawthorndean with Rosine to attend the funeral of the wife. It was a mere 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 Mrs. Benton's father, in which the Colonel descanted at large 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 felt as if he was invincible, and forthwith the following letter was dispatched from Hawthorndean, addressed to Mrs. Benton.

"HAWTHORND E A N., 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 of 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 authorised 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 a father's blessing. 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 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 counter-balancing pleasures? not the least of which I flatter myself is 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 no tears, but the letter frightened 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 continual 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 Jeannie 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 poor 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.

The 'Cologne Gazette' concludes an article, "The Russian Road to India," by saying:—"If we reckon up all that Russia has obtained already, the final subjection of the whole of Central Asia is only a question of time, and then she will probably have a railway to the Amu-Darya, and use the road to India."