

AN ORIGINAL GIRL

By Christine Faber.

CHAPTER XVII.—CONTINUED.

MY DEAR TERRY. You news of my Charge was... My dear Terry, you news of my Charge was a waste—several days ago...

Hardman was told to go immediately with the letter to the post-office. He found the postman concerning Miss Burram...

Hardman started. "By some people I mean Herriek," went on little Pettard, "he's got an awful sight of curiosity."

The very next day found Mrs. Gedding on her way to Miss Burram's; she had little or no misgiving about the fact...

Miss Burram, that I am compelled to be a prisoner in your delightful easy-chair, but I can't help it, and the little lady laughed softly.

"I was sent with a message," the soft, monotonous voice went on, "a message of charity from my daughter."

"Fortnight after, Rose ventured to ask her father how Mr. Burleigh was."

"By insisting that I have destroyed all chance of propitiating Miss Burram herself, if I had only stopped to think, I might have known that mother would put her foot in it—she really hasn't the first idea of tact, or diplomacy; but you see, I counted on her not speaking and her imperviousness to my words."

Christianity which teaches to let alone the neighbors who prefer not to know Mrs. Gedding and her Christian family. Good afternoon, and ringing for Sarah she said briefly, when Sarah appeared, which she did with surprising promptness.

"Show Mrs. Gedding out," Mrs. Burram said. "You have just ruined everything! What in the world did you want to bring in Christianity, or to say anything about Mr. Burleigh? Now, of course, Miss Burram has taken alarm lest her affairs are being told by her man of business, and if father should hear that you have been talking this way, there will be no end of unpleasant feeling."

"All through you," said her mother, roused into unprecedented emotion by her recent experience, "and the next time you want your charitable propositions carried out, carry them out yourself."

"But, mother," expostulated Rose, "who thought you were going to say anything so nonsensical and ridiculous?"

"Then, why didn't you tell me what to say, or go yourself?" Mrs. Gedding for the first time in her daughter's memory began to cry. That was too much for the really warm-hearted girl.

"You dear, gentle, little mother; it was just because I was so sure of your gentleness winning what nothing else could win, that I begged you to go. But, forgive me, I never thought of that. I will not say one word of it to father, nor will I say anything, except Hattie; you shall not say one word of your visit to any one else. If father or Will should want to know if you called on Miss Burram, and how you succeeded, you can just tease them by saying that is your business," to all of which she lengthened Mrs. Gedding agreed, and all length Mrs. Gedding pacified and restore her to her wonted placidity.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Misses Gedding and Fairfax had not been the only ones in Rentonville whose curiosity had caused them to be in the railroad depot at the very time of the arrival of the train that brought the Misses Burram's weekly visitors. Herriek, more than one occasion, had made it his business to be there also, so that he knew by sight pretty well, though he had never heard their names, Mr. Burleigh and Mr. and Mrs. Tounsell. When, therefore, on the afternoon of the second day succeeding Mrs. Gedding's call upon Miss Burram, Herriek recognized Burleigh just in advance of him on the road leading from the depot, he lost no time in overtaking him, and, presuming upon his destination, offered, as he was in his buggy, to drive him there.

Burleigh looked astonished and even disposed to resent the offer. "I thank you, sir," he said coldly, "but I have no wish to ride." And there was nothing for Herriek to do but to accept the declination and drive on.

He would be obliged to wait to see Sarah in order to learn anything of the cause that could have brought Miss Burram's weekly visitor out of the accustomed time. But Sarah proved to be ignorant as Herriek himself, for Miss Burram and her visitor had closed doors, and when the end of it, the visitor went away without waiting for refreshment, or even to bid good-bye to the depot.

"Shows that there was business in his visit—dead business. Shouldn't wonder if it didn't have something to do with her long monthly journeys in the carriage."

more drawn to that little creature than ever, she has so much spirit." "Spirit," repeated her friend, "a strange kind of spirit that makes her, when you smile at her, give you the oddest look imaginable."

"Not know you, when every time you have seen her Sarah has been with her, and of course Sarah has told her all about you, and how kindly you feel to her, Sarah having learned that from your Margaret to whom I myself heard you say how much you would like to know Miss Burram's Charge."

"But my mother's unfortunate visit may have given occasion to Miss Burram to warn her Charge against me; and if the child only knew how kindly I feel to her and how sorry I am she hasn't the pleasant life other children have, and she shows that she hasn't, there is a sad, wistful look in her eyes that haunts me, and just think of it, the little thing, having no other company, spends all her spare time, Sarah says, with Miss Burram's coachman."

"Miss Fairfax, 'is a good man, if he is an ignorant one, and a servant. Uncle Baldwin's spoken of him a good many times—a careful, honest fellow he is, and devoted to his mistress's interests; so I do think his company is going to hurt her Charge very much. And Miss Burram's Charge is going to Margaret, who, as your brother says, got it from Sarah, who got it from the evidence of her own eyes, is not left entirely to the coachman, nor even to herself. Christmas night she was in the parlor with Miss Burram's company, and also on the Sunday night after, and as Sarah said, things looked as if she was going to spend every Sunday evening with Miss Burram's company."

"And don't distress yourself any more about Miss Burram's Charge." "But the advice was not needed, for Rose continued, as if she had hardly heard the last speech, 'If she were only old enough to be in our class, or, if you were only young enough to be in her, I might have interrupted Miss Fairfax, 'I expect to graduate next June, and Rachel Minturn is six classes below you, there is not much chance of one, or the other; and now, do, for mercy's sake, Rose, talk of something else beside Miss Burram's Charge—' 'There is Mr. Notner, 'as that gentleman turned the corner of the street just in advance of them, 'now, I am a good deal more interested in Mr. Notner, 'she went on, 'and particularly, since I heard he was seen in the choir of Father Hammond's church Christmas morning—just seen there—that was all; he wasn't introduced by anybody, he didn't speak to anybody, only he was seen there listening to the music, and he isn't a Catholic, you know, 'asked Rose, impatiently, 'he is probably a good deal of music, and the Catholic church has the best choir and the finest organ in Rentonville."

"Look! where he is going," said Harriet, suddenly seizing her friend's arm; 'as I live, if he isn't going into Father Hammond's house."

Notner was turning into the little path that led up to the pastoral residence, and he became both interested and curious, but when she and Harriet spoke of the incident that evening young Gedding made a wry face.

"Isn't that feminine?" he said, half in appeal to his father, "to be so curious because a man is seen going into a house?" "You deserve to be punished," said Miss Fairfax, drawing herself up with an air of ridiculous stiffness, and shaking her finger at him, "and you shall not hear one thing from me in future; we shall unravel our mysteries and keep the unravelment to ourselves."

"Oh, ho," he said, "here is something they are trying to keep from us, father, and as it relates to something that was planned and promulgated in our very presence, it is our duty to know. Out with it, mother!" "Mother," again admonished Rose angrily. "But her mother, now that she had come through the ordeal and could look back upon it with such absolute complacency, was quite disposed to enlighten her husband and son, and enlighten them she did, from the appearance of Miss Burram, to the last look of Sarah's solemn eyes as she shut the hall door."

"Great Cesar!" ejaculated Will, and Mr. Gedding straightened up in his chair. "Martha, what in the world did you mention Mr. Burleigh's name for? He had nothing to do with your visit to Miss Burram."

"But Mrs. Gedding was not going to be ruffled this time; 'Why didn't you all instruct me before I went? How was I to know that absolute frankness would be out of order in such a visit?' 'Absolute frankness be—' but Mr. Gedding checked himself in time, and he sank back in his chair with a sort of helpless feeling that nothing could be said or done in the face of such absolute composure as his wife maintained. But his son said: 'No wonder, father, Mr. Burleigh found your office too far down town. He didn't take an affecting adieu. I suppose; didn't allude to the fraternal relations existing between himself and the prudent member of the firm with whom he had been doing business?'"

The sarcastic emphasis he laid on prudent made Rose shiver. "I tell you," he went on, "Miss Burram's Charge has made a stir in this household."

His father had risen, and with a brief "Good night, all," he left the parlor. That was his way when he was annoyed, and that he was annoyed in this instance no one could dispute who heard him as he went through the hall inveighing against all women as gossips and mischief-makers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Sarah's prediction regarding Miss Burram's Charge spending every Sunday evening with Miss Burram's company proved correct, and though the Charge frequently got tired before it was signified to her, as well as she could retire, on the whole she rather enjoyed the privilege.

The brilliant illumination of dining-room and parlor was a pleasure in itself to the child, and she found much amusement in young Tounsell's insouciant remarks, especially about salads. She tried to remember them in order to tell Harriek, and she succeeded sufficiently to cause him many a hearty laugh; indeed, in repeating what she heard, Rachel looked at her with a smile, as if by her imitation of Tounsell's tones, she showed unusual histrionic talent, and Harriek looked at and listened to her with an admiration that he did not attempt to conceal. That which tried her was Burleigh's talk. He had always so much to say on what he called the great problems of the day, and he said it in such a very learned way, that Rachel neither understood nor remembered very much of it.

Thus, on one Sunday evening, when Burleigh was telling with unusual excitement about an article in one of the recent magazines, Rachel understood much more about it than any of the company. Miss Burram, happening to be at her, found her actually leaning forward in the intensity of her interest and with sparkling intelligence in her face, that lady felt perhaps her Charge was unwisely comprehending what was said. She hastened to say to Rachel: "You can retire."

Rachel had heard enough to tell Harriek, which she did the very next afternoon. "Somebody put it in a book," she said in her quaint way, "how a man hasn't any right when he's dying to say that his hand shouldn't be built on for hundreds and hundreds of years—and Mr. Burleigh was awful mad about it."

"Seems to me that 'about right' he said slowly. 'Supposing in the beginning of the world the folks as owned it and left it in their wills that there wasn't no buildings to be put up on the land they owned, where would the rest of the world be?'" "Oh, but Columbus discovered this new world since the old world was made, and Miss Burram said, and what Miss Burram's Charge said, and where Mr. Notner was seen, and how Mr. Herriek looked, and all the rest of the old women's gossip of Rentonville."

did, or somebody else did, make her house and she paid for it." Rachel thought she understood, and she found herself, when looking out at the bay from her window that night, wondering if the people could claim the water as they did the land, and as she prevented everybody from sailing upon it unless each one paid for the privilege as houses were paid for.

A week after, when something about this same subject came up in a reading lesson, and the teacher undertook to explain it to the class and to enforce a moral lesson thereby about the rights of property, Rachel, to the amazement of the class and the horrified astonishment of the staid, conservative teacher, sprang up in her seat, and said impulsively: "It isn't right for anybody to hold the land forever and ever, when nobody made the land; God made it and He made it for everybody."

The silence that followed her speech was appalling. Then the little Herriek girls laughed, and most of the class, following suit, laughed also. The teacher recovering a little said severely: "Rachel Minturn, you do not know what you are talking about; take your seat."

"I do know what I am talking about," answered Rachel, but with a stoutness of assertion that the teacher deemed absolute impudence, and she ordered one of the class to go for the Principal. She did not feel able to put down this little rebel.

And everybody looked with a new sort of horror at their daring classmate, and awaited the coming of the Principal with a kind of hushed breath. For Rachel, now that her spirit was aroused, the coming of the Principal had no terror; she had only said what she thought was the truth, and to tell the truth and to stand up for the truth, was what Tom had taught her to do. She would please him in the face of a dozen Principals and teachers and all the school in the bargain.

"Come to the front of the room," Rachel Minturn, said the teacher, when Miss Ashton entered the class, and Rachel obeyed the order. Walking through the rows of girls who were looking at her with various expressions of wonder and horror, to the almost total exclusion of any sympathy with her head thrown proudly back and her little figure stiffly erect, she stood before the Principal while the teacher told of her dreadful conduct.

Miss Ashton, wiser than her subordinate, saw that it was a case for explanation and reasoning, more than chiding or punishment; and she said: "I shall take Rachel with me to her private room and had a talk with her, but how much of whether she were convinced at all, Miss Ashton could not determine. Nor had she been able to see from the child where, or from whom she had imbibed such advanced ideas; not certainly from Miss Burram, the lady thought, judging from what she had heard of that lady, and Rachel had heard of that lady, and Rachel had far too careful and loyal a regard for Harriek's name in an atmosphere that was so evidently against all Harriek's notions."

"Well," said Miss Ashton at length, "tell your teacher that you are sorry for having spoken so."

such a large landholder, should actually have in her own household, and so near to herself, some one who is growing up with ideas exactly opposite."

"Where did the child get such notions?" asked Mr. Gedding. "Brought them with her from wherever she came," answered his son. Rose, seeing that with her father and brother were interested, ventured: "Yes, you think, Will, that she is spirited?"

"Who?" he asked mischievously. "Miss Burram? Yes, I think she has spirit enough for everybody in Rentonville."

"You know who I mean," said his sister pettishly, "and I defy you to deny now, that Miss Burram's Charge is intensely interesting."

"Yes," he answered speaking with mock gravity, "I think she is, and I think, further, that if she keeps on being so interesting, Rentonville people will not die of ennui for want of something to talk about."

Herriek had made up his mind to call upon Miss Burram; she had not visited his store for three weeks; she had not even seen Harriek with an order, nor had she given him any information—indeed that eccentric and superstitious mind was in too perturbed a state of mind herself to give her wanted heed to storing up information for Harriek. Harriek had not yet given word or sign that he had ever read her letter, and as Sarah said to Mrs. McElvain, every day made her more anxious, while every day made her more loath to ask him.

"If he'd even look at me," she said, "the way he done when he had me out sailing, but there's times, Mrs. McElvain, when he doesn't seem to see me and I right in front of him, I might hint at it in a sort of bias way to be sure, if he'd toss his cup, but he won't have anything to do with tennis since the night I told about it, Miss Burram out of his own free-leaves, Mrs. McElvain's only comfort was, 'Well, Sarah, have patience; don't force him, for no man wants to be forced by a woman, and by and by he'll come round.'"

"Yes, he'll come round," muttered Sarah, "after a body's spent waiting for him."

A THREAD OF PURE GOLD.

Uncle Richard is sitting near the window, with the wintry sunlight streaming over his white hair, illumining the kind old face bent over the children, who, clustered round his knee, are begging for a story. The voices get so tangled up with the thoughts, I catch a stray word or two, that, in despair, I lay down my pen and become an attentive listener to the conversation.

"Let it be a story of the war," Uncle, cries my boy-soldier, "and I'll bring an imaginary sword. But Julia objects."

"Tell us a ghost story, Uncle, please," she petitions, in an awed little voice. "What does Mary want?" asks Uncle Richard, lifting his five-year-old baby to his knee.

"Please tell me a 'tory' bout the Blessed Virgin," she answers, raising her eyes not unlike those of the painted Madonna hanging on the wall. Uncle Richard did not expect the reply. Religious stories are not in vogue at his desk, whereupon I direct my attention to my scattered papers. But I see his eyes travel through the window over the wide expanse of landscape with its dreary deriding of snow, looking all the while under the uncertain twilight with his eyes so well acquainted with his own life, and in that past, I ask as dreary, as he finds the story for which innocent babe is pleading. After while his eyes come back, and, following his arms around Mary, he says: "I am always telling stories of olden times and of olden times, and of ghosts to you and Will, Julia; Mary's time to-day."

"Oh! we don't mind, Uncle," in Julia, politely. "We like to hear any story." They draw nearer to the old man, and resting their heads on his knees gaze with wondering, trustful eyes, on his time-furrowed face.

"Once upon a time," he begins, "there was a big brick school where two boys, Dick and Harry, went to school."

"Didn't any other boys go?" Uncle "No," questions Will. "Why, yes, any number of them you are going to hear about the end of the world. They were taught by a Sister named Agnes. These Sisters wear caps with pretty frills, and underneath their faces look like angels."

"I didn't see any other boys go," Uncle "No," questions Will. "Why, yes, any number of them you are going to hear about the end of the world. They were taught by a Sister named Agnes. These Sisters wear caps with pretty frills, and underneath their faces look like angels."