

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

BY CHRISTINE FABER

CHAPTER XX

The Eastbury papers had copied pretty fully all the New York accounts of the Phillips will case, and from them Miss Burchill learned of the singular events in which Mr. Thurston and Miss Brower had recently figured, but she knew not whether to pity either or both; from what she had discovered during Gerald's delirium of his attachment to Helen, it would seem as if he had been grossly wronged, but again, she could not conceive Miss Brower acting so treacherously, and at length in her doubt and perplexity, she resolved to dismiss all thoughts of the subject; this was the easier to do, as her mother's falling health demanded her closest attention. It was with no little satisfaction that she had sought Miss Balk to tell that lady of her mother's intention to resign the boarding house; but Barbara received the news with great nonchalance, coolly remarking that Miss Brower's expected return would expedite her own departure from Mrs. Burchill's. For Gerald, however, to whom her mother communicated the intended change, she had a very different feeling. She experienced a vague regret at his going which she could not understand, and for which she could not account, and sometimes, despite all her resolutions to the contrary, she found herself thinking about and even pitying him; he bore that in his face which seemed to express severe mental suffering. She did not see him on his departure, but he left a kind adieu for her with her mother.

time, was unable to keep her word; and the owner of the little house in which they lived, in view of the demand for houses to accommodate the expected influx of summer visitors, raised the rent so exorbitantly that Miss Burchill decided to leave the premises immediately. She had grown very pale and weary looking during this accumulation of trials, and the drawn and resolute look of her face, conveyed the impression that her persistent effort to control her emotions was undermining her health. The scanty amount which still remained to her must be strictly economized, and, having in the first place to seek a home, she could think of but one quarter of the village where the rents were not incompatible with her humble means—the part where the Hogans lived. For an instant at the thought of living there, the blood surged madly into her face, then her eyes fell upon her grandfather—the little old man who had not once smiled since his daughter-in-law's death, and who was rapidly losing his ruddy and chubby look. His melancholy air went to her heart; with an impulsive bound she was at his side, her arms about his neck, and a long pent up burst of tears wetting his furrowed cheek.

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TO BE CONTINUED

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she had given up the little house, much

to the regret of the boarders, who had learned to regard Mrs. Burchill as a mother, and were living in a smaller and plainer, but equally comfortable house, in another part of the village. Mildred had failed to obtain the position she sought, her influence being insufficient to win the unanimous consent of the board of selectmen; and to another young lady, whose father had a bank account in Boston, and who only wanted to teach to increase her allowance of pin-money, was given, with some ceremony, the post of junior teacher in the village school. Mrs. Burchill seemed a little sad when she heard of the appointment, but she brightened in a moment, and said cheerfully:

"Perhaps it's all for the best."

Mildred applied herself to dressing, taking lessons from the only modiste which the village contained, an employing her leisure hours in cultivating her voice. She did the latter in obedience to her mother; for, ignorant though the good woman was upon all musical matters, she had sufficient ear to know that her daughter possessed a fine voice, and from the early childhood of Mildred she had practiced economy that the little girl might have this instruction. So, from one itinerant master or another, according as each took up his temporary residence in the village, Miss Burchill received musical instruction. At this time her teacher seemed to be much superior to any of her former instructors. Unexpectedly and feeble health had compelled him to seek a living in Eastbury, and his musical ability and admirable mode of instruction becoming known, it secured for him many pupils among the wealthier class. Because of his health he was obliged to refuse to give lessons in the homes of his pupils; consequently, they all came to him. And one afternoon, as Mildred had just concluded her lesson and was about to step from the threshold of the hall door to the little porch, a lady in deep mourning and heavily veiled turned from the walk to ascend the steps. She threw up her veil as she reached Mildred, and the latter recognized Helen Brower, or rather Mrs. Phillips. Never having been introduced, though it was evident the widow desired to speak, and as Mildred was about to pass on, the former said hurriedly:

"Is the professor in?"

Mildred bowed an affirmative, and proceeded on her way. That Mrs. Phillips had engaged to take singing lessons was evident, for Miss Burchill frequently met her, as she did on that first day, entering as she was leaving. On one occasion that the professor, delighted with Mildred's execution of a difficult aria, requested her to sing it again, she found Mrs. Phillips waiting in the outer room. Mrs. Phillips, of course, had heard her; and was it surprise at the magnificent voice which made her look so intently at the young girl? Mildred without noticing the look, passed on. But the gentlemanly professor found his beautiful pupil that afternoon. She would insist on trying notes for which her voice was utterly unequalled, and at last in a fit of ill-concealed temper at her teacher's unwillingness to gratify her, she said half pettishly:

"I want to sing just what that young woman sings who took her lesson immediately before mine."

M. Clarmont smothered some anathema between his teeth, and looked up from the piano with what calmness he could assume as he answered:

"You would have to possess Miss Burchill's voice, in order to sing what she does."

Mrs. Phillips, however, would have her own way; and as she was a pupil by no means to be offended, he consented with what grace he might, and the aria, which from Mildred's lips had so delighted him, now given by Mrs. Phillips made him feel like banging the piano down alike upon the music and the widow.

Mrs. Burchill seemed to entertain some hope that her daughter's voice might yet contribute to the latter's livelihood, and for that reason, when Mildred spoke of discontinuing the lessons, in order to give more time to her trade, and spare her mother's already strained purse, Mrs. Burchill would not hear of it, nor had the girl herself the heart to press it, when she saw how fondly and delightedly her mother and grandfather listened during her hours of practice.

But the quiet and contented life of the little household was to have an interruption. Mrs. Burchill's predictions of her own early demise at last came true, and her end was as sudden as she had feared it would be. She had but time to call her father-in-law and daughter, and to impress upon her daughter the remembrance of the promises already obtained, when she died quietly and painlessly. The physician, who had been long attending her, obeyed his hurried summons only to find his patient forever beyond his skill.

The poor little grandfather's grief was the most touching. When he was not hanging over the corpse in mute agony, he was following Mildred about with a childish affection that must have gone to any heart; and "Milly" as he so dotingly called her, in her own desolation still felt acutely for him.

"Troubles come not singly," and the young orphan for the next few weeks painfully realized the truth of the adage. The bank which held her mother's little account failed; the modiste, who had promised to pay for her services after a certain

time, was unable to keep her word; and the owner of the little house in which they lived, in view of the demand for houses to accommodate the expected influx of summer visitors, raised the rent so exorbitantly that Miss Burchill decided to leave the premises immediately. She had grown very pale and weary looking during this accumulation of trials, and the drawn and resolute look of her face, conveyed the impression that her persistent effort to control her emotions was undermining her health. The scanty amount which still remained to her must be strictly economized, and, having in the first place to seek a home, she could think of but one quarter of the village where the rents were not incompatible with her humble means—the part where the Hogans lived. For an instant at the thought of living there, the blood surged madly into her face, then her eyes fell upon her grandfather—the little old man who had not once smiled since his daughter-in-law's death, and who was rapidly losing his ruddy and chubby look. His melancholy air went to her heart; with an impulsive bound she was at his side, her arms about his neck, and a long pent up burst of tears wetting his furrowed cheek.

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