

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

BY CHRISTINE FABER
CHAPTER III.

Gerald Thurston drove his be-trothed to Boston, and during the long drive in the early summer morning he was more in love with her than ever. The fresh, balmy air, the beauty of the surrounding country, the bright anticipations which filled her mind, the consciousness of her beauty, which she felt was never more perfect, all added to give a flow of spirits that was irresistibly bewitching to her companion. He could only look and listen and secretly chide himself for being so silent, but he pretended to be anxious about the horse, which was really a spirited young animal and one not altogether to be trusted, and she too selfishly absorbed in her own delight to care particularly about the reception of her mother's remarks.

There was quite a concourse of people at the depot, for the season of summer travel had set in, and Helen's bright eyes, always critically observed, rested in turn on each of the strangers while she waited for Gerald to get his ticket. There were some evidently country folk, and she became interested in contrasting them with the city people. Helen was an aristocrat by birth and education; one motion which denoted culture won her regard quicker than the costliest attire, if such were unaccompanied by the evidence of good breeding, and now as she saw Gerald returning to her she watched to see how his bearing compared with those about him. It was all that even she could desire, and it was with a glow of pride that she saw more than one stranger turn to look again at the tall, athletic, gentlemanly young fellow, whose plain clothes—and they were very plain, she acknowledged to herself—set upon him with as neat and becoming a grace as the more elegant and stylish apparel of the city men about him. She wondered, as she had wondered

hundreds of times before, whence Gerald had come or where he had been educated to give him the superior and cultured air which always characterized him; but she was as little able to answer her question now as she had been on previous occasions.

All that she knew of Gerald Thurston was that, five years before, he had come to the village of Eastbury with a letter of introduction to Mr. Robinson, the wealthy proprietor of a large factory; he was at that time about twenty-one years of age, and by his gentlemanly deportment, his good judgment in the business with which Mr. Robinson entrusted him, the superior education he seemed to possess, he won the respect, confidence, and in some instances the warm friendship of all the residents of the village. Accident had enabled him to render some service to Helen's father, and he, captivated by the young man's simple, manly bearing, took him at once to his heart, and only urging upon him the frequent hospitality of his home, but seeming to design an attachment between him and his daughter. From such an attachment the young stranger shrank, but won by a beauty the most exquisite he had ever seen in woman, and manners which appeared to be those of an angel, he was fatally caught at last. For Helen it had been easy to favor her father's design, the high-bred air of the stranger, his perfect gentlemanliness, his magnificent physique, were sufficient passport to her heart, even if they had not been supported by the fact that, owing to her seclusion, he was her first suitor.

She was aware, however, that her father knew the young man's antecedents, for on one occasion Mr. Brower had said to her:

"I know everything about Gerald now; he has told me himself voluntarily, and while there are strange, and even unpleasant, circumstances connected with his past life, they are circumstances which place his character in a most creditable light. I am quite satisfied with him, and I agree with him in thinking it is best to say nothing of these things to you at present, my dear; there is really no necessity. I am satisfied, and that is enough."

Something of all this was recurring to Helen's mind as she watched her lover's advance, but the whistle of the approaching train was heard, and the people about her began to exchange their adieux. Gerald escorted her on board, to be sure that her seat was comfortable, and to thrust in her hand a pretty little basket of fruit and a paper. By so doing he narrowly escaped being forced to accompany her; as it was, he had to make a huge spring, and then he stood by the side of the track, and watched her bright face looking out at him from the window until it became a dim speck. Could he have known, could he have foreseen their next place of meeting, he would have wished that it was his dead and mangled body which looked up to her from the side of the railroad track.

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Burchill's was the chef-d'œuvre of a little boarding-house. Pretty, tasteful, embowered amid trees, its clean, white-painted exterior attracted even the notice of strangers; within everything was in harmony—from good, practical, warm-hearted Mrs. Burchill, her cheery, old-fashioned, good-natured father-in-law, and her graceful, lady-like daughter, down to the large, healthy, willing servant girl. Her

boarders were few, owing to the limited accommodation of her house, and her own much to be commended but unusually rare anxiety about each one's special comfort. Thus, when Miss Balk called and stated her desire to make one of Mrs. Burchill's house, she was met with a little doubtful shake of the head from the good lady herself.

"I don't know how I could manage it, ma'am. There's Mr. Thurston, he has the best bedroom; I wouldn't disturb him on no account; and there's father, I wouldn't put him out of his room, and—"

"I do not wish you to put any one out of his room," said Miss Balk, bridling with anger, though her words were uttered in her usual so-manner. "I only want you to say at once whether you can accommodate me for the six months of Miss Brower's absence."

Large in form and practical in mind as Mrs. Burchill was, it must be acknowledged that she was somewhat afraid of this grim woman, whose severe face and stringent tongue had caused fear on previous occasions to more than one village dame; then, also, she felt in secret not a little honored by this choice of her house rather than a more stylish and wealthy one for Miss Balk was said to have ample means, while, in addition, to be visited from the Brower household was an honor in itself; the Browsers lived in such strict seclusion, and held themselves even in their comparative poverty, so much above their neighbors.

"Well, ma'am, I'll be able to manage it if my daughter is willing to give up her room to you; she can share mine. She'll be home from school directly, if you don't mind waiting," and the best chair in the little parlor was drawn forward, and Miss Balk bidden to seat herself.

At that instant a young girl was entering the house. Mrs. Burchill's quick ear caught the sound and stepping into the passage-way, she called, pleasantly:

"Mildred!"

To which was responded a pleasantly spoken:

"Yes, mother; I am coming."

In another moment Mrs. Balk found herself introduced to a tall, graceful girl whose clear, frank gray eyes met Miss Balk's bold, piercing gaze more undauntedly than most people did. The young girl—she seemed scarcely sixteen, though unusually tall for her years—looked grave when her mother stated the business for which she had summoned her, and she hesitated as if holding some mental debate.

Her mother watched her anxiously for, to tell the truth, because of the reasons before given she was anxious to oblige Miss Balk.

"Would it be a great accommodation to you, Miss Balk?" and the clear eyes seemed to go through the cold, hard, indented face.

Barbara, who was already standing, drew herself up very stiffly.

"I do not wish to be considered as begging for board here; I am not restricted to Mrs. Burchill's house, I am sure."

And the scant, black, brocaded mantle was gathered more closely round her arms in preparation for departure.

"Oh, don't take it in that light, ma'am," interposed Mrs. Burchill, in some affright. "Mildred meant nothing by what she said, and I am sure she'll be willing to give up her room; it will only be for a few months. Won't you, dear?"

"If you wish me to do so, mother, yes; but Miss Balk has not seen my room; perhaps it will not suit her."

It was evident that there was a wish in the heart of the girl that it would not suit.

Her wish was not gratified, however; the room suited, and would have done so had it been much less than the fair-sized, very neatly furnished apartment that it was, for Miss Balk had her private reasons, despite her assumption of independence, for desiring to board with Mrs. Burchill.

To Gerald Thurston's disgust, he found his prediction of Mrs. Burchill's bad taste fulfilled. Miss Balk's angular form, arrayed in skim black silk, directly confronted him at the table, and her bold black eyes riddled his face, as he had expressed it.

His salutation of her was perfectly courteous, but extremely brief, and he bent immediately to his plate.

On Miss Balk's right hand sat Mrs. Burchill's old, cheery little father-in-law. His cheeks were as plump and rosy as the soft and bright hued peach that lay upon her plate, and his small blue eyes twinkled as brightly as they might have done twenty years before. His whole neat clean appearance bespoke the affectionate care of his daughter-in-law's hand, and his good-humored countenance was a pleasant contrast to the straight, stiff, masculine-looking woman at his side. With his old-country notions of politeness, he thought it incumbent upon him to devote himself to this new boarder.

His daughter's table, and Miss Balk found herself the recipient of attentions which, well meant though they were, were so ludicrous that Mildred, on the opposite side of the table, became almost convulsed from suppressed laughter; even Thurston had to look up, the little old gentleman's speeches were so irresistibly funny.

"Oh, ma'am, if you were in the old country your appetite would get a wonderful recruiting. You're not eating a bit. Ain't I watching you?" as Barbara uttered a dignified disclaimer against receiving any more upon her plate. "And you'd grow more lissome if you were there; you

wouldn't be so stiff in the back—you'd—"

There was an explosive sound from the other side of the table. Mildred seemed to be making violent efforts to suppress a fit of coughing; in reality, it was laughter. Her sense of the ridiculous was so keen that it frequently exceeded her control, and she was obliged to turn her head quite aside and bury her face in her handkerchief. The humorous muscles of Thurston's countenance also twitched violently, and the more so that the poor little old man, unconscious of having said anything to provoke mirth, and unsuspecting that it was laughter and not coughing had been the cause of the interruption, was again devoting himself to Miss Balk. She, however, sharper than her companion at the table, divined perfectly the cause of the pretended coughing and the reason of the amused look on Gerald's face, and she inwardly fumed with indignation. Drawing herself up with such rigidity that it might well justify the poor old gentleman's opinion of the stiffness of her back, she dashed her plate from her and turned upon him the most terrible look of her baneful eyes. Her anger was quite lost upon him, however; he was too well contented with himself and with the rest of the world, and he had too good natured a disposition to take rebuffs while there was the shadow of an excuse for declining to accept the same; so he simply put his plate a little further away than her impatient hand had already dashed it and said, while he looked on from the steaming dish of fried potatoes:

"There's no use in life, ma'am, in being so vehement," with an emphasis that was laughable on the middle syllable of the last word; "a little coolness in everything is better, and if there's one charge—"

But Miss Balk did not wait to hear the charge; she hastened out to the front piazza to cool her indignation and to debate with herself whether she should remain in a house where she was likely, through that stupid old man, to become an object of ridicule.

The stupid old man, finding the stiff lady gone, was about to address the rest of his remarks to his now openly laughing granddaughter and the broadly smiling Thurston, when a sudden comprehension of the real state of affairs entered his mind.

"I wasn't the cause of sending her away from the table, was I?" he asked, with his fork half-way to his mouth, and his ruddy face a most amusing picture of alarm. "I'll go this minute and ask her pardon."

"Don't," said his granddaughter, now giving way unreservedly to her mirth, but at the same time starting up to prevent such a catastrophe as she feared the threatened apology might cause; she felt that it surely would not quell the flame of Miss Balk's wrath.

At that instant Mrs. Burchill entered from the kitchen, where her duties generally detained her long after the commencement of each meal, and she saw from the embarrassed and afflicted air of her father-in-law and the manner of her daughter that something unusual had occurred. The old gentleman gave his account, a truthful one, but one so amusing in his manner of telling it that even Thurston's hearty laugh rang out.

The good woman was quite distressed; she feared that Miss Balk had been seriously offended, and in her perplexity she was about to go out herself to Barbara, and in her simple fashion endeavor to apologize; but Mildred had crossed to her and was now standing with her hand on her mother's arm.

"Mother," she said in a voice peculiarly quiet and firm that it attracted Thurston's attention, "it is not your place to offer any apology to this woman; she came to us of her own accord, and if she is too obtuse or too narrow-hearted to see that poor grandfather's attentions are kindly meant, why we must leave her to the unhappiness of her own ill-humor. Don't look so distressed, grandfather; you did nothing wrong, and it was a shame to subject you to a moment's anxiety on account of this person."

"God bless you, Mildred!" That was the old man's fond diminutive for his granddaughter; and he took one of her hands and stroked it fondly. Mrs. Burchill, convinced of the truth of her daughter's words, a conviction to which she was much helped by her own strong affection for her father-in-law, said, quietly:

"I believe you are right, my child; but I'll change her place at the table."

Gerald Thurston had not withdrawn his eyes from Mildred. His gaze followed her even when she returned to her unfinished breakfast. One reason of his marked attention at this time was that he never had heard Miss Burchill speak at such length and in such a manner before. Though for two years a boarder in her mother's house, owing to his business cares and his beautiful betrothed, which left him little time out of the factory, his own room, or Miss Brower's parlor, he had never seen more of Miss Burchill than to seek her at table, where she never spoke unless directly addressed, or to pass her in the village street, when she returned his graceful bow by a modest and brief salutation. Indeed, when he came to Mrs. Burchill's as a child, a little school-girl, when he should notice at all, would be a fatherly manner; but the little school-girl had been as coy of approach in his presence save when she demanded as was now the case, the man's attention.

"Ob, kill me!" the voice sobbed. "I can't stand it!"

Schultz caught a certain cadence in the voice; it was a far off echo, such as we hear in the stranded sea-shells of the Irish infection.

"When did you 'whisper' last?" he asked.

"It's many Basters ago, worst luck!" was the faint answer.

ness of tone which had most attracted his attention, and now as he looked at her without fear of being perceived—she was directing all her attention to her plate—she was surprised to find himself mentally deluged from her features—from the poise of her stately head—from his remembrance of her voice, of her kindly speech to her grandfather, a character so firm and frank and generous that it excited his admiration.

He smiled as he caught himself in his task, and thought, then, having finished his breakfast, he left the table. "What would Helen say if she knew to what my morning cogitations have been tending?"

And then he smiled again as he felt how little cause for fear Helen would have, even if she did know, for never was heart more firmly caught in beauty's toils than that of poor, doomed Gerald Thurston.

TO BE CONTINUED

A PAGE FROM LIFE

By Maurice Francis Egan

"If ever I get home," said Schultz, at the worst of the Argonne drive. "I'll try to be a good friend of the Lord. And if I find my buddy, Jim McGarry, I'll say the Rosary every day of my life; and if I don't find him, I'll say it all the same for his soul."

Schultz was from New York city, and McGarry from Cleveland. They had gone through horrors together; and Schultz when he made this resolution was still in the midst of horrors. The relief had not come.

"Fritz" was making a cave of fire, with narrowing walls, for the men of the battalion in which Schultz served; and these narrowing walls were of fire, too, with fearful bursts through them of flames that brought death, and what was more terrible than death.

"I haven't felt worse," Schultz confessed, "since I saw those frog children running away from the bombs in the dinky towns where that night frog woman lived."

"Frog" was the name that Schultz applied to our allies, the French, not in derision, not in condescension, but simply because in the army no thing had its right name. But nobody wanted to think of the Argonne horrors or to describe them, at least, at second-hand. The cave narrowed; the fiery walls seemed about to fall inward; and Schultz saw a soldier hurled from somewhere into space, and then he fell fifty yards from Schultz's dugout.

"It's death, anyhow," said Schultz. "I may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. I am glad I whispered last week when the chaplain came around."

So he crept out of his shelter; he knew Fritz saw him, for the fusillade on his spot redoubled. He kept on, and with difficulty dragged the man to shelter. It was done with perfect simplicity, as if it were swimming through a calm lake. The man brought in seemed to be hardly a human being; he was black and bloody.

"It would be a kind thing to finish me with your pistol," he whispered. "I think I have lost my legs, and there is no chance of a doctor hereabouts; we're cut off. But, say, 'twas fine of you to do it! I am going fast. I'll trouble you for a drink of water, if it's handy; and there's a message in my inside pocket for my people at home."

The voice was husky. Schultz could hardly hear the words through his thick woolen helmet; he himself looked like a gnome, for he had not had time to have a wash for several days and nights.

"Don't give up yet," he said. "You're out of the worst of it. I am in the worst of it. It's a doctor I ought to have had days ago. I am all in, and death will be welcome."

"Be cheerful," said Schultz. "As soon as Fritz eases up a little, I can get you into our Hotel de Louche, the best in the trenches; for if we haven't soap, we've water. The doctor is awful busy, but I'll find him."

The groan from the shapeless mass thrilled Schultz, accustomed to such sounds as he was.

"You're suffering?"

A stifled sob was the only answer. Schultz looked at the sky; it was full of danger. Well, he could die only once, and he had seen the chaplain last week.

He raised the mutilated man on his back and crawled over the rough and calcined earth—from which green things could scarcely spring again—and made for the cell of a trench which he called his own. Naturally, he was afraid, especially when the hot blood of his burden dripped on his wrist. He had never winced in battle—Schultz—but the image of the half-dead creature he bore filled his mind. He visualized it unconsciously; for, unfortunately for a soldier, he had imagination. He ran with his mask down; the wind had turned, and by this time he had learned to know the smell of the mustard gas. He seemed to tread through burning fire; he fought all fear, all danger, in his determination to reach the goal. At last he laid the man down in the lower bunk of the recess in the trench room.

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"It's not for the likes of you" (Schultz's mother had been an Irish woman) "to be talking of taking your own life. The poor creatures think out themselves are different but you are a right-hander, if I'm not mistaken."

"My name's McGarry," breathed the wounded man.

"Jim?"

"James Joseph McGarry."

"It can't be!" Schultz looked closely at the wounded man.

"There's no nurse; we've been under fire so long that the nurses are all with the wounded below in the dug-out they call the hospital; but we've warm water, which we haven't had for days; and there are some clean towels. I'll do what I can till I get the Captain to call the doctor by telephone. And I'll have the chaplain come, and you can relieve your soul by 'whispering' this blessed minute. Do you know who I am? Keep alive, man; it's your 'buddy'—Charlie Schultz."

The hand of the wounded man slightly tightened on Schultz's.

"You'll find," he breathed, "the set of fresh underwear in the oilcloth bag under my vest; I've kept it for you."

"There was no more. Tears started to Schultz's eyes; he almost sobbed himself.

"The best God ever made!" he said. "And he knew what it was that I would want most when he found me. The Lord be good to him!"

Willing hands, with great tenderness, did what they could for the unconscious man. The most skilled of them dared not touch the mangled mass that had been his legs.

The chaplain came first—a tall, slim young man, on whom the unspeakable terrors of war had left no trace, except in his eyes, which beamed his cheerful mouth. His eyes for many months had not smiled.

"He'll want to 'whisper' Father, as soon as he comes to," said Schultz. "In the meantime I'll get the stretcher; he's well wrapped up."

"The way to the hospital is the way of death tonight," said the priest.

"He'll die if he is left here."

"But you—and the others?"

"We'll give him his chance."

McGarry gained consciousness after the priest had given him a restorative.

"And now," said the chaplain, cheerfully, "you'll just 'whisper' as well as you can, and I'll give you absolution."

The two were alone. The turmoil, the roar of death and destruction were heard outside; inside was that peace which surpasseth all understanding. Schultz and three soldiers entered; the priest gave them his blessing, as they bore their comrade out.

"Bless you again! Say an act of contrition." He raised his right hand. "It's a solemn hope."

"You're going the same way to the hospital yourself, Father. And if Fritz knocks us over, we'll be in good company."

The priest looked out into the fiery night; he recalled rather whimsically a line from a poem he knew—Tennyson's "Into the Mouth of Hell." "But out of this hell," he thought, "there is a glorious redemption."

The battalion stood against all odds; the improvised hospital was safe; the bearers of McGarry reached it, as men wearing some strange pledge of immunity.

"My mother," said Schultz, "would have remarked that we had eaten the fern seed of the Little People, so that Fritz couldn't see us."

"Your mother, Charlie Schultz," answered McGarry (both his legs were now off at the knee; he was waxen in color, but he had a red and quick tongue)—"your mother would have said something about the medal of Our Lady of Lourdes she gave you; and something, too, about the scapulars the old frog woman put over your head."

"The Lord forgive me!" said Schultz. "But in these days you can only fight and leave the rest to God! The old frog woman was here today when you were asleep. The captain brought her in. She told her story to him; he speaks the frog line. It's her story's made of me. When Fritz's bomb knocked her house and garden together, and frightened her three cows off—'twas all the poor old thing had to live on—she seemed killed entirely. Fritz, when he went over the ground for the first time, didn't know that she had hidden the cows under the church. You see, it was after you were lost, and we'd been three weeks in the dinky village. Well, I found the cows, and a fat and myself uncovered the bit of a stable where the hay was, and we milked them for her (a bit of shrapnel had hurt the old creature's hand). It was a pleasure to do all we could for her; for she seemed like as if she was everybody's grandmother."

"When we moved away she was quite comfortable-like, and she brought scapulars when we were leaving, and the Protestant boys couldn't put on too many of them. I am the only one of the lot back here; but she came today through shot and shell, and told the captain to give me the note in the frog line I have here. When the war is over I am to give it to Colonel Bouigny, who is on some commission or other in New York. The captain said the colonel's father used to own the castle over yonder that is in ruins. The old lady spoke of the colonel as

'Oorree,' and cried; she was his nurse once. And she kissed me on both cheeks—the captain kept quite stern-like and didn't laugh. She called me her 'Fez,' or something like that—what strange talk they do have! But I was mighty glad that the boys and I saved her from starvation. It seems as if every good old woman in the world was having it done for her."

"It means," said McGarry, whose forbears were from the north of Ireland, "that this Colonel Bouigny will have a job for you; and badly you'll need it, with a whole army of us getting home after the war and wanting work. As for me" (he looked at the foot of the bed and choked)—"as for me, I'm done for."

He turned his face to the wall.

"And the likes of him losing his legs," thought Schultz, "and thinking first of the clean underwear I needed! God forgive me!"

Schultz went back to his dugout, and the tears of the helpless—the grateful helpless—flowed down his cheeks. The call for another day's bloody work came. The drive was resumed. The next day General Foch declared the armistice; on that last day Schultz lost his right hand.

Colonel Bouigny received the battered-looking young soldier, still in khaki, with what might be called embarrassment. He had read his old nurse's note.

"Ah," he said, "dear old Clotilde! How we all loved her! In helping her you have helped the very flower of the old women of France. You deserve the Croix de Guerre. Now," he added, "I have a big house on Long Island; I have an American wife there, too; and, if you like, you may take care of my big house winter and summer. You will be well paid—Clotilde would wish that," he smiled. "A man with one hand will not find it easy to get a job at once, and the process of reconstruction is very long. For my work, you will need only quick eyes, a good memory, and a lively mind."

Schultz's heart jumped. He had been rather "blue." How could an entry clerk work effectively with his right hand gone? At best, as Colonel Bouigny had said, the process of "reconstruction" would take considerable time; his mind gloomed at the thought of idle waiting; but presently he said:

"The best man for you, colonel, would be a 'buddy' mine—the best ever! And if a one-handed man is the right sort for your work, a no-legged man would be even better."

The colonel had watched his face and read his thoughts.

"What did this pal do for you, mon brave?"

McGarry fired up.

"What we all most longed for in those filthy days was a suit of clean things—you don't know how much!"

"Yes, I do," said the colonel. "I was in the trenches, too, before I lost a lung, and they sent me over here. Yes, I do!" he added with emphasis.

"Then you understand. This 'buddy' of mine carried for weeks a suit of underwear for me in an anti-septic bag; he—"

Schultz broke down—"he—well, he lost his legs, but he kept my clothes."

The colonel paused a moment.

"I have a place for two," he said. "There's the lodge. That might suit the legless man. My old keeper was killed, and his wife and children will not live alone there. Yes, yes, a legless man would be better than anybody. It is arranged. There will be room for two. Report on Monday."

And the colonel warmly shook the hand of Schultz.

"The Lord bless the old frog woman!" said Schultz.

"Comment?" said Colonel Bouigny.—Ave Marie.

A FRENCH CATHOLIC POLITICAL PARTY

Unofficial, yet persistent, are the rumors that come out of France telling that the formation of a Catholic party is imminent. The projectors of the idea have been made bold by happenings in Italy, where Catholics have decided to throw their united strength into the pan of god government and thus try to restore the balance now leaning to radicalism. There is only one sentiment in this regard, and that is hope that the rumor flows from fact. If French Catholics were again to settle back contentedly into the role of the repressed, their colonialism throughout the world would be sadly disillusioned. We can believe that before the war the Catholics of France so totally considered themselves a helpless minority that had no choice but to accept the persecution heaped upon them. Now there is no gain-saying that the war has proved that Catholicism has a vigorous life in France. If from this day it does not assert itself in molding French official opinion, French Catholics will quickly slip from the estimation in which the world generally holds them. Silence, as a protest, is commendable as long as it does not mean the encouragement and spread of the evil against which it is directed. This has been the trouble in France. Unable to reconcile themselves to the government that existed, the prominent Catholics preferred to remain entirely aloof from it, rather than to father a movement which would prune it all of its evil angles. But the Catholics of France have redeemed themselves a thousand times on the battlefield. They showed

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