

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

BY CHRISTINE FAHER

CHAPTER XXXI

Compelled at first to give his whole attention to the horse, Gerald was unable to turn to his companion, until he had driven a considerable distance out on the road.

"Are you comfortably seated, Miss Burchill?" he said at last, slackening the horse's pace somewhat, and turning to the form beside him.

"Very comfortably seated, dear Gerald," at the same time throwing back the hood from her face and putting her hand upon his arm.

"How came you here, and where is Miss Burchill?" he asked, as soon as his astonishment and rage allowed him his voice.

"Oh, Gerald, listen to me! Miss Burchill told me to go to the back piazza to you. She has gone with Mr. Robinson. You will find her at the hotel when we arrive."

He would have ended the drive there and then, but he dared not stop until he could stable his horse, neither could he turn the animal about in the somewhat narrow road they were pursuing, for that attempt might bring on the very skittishness of the uncertain beast.

So he was obliged to proceed. He would not believe what Mrs. Phillips said, somehow he doubted everything which fell from her lips,—but still in her words there was a sharper sting than he thought a woman ever again could give him. And what if it were really so, that Mildred had sent the widow in her place, and gone herself with Robinson?

Under the maddening sense produced by the thought, he whipped up his horse as if there were a devil in him which would rouse the devil in the animal, and they dashed on at a speed that made Helen shriek and endeavor to cling to his arm. He swung her off.

"Oh, Gerald," she cried, "will nothing touch you? Must I carry your unfortunateness to my grave?"

"You sent my father to his grave, madam," was the stern reply.

"But I have repented; and oh, Gerald, I cannot live with the weight of your anger upon me. I ask nothing but your forgiveness. Forgive me! Forgive me!"

"Ask heaven for forgiveness, madam." Gerald spurred his horse anew, taking a shorter road than he knew the others were pursuing, and turning an utterly deaf ear to her passionate entreaties. She sobbed aloud, but he was as little impressed; when they arrived at the country hotel in which supper had been ordered for the party his horse was flecked with foam, and her beautiful eyes were red and swollen from weeping. The company had not yet come, and Helen at once retired to bathe her tear-stained face, while Gerald impatiently waited the arrival of Mildred to hear from her own lips an explanation of her strange conduct.

The party came at last, but neither Mildred nor Robinson was with it. Great was the surprise of all when they found two missing, it being confidently thought that by taking a shorter road, as Gerald had done, they might have arrived in advance. As it was, they might come yet, and the supper was delayed, and an anxious watch maintained; but, when an hour elapsed, Gerald would wait no longer. He could not content himself in the gay company while his heart was so torn by suspicion and, on the contrary, had the text of fearing some accident had happened, he ordered his horse, which still bore marks of its recent hard ride, and dashed homeward.

The house was in the same state of illumination as when he left it, the lights in the study streaming through the open windows out upon the piazza, and a tall figure seemed to be pacing the path. Waiting only to stable his panting horse, Gerald hurried back to the pacing figure. It was Robinson.

Robinson called to him. "Where's the rest of 'em, and what did you do with the little widow?" Gerald answered somewhat hotly: "As she forced herself upon me, I escaped from her company as quickly as possible by leaving her with the rest of the party at the hotel."

And lest he should be questioned farther, he hurried away. Some time in the small hours of the morning the company returned. Robinson awaited them, and gay voices and loud laughter made the house resound for another hour; but Mrs. Phillips broke from the party almost immediately, and hurried to Miss Burchill's chamber. The latter was a light sleeper; she heard the first gentle tap at her door, and half expecting it to be Cora, she waited only to light the gas and throw on a morning dress before she opened it.

"Let me in," said Mrs. Phillips, quickly; and when Mildred stepped aside she followed her, and seizing her hands drew her to a large easy-chair before the bed.

"Sit there, Milly, and let me explain to you how it all happened. Oh, I am so unhappy!" and to Miss Burchill's astonishment a wild burst of tears succeeded the last speech.

"Mr. Thurston mistook me for you—you know in this case I resemble you—and he snatched me into the wagon before I could say a word. When he found out the mistake, he seemed to think that Mr. Robinson would drive you, and anyway, that we should meet you at the hotel. But he will explain it all to you in the morning. I am sure, unless perhaps you have already seen him," looking up through her tears.

"I have not," said Mildred, quietly, though her heart was beating wildly with various emotions, among which distrust and a half disgust of the widow predominated.

The latter regained confidence, but at the same time she seemed to read Miss Burchill's mind. With her tears still flowing, and her white taper hands resting, clasped, in the lap of Mildred, she resumed: "You think I am gay and pretty, and all that; but you don't see the heart I carry. You don't know how suffering has seared it. Oh, Milly, if you knew my secret history you would pity me. Some day you will let me confide in you? I should have asked to do so long ago, but I hesitated to sadden you with wrongs such as I have known."

Mildred did not answer; she was thinking of the last words—"wrong such as I have known." Could it be that Gerald had indicated any wrong upon Helen in severing their engagement?

"You do not speak," said Mrs. Phillips. "You, too, refuse me my one last consolation—a true friend."

She was perfect in the art of simulating grief; tones, gestures, expressions were all in accord, and Miss Burchill was touched in spite of herself.

"You may confide in me when you wish to do so, Mrs. Phillips," she said; "but I think now you had better retire; this excitement is too much for you."

"Have you forgiven me, then, for taking your place tonight? It was unintentional. I could not help it, and I also expected to meet you at the hotel, when the mistake could be rectified, and you could return with Mr. Thurston. I could not sleep until I had explained it to you, and now, if you are angry or distressed about it, my heart will break."

"Oh, no; Mr. Thurston, as you say, will doubtless explain to-morrow."

"Well, then, kiss me good night, dearest, or rather good-morning, for I declare, is not that four striking? And there is Cora, I think," as a rustle of garments sounded in the next apartment. She ran off, leaving Mildred so sleepless and anxious that she peeped at last into her pupil's room. The girl was slowly disrobing, but catching sight of the pale face in the doorway, she sprang towards it.

"Oh, Miss Burchill, I wanted to see you so much, to know just why you didn't come; but as uncle said you had retired, I didn't like to disturb you."

"I didn't go because there was some mistake which resulted in Mrs. Phillips going with Mr. Thurston; but perhaps it is as well."

Cora looked earnestly into the frank eyes turned upon her own, and at length, as if she doubted how her communication would be received, but felt that it must be made, she said: "Mightn't Mrs. Phillips have done all that on purpose, so that you couldn't go with Mr. Thurston?"

"Why should she do so?" was the wondering reply. "Well, I don't know, but I don't like Mrs. Phillips; and I heard some one say in the parlor the other night that if Mrs. Phillips wasn't Mr. Thurston's stepmother they'd say she was in love with him as he watched him go; and then some one else said that they guessed you had the best chance, for Mr. Thurston was always paying you some attention. And I wish it were so, for I like him."

neither Mrs. Phillips nor Mr. Robinson, from whom she received her information, knew that Gerald had gone to New York to avoid the company of the house. He was again out of tune with everything of the kind, and believing Mildred, since he had received no explanation from her, to be wanting in the qualities which he most admired in woman, he was anxious not to meet her. Rodney being obliged to return to the city, Gerald determined to accompany him, ostensibly on business; but the business could have been transacted as well without his personal supervision. On the train Rodney said, having watched for some minutes in silence his companion's gloomy visage and abstracted manner:

"Come, Gerald, don't let last night's disappointment work upon you so much. I've studied Miss Burchill during my stay at The Castle, and what conclusion do you think I have come to?"

A look of inquiry was his only answer. Rodney eloped Thurston's knee as he resumed: "That she's just guileless enough herself to become the victim of that little devil of a widow. I shouldn't be a bit surprised to find that the jade's told some whopping lie to Miss Burchill about this affair."

But Miss Burchill should have sent me some explanation," answered Gerald.

"There you go at your old rate, my boy, jumping at angry conclusions, and forgetting that, if you were bitten once, all women are not snakes."

But Gerald had leaned back with his hat over his eyes and his teeth set hard together.

CHAPTER XXXII

When Gerald had returned to The Castle the guests had all gone, and the mansion had resumed its wonted quiet aspect. Miss Burchill again voluntarily confined herself to her own part of the house, and Mrs. Phillips paid her daily visit as persistently as ever. That visit had grown to be an intolerable infliction to Mildred, and again and again she had to fortify herself for its endurance by recalling her promise to her mother.

But the widow assumed that she was quite welcome, and she "deared" Mildred and Cora, and hung about them, and was constantly seeking to insinuate herself into their regard by little flattering speeches, or to win sympathy by colorful accounts of her unpleasant life at home owing to Miss Burchill, until both her pupils felt like begging her to desist. The pupil, indeed, showed her anger and disgust on more than one occasion, and nothing but her desire to please Mildred, to whom she was devotedly attached, prevented her from showing continually the aversion she felt. Cora was now fourteen, tall for her years, and scarcely any grizzle in appearance as her age would warrant her to be.

Miss Burchill was seriously debating the propriety of asking Mr. Robinson to send his niece to some educational institution. Should the factory owner assent to the proposition, she could pursue with better heart a plan that she had formed for herself. It was that of seeking a position in Boston. She had some hope of success, owing to the acquaintances she had made among Mr. Robinson's recent guests, and she was the more anxious to make the trial as The Castle had lost its charm for her. She had neither seen Gerald nor heard from him since the night of the ride, and she was keenly from a silence which at times her imagination distorted into the acme of unkindness, she was often tormented by fear that she herself might be to blame; and yet, as the days wore on it became more and more like a gross impropriety for her either to make or demand any explanation of the unfortunate occurrence.

So she bore her pain in silence, but joined to Mrs. Phillips' torturing attentions it was fast becoming insupportable; indeed, nothing but her affection for Cora kept her from taking an immediate departure. She fancied that away among different scenes she might teach herself to forget the causes of her pain and annoyance. There was also another reason for changing her residence. Mr. Robinson was beginning to show her unwished-for attention, frequently sending her choice bouquets and the rarest of his lighthouse fruits, and all of which Mrs. Phillips managed to see, and at which she laughed and shook her head significantly. There, also, he had more than once, on the occasion of an accidental meeting with her, in company with her pupil, joined him and Gerald at table. But Mildred respectfully declined, and continued to take her meals as usual with Cora. At length the factory owner insisted that his niece should dine with him, possibly with the hope that Miss Burchill, deprived of her companion, would be compelled, as it were, to accede to his wish. But she preferred dining alone, even though Cora protested against it both by tears and entreaties. The widow of course at once knew of the arrangement, and she so manoeuvred that she also was asked to dinner by Robinson. Thurston started when he entered the dining-room and saw her, but recovering himself he bowed distantly, and requested the servant to change his place at the table to one quite removed from Mrs. Phillips. She bit her lip and blushed violently, while Robinson regarded the proceeding with ludicrous astonishment.

He made no remark, however, and Helen, as if she were not in the least disturbed, addressed herself to the factory owner, assuming the while so gentle and modest an air that she might be thought to be some uneducated girl, scarcely released from the espionage of her governess. As the meal went on—Gerald silent and seeming to pay not the least attention to anything but his plate—her vivacity somewhat increased. She managed to introduce Miss Burchill's name.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE LAST WORD

He sat there a long time by the open window of his apartment puffing at his pipe. Slow coils of smoke climbed upward toward the ceiling while he pursued reflective processes in which he found a strange fascination. Edward Long was almost thirty. He was spiritualist and could tell you with great fluency that spiritualism was the "coming religion," nay, that it had practically arrived through the harrowing anguish of the war. He was not very tall, and he was strikingly ugly, with a Roman curve to his nose, a large mouth, and a wide forehead; he had, however, a pair of very intelligent eyes. People forgot his homely face when they saw his eyes.

At the present moment he was not meditating on spiritualism at all, but on Teresa Way. He had met her on the previous day, Sunday, while making a call on his old friends, the Harsons. She had quite the most satisfactory blue eyes and crispy brown hair that he had seen in many a day, and in addition an indescribable charm of manner. But—and it was this that puzzled him—she was a Catholic, and, moreover, a very well informed one. When he had launched his torpedoes at Rome she had paid him back in the same measure, without a particle of malice but with much golden laughter. And when, as a parting salvo, he had declared that if it had not been Sunday he would have told a ghost story that called for holy water as a protection, she simply smiled and said it would have been wonderful of him.

Edward Long was an inveterate seeker of theories. He was always hunting for them and bubbling over with satisfaction when one had been run to earth. For anything he was not able to explain to himself he found or invented a theory. It was the theory that settled it. On this occasion, while the smoke soared from his pipe, his mind was soaring after a theory to explain Teresa Way. She impressed him as being a most intelligent person. But how could she be intelligently intelligent and yet be a Catholic? Brains were with the spiritualists. Catholics were unintelligent emotionalists.

The next morning he awoke to glorious sunshine. The more he thought about Teresa Way the more interested he became. He had a problem, and he was like a hunter awaiting the dawn so that he could set forth for the fray. He would show this Catholic—open up to her new vistas of thought!

The first thing he did was to pick up the telephone directory to ascertain her number and address; but it did not yield the secret. He stroked his chin reflectively. Nothing else, then, than to obtain it from the Harsons. The Harsons were not spiritualists, but belonged to the High Church section of Episcopalianism, and were most careful to speak of those in communion with Rome as Roman Catholics, never as Catholics.

A few weeks later he was scheduled to deliver a lecture on spiritualism in a New England town on the coast. He took it for granted that Teresa Way had not returned as he had not received a word from Mrs. Harson. And now as he paused by the shore of this conservative New England town to watch the shining sea and the play of its waves, he felt it was good to leave behind the thunder of the city, the fury of subway and elevated. It was the fall of the year, the pensive days of gray and gold.

He was presently aware that some one was speaking his name—yes, he felt positive that his name had been called. He turned on his heel. "So it is Mr. Long!"

There she was standing before him, heavenly as the sunlight on the sea. He felt a little dizzy, and for an instant his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth. "It is I," he exclaimed. "And the best part is that you're Miss Way. I've wanted to see you ever since that Sunday."

"Tell me," she queried, avoiding the last remark, "are you the Mr. Long?"

"The Mr. Long?"

"They tell me that the Mr. Long is going to lecture on spiritualism; that he is the greatest authority on the subject."

"Anything else?" he asked grinning. From a nearby church the Angelus bell pealed. Teresa bowed her head for a moment. "I beg your pardon," he said in bewilderment. "All right," she said, and then told him why it was rung.

"I once saw a picture called 'The Angelus,' but it didn't convey much to me. It was beautifully painted, however."

"Now you know something more than when you saw the picture." He nodded: "Rather a nice idea. No wonder the picture was so well done."

"You lecture tonight?" "Yes. You know, spiritualism is the last word."

"How wonderfully interesting!" she said, with an irresistible smile. "Why, I once knew a man who declared that the last word was the New Thought. He was going about handing it out in pamphlets—and a rush of words that showed he at least had an imagination!"

"But I tell you, Miss Way, that spiritualism is the last word." "That's what the Christian Scientists say of their ideas."

"Look here, Miss Way, will you come to my lecture? Oh, I promise there will be nothing to offend you, no table-turning or spirit rapping. It's just an elementary talk to sow the seed and make people think."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Long. I'll be sordid. A bargain's a bargain. I'll come to your lecture on one condition—that you'll come to my church when you are back in the city again."

"Sheek!" he cried. They shook. "Just to make people think," she shot back at him with a mischievous laugh.

Teresa kept her promise. She found the lecture indeed "elementary," and elementary in its appeal; it was punctuated with the stupidities of "creed-bound churches," "hide-bound dogmas"—the old stock phrases that would have bored her utterly if she had not possessed some knowledge of the lecturer. She was glad to be out again in the open air and to feel the tang of the sea. In a few moments Edward Long was beside her, looking flushed and excited.

"Well?" he exclaimed. "Well," she repeated, and the tone of her voice told him that his lecture had not made the impression he had hoped for.

"Oh," he commented, "is that how you feel about it?" "It is," said she, a smile rippling over her face.

"But spiritualism's tremendous!" "Perhaps, when you haven't anything else to believe in."

"It's sublime," he said in a tone of exultation. "Look," she said quickly, "there's something that's sublime," and she pointed to the sea. Just over the rim of the waters the moon, with the delicate beauty of pale ivory, was weaving a silver path. The spell of it seized them and they walked on in silence.

Several months sped past before Edward Long kept his promise. Teresa had changed her original plans. She had now arranged to take him to her aunt's country house, a few miles from town. It stood on an upland of many acres with stretching woods on all sides fading to dim horizons. Her aunt was a woman of deep piety and wealth, living in the world but not of it, except to spend her money and energy in good works. Never did her right hand know the doings of her left.

They were driving from the station. Snow covered the ground and the silence after the city was demoralizing and refreshing. Edward Long admitted to himself that keeping his part of the bargain was a splendid experience. "Well," she remarked, "you're starting out right enough, Mr. Long."

Teresa in an ingenuous tone. "Yes, I think I do."

"Why, how perfect!" There was a tinkle in her voice. He wondered what they were next going to ask. "I'll leave you in the hands of my niece, Mr. Long. And you will remain, of course, for luncheon?"

He said that he would be especially pleased to remain for luncheon. "Miss Way," he said, turning to her with a smile, "you've a full-grown heretic on your hands, a large handful. What are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to make 'it' think." "Oh, you can't do that. I've already started the job."

And then he wondered what some of his friends would think if they knew where he was. He remembered that a large number of spiritualists were sadly lacking in humor. He smiled softly to himself.

The very first thing that Teresa proceeded to do was to take him to the chapel, up wide, dignified stairs lighted by a tall stained glass window. The chapel was a jewel. The light, soft and mellow, falling upon the marble statues gave them an appealing loveliness. Teresa crossed herself, knelt for a moment and departed. She stood outside for several minutes, wondering why he did not watch her. She glanced at her wrist watch and gave him another minute. The minute passed and still she waited. What could have happened, she thought? She re-entered the chapel and beheld the extraordinary sight of a spiritualist standing with folded arms gazing straight at the bronze door of the tabernacle. She turned and quietly walked out.

"Honestly, Miss Way," he said later, with a good deal of feeling, "that's one of the most astonishing places I have ever seen. I was trying to observe it like a spectator, but as soon as my eyes rested on the door in the centre of the altar I was conscious of a curious feeling of satisfaction, a sort of thrill of warm comfort, as if I had received good news of a personal character."

There was a pause. "I'll tell you something more. You Catholics have a secret."

"A secret?" she repeated, looking at him seriously. "In what way?" "That's just it. I don't know. I don't understand, and I don't know how to say it in words. But I feel it's something external, touching and moving one's thoughts, as a wind stirs the sea."

Quite suddenly his mood changed. Jerking out his watch, he declared that he must catch the first train back to the city. He was profuse and eloquent in apologies for not remaining for luncheon.

Teresa and her aunt considered that it looked a promising case for conversion. At any rate they had seen some less promising end that way. But Edward Long simply and utterly disappeared. The Harsons knew not his whereabouts; nor could they find a clue. But they asserted strongly that spiritualism was at the bottom of it.

Many months later, on the afternoon of the feast of the Assumption, Teresa happened to step into a certain church she loved for its atmosphere of religious peace. Suddenly from behind a pillar a gaunt, pallid figure approached her. It was Edward Long. At first she hardly knew him; but there was no mistaking the Roman curve of the nose. His eyes were sunken, but glowing with a strange fire. They walked up the aisle together and from a side door into the street.

"Why, Mr. Long," she exclaimed, "what in the world—"

"Nothing in the world, but something above it," he said with intense feeling. His eyes possessed a tenderness and a lofty expression she had never seen before. "I have been fighting! It was the secret of your Church that won. In spiritualism I made some curious discoveries, but what were they," he made a gesture with his hands, "compared to the greatest secret in the world?"

"Yes, yes," she exclaimed, thrilled at the wonder of what she was hearing. "The piercing secret that is only revealed to those who are Catholic. It is a radiance—"

And then from the tower of the church the great bell rang out the music of the Angelus. As it soared above the noises of the street they bowed their heads until the last glorious note faded away. "Your bell and my bell, too!" he said.

She took his hand and shook it. The marvel of the change was so deep that it kept her silent in a sort of ecstasy. All around was the strain and stress of life, and above it the wonder of the Church, guarding, transmuting, sometimes delving deep into the hearts of men, working miracles. There were tears in her eyes as she turned her head to look at him; but he was smiling.—O Decker in Rosary Magazine.

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ANGLICAN CHURCH HAS TROUBLE OF HER OWN (C. P. A. Service)

London, Aug. 7.—The Protestant Bishop of Bath has descended upon one of his clergy, has forbidden the service of Benediction in the church, ordered the tabernacle, a statue of Our Lady and the Holy Water stoup removed, dismissed the rector, and summoned the church wardens, who did not appear.

Open rebellion is now the rule in the Church of England, and it is certain draws daily nearer, members crumbling off hourly, and converts pouring into the Catholic Church.