

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

BY CHRISTINE FABER CHAPTER I.

Eastbury folk gave to the sole living member of the Brower family the same high regard they had given to her once prominent father. The tradition of former wealth still clung to her and her own exclusiveness did the rest; also, that she was a young girl and a girl of unusual beauty, contributed much to the popular feeling for her in a country town where there were no rivals.

On this summer morning, seated on the low sill of the cottage window, she looked as fair and sweet as the roses which grew within touching distance in the garden below. She was strewing flower petals about her and humming a lively tune evidently in accord with her gay spirits. But the tune was suddenly stopped and she herself in some sense shocked as there sounded from the depths of the little room:

"And so you are going?" The speaker was a tall, masculine looking woman with a form that showed angles instead of curves—angles everywhere, as if they were wantonly made.

Her face matched her form; hard, pallid, cold, indented with lines which were not the effect of age, and made repellent by a wide, rigid mouth and scanty, straight, black hair. The only redeeming feature of this uncomely face were the eyes, but even they, black and lustrous as they were, caused fear and repulsion rather than admiration. Her voice was deeper than the ordinary feminine tones, and there was a slowness and distinctness about her words painfully unnatural, being in such strange contrast to her quick, nervous motions.

The girl sprang from her seat: "Yes, I am going, and why should I not go, Barbara Balk?" her face flushing hotly, and her whole manner showing disdainful defiance.

But Miss Balk did not depart from her uncompromising attitude, nor from her painfully slow and distinct tones. "Because there is no legitimate reason for you to go, and because, if you do go, you will return more filled with vanity and folly than you are now. These are the reasons why you should not go, Helen Brower."

The girl laughed saucily. "Do you think I am going to resign the only chance I ever had, and perhaps ever shall have, of seeing a great city like New York? Don't be a fool, Barbara, and set up those antiquated notions of yours against the customs of civilization and good society. I expect to return knowing a good deal more than I know now, for you may be sure I shall keep my eyes and ears open, and what if I do come back with better taste about my own dress, and disposed to give even you some ideas about your ugly old costume?"

What do you say to that, Barbara?" and she laughed heartily. Miss Balk waited in haughty silence for the mirth to subside; then, without a change in her countenance or the slightest alteration in her unnatural manner of speaking, she replied:

"You are a vain fool, Helen Brower, and you'll come to grief through that vanity of yours before you die, mark my words. Where you're going now you'll run your head into a noose of your own making, and you'll break somebody's heart, but it won't be your own—oh, no! it will not be your own."

A grim smile played for an instant about Miss Balk's thing, pallid lips. Helen began to pout. "I do not know why you say such things to me; I am not beholden to you, Barbara Balk, and when my father died he did not charge you to be my mentor, and I shall not submit to such dictation," shaking her head and straightening her slight figure.

"Better for you your father left somebody to be your mentor. But it makes little difference; your tetter will be short; faces like yours do too much mischief to reign long; and now, having told you to your face truths that other people will say behind your back, I should like to ask you a question on my own account. What do you intend shall become of me during your absence?"

"You?" with an accent of intense astonishment. "Why, you will stay here, of course, and keep house as usual."

"Oh, indeed! And entertain the rats, I suppose, that make nightly feasts in the garret over my head? Thank you, but I purpose doing no such thing. You have said you would be afraid to live here alone. I see no reason why I should have more courage."

"Why, Barbara, you are forty years old, and I am only nineteen, and you have lived here and kept house for papa ever so many years. Of what can you possibly be afraid?"

"Not of abduction, certainly, you would say if your prudence hadn't checked you," replied Miss Balk, with a sarcasm that made her unbecomingly and painful. "But, nevertheless, I decline to perform the part of hostess to myself, and during the half year of your absence I shall board with Mrs. Burchill."

"Mrs. Burchill!" There was amazement and dismay in Miss Bower's exclamation. "Yes; Mrs. Burchill. Does it astonish and displease you? Are you afraid that I shall tell Gerald Thurston disparaging things of you;

that I shall describe to him your vanity and selfishness; that I shall tell how your very gentleness of manner, which he and everybody else admires, is only another fibrous of your vanity; that there is no genuine kindness in him, and that he'll never know until he marries you how little real heart you have? Bah! don't be afraid, I shall not tell him; if he is silly enough to be caught by your pretty face, let him put up with the consequence."

"If we were both men, Barbara Balk, I'd strike you where you stand," and the flaming cheeks and eyes and clinched hands of the speaker evinced a very desperate inclination to enforce her threat regardless of sex.

Miss Balk was not in the least dismayed. She folded her long, bony, scantily-covered arms, and looked down scornfully on the indignant young beauty.

"Keep your wrath, Helen," she said; "you'll only waste it on me." But the girl's sudden anger had changed as suddenly to passionate grief; she flung herself on the floor and sobbed.

"Oh, papa! why did you insist that I should keep this woman with me?" Miss Balk was as little moved by the sight of her companion's tears as she had been by her anger, and waiting only for the sobs to become sufficiently subdued for her own voice to be heard, she said:

Your father insisted that I should remain with you because he knew that I was the only one who would tell you the truth about yourself. And now, you'd better not cry any more, but just face what you can't get away from; that's me. You'll never get away from me till one or the other of us is taken by death. If you attempt to leave me, I'll follow you; I'll haunt you, and I'll publish the story of your broken promise to your dying father until you are shamefully disgraced. I won't disturb you while you are on this visit, even if you should make it longer than the six months you say you will stay; but you must write regularly, and there's Gerald Thurston coming in."

There had been no change in the tone of her voice, nor in her slow manner of speech, as she uttered the last words so that the weeping beauty on the floor did not immediately catch their purport; when she said, the old fashioned knocker was already sounding, and Miss Balk had gone, with her heavy step, to open the door. Helen hastily gathered herself up, and fled into another room.

CHAPTER II.

Manly was the most fitting term with which to describe the young fellow whom Miss Balk, with grim politeness, was ushering in. He had neither the regularity of feature nor the richness of complexion to be styled handsome, but he had the strong, athletic physique and manly bearing which go to women's hearts far quicker than mere beauty of face.

He seated himself with graceful familiarity to await Miss Brower's coming, and without again addressing Miss Balk; there was never much intercourse between these two, owing to a settled antipathy on the part of each. And Miss Balk, having brushed with her apron the window sill which Helen had littered with flower petals, went in grim silence from the room.

Miss Brower's tear stains had been carefully washed away, and her curls put back into their proper becoming fashion. Her face with its smiles and its blushes and its expression of arch surprise and delight, looked to Thurston, as she came gracefully into the room, the prettiest sight he had ever seen. Nor did he attempt to conceal his admiration; it flashed out in the glow of pleasure which suffused his own face and in the eager and yet half deferential way in which he rose, and extended both hands to greet her.

"I did not expect you until—until tonight," she said, with a pretty assumption of bashfulness, and an attempt to withdraw the little white hands which were held so firmly.

"Nor did I expect myself to have the pleasure of so early a visit; but Mr. Robinson gave me a couple of hours this morning in return for my detention last evening, and I came over to talk a little further about this matter of your going away."

She gave her head an impatient toss. "One would think I was going to New Zealand, or South Africa, or I don't know where, the way you and Barbara Balk go on about my going. I declare it is too bad. Here's Barbara making my life perfectly miserable, and now you—"

She stopped suddenly, and let her tears have their way sufficiently to make her eyes and long, dark, exquisite eyelashes glisten; but there she stopped them, for if allowed to brim over they would probably make her nose red and spoil her interesting appearance.

Her lover became grave and concerned; emotion in Helen, and that emotion caused by himself, was like a dagger stab to him.

"It is not possible," he said, "that woman has dared to question or reprove any of your plans, or—"

"It is possible, she interrupted. "Indeed, there are times when she makes me wish I was lying with papa."

Now was an appropriate time for her tears to flow, even if they did make her pretty nose a little red; accordingly, she let a very few drops trickle effectually down her cheeks. The young fellow became desperate. "Helen," he said, "that prom-

ise made to your dying father was not meant to bind you after your marriage. Marry me now, before you go away, and Miss Balk—well I understand that she has sufficient means to provide another home for herself."

"Marry you, and papa dead only three months! Surely, Gerald, you cannot mean that? Year, at least, I must have; I could not put off my mourning sooner."

A strange feeling passed over the young fellow at her last words. Was his idol not all he painted her? Was this beautiful exterior, this gracious gentleness which made her so charming, only gliding after all? He released her hands and looked anxiously down at her. Never was there a more perfect picture of womanly beauty and modesty than she at that moment presented. The timid, downcast air she had assumed, the tears still upon her cheeks, the heaving of her breast as if from inward sobs, all combined to exert an influence which honest Gerald Thurston could no more resist than he could stem the tide of a madly rushing river.

"A year then, Helen," he said, taking her hands again. "But only a year, and for half that time, at least, you will be free from Barbara Balk. You told me the other night she was not going with you."

"No; she will board with Mrs. Burchill."

"With Mrs. Burchill! There will be the devil to pay! Beg your pardon, Helen, but I was surprised into the profanity. What, in the name of all that's wicked, put it into her head to go there?"

"I don't know, unless it is because you are there."

"Why, she hates me as his Satanic majesty is said to hate the sight of a cow!"

"Well, it's owing to some perversity of hers," said Helen a little impatiently, as if she was desirous of changing the subject; "though," she continued, "I shall be rid of her for six months and you, Gerald, will have her."

"Yes, with a vengeance. I wonder if Mrs. Burchill will have the tact to place her opposite me at table? I don't believe I could stand those eyes of hers; they'd have me riddled in less than half the time you are to be away."

"I thought you came over to talk about my journey? Here is a half hour gone, and you have not begun to discuss it yet."

She spoke in a light, playful tone, but even her lover detected the impatient and dissatisfaction for the concession of which that tone had been assumed.

"Yes," he said gravely. "I want to have my mind quite clear on every matter connected with you, yourself have given me this right to a knowledge of all your actions, have you not? And he touched for an instant the ring which sparkled on her finger."

"Yes," she answered, archly; "to a knowledge, but not to a control of my actions yet."

Without seeming to notice her reply, he resumed: "This family in New York, whom you are going to visit—comprising, I think you told me, the father, mother, and two daughters—are they wealthy?"

"Very. Magnificent house, their own carriage, yearly trip to Europe, and all that," manifesting an enthusiasm in her description which struck a sort of chill to her lover.

"How is it these people having such ample means of entertaining you—there was an almost imperceptible sarcasm in his tone; but, faint as it was, it somewhat disconcerted Helen, and dashed for a moment the glow with which she would have given further details—'have never tendered an invitation to you before?'"

"They have. I thought I told you some time ago." Her eyes distended in astonishment at his ignorance of what, to do her justice, she really supposed he had known, and she continued, eagerly, "Why, Mr. Tillostson was the best friend papa ever had; they were at college together, and when papa became so reduced that he had to come here from Boston and live, right after the death of my mamma when I was a very little girl, Mr. Tillostson offered to place papa in business again, and to send me away to school with his own daughters; but papa was so spirited and proud he would not accept either offer; he preferred to live here in this plain way, and to educate me himself. The only thing that he regretted was that he couldn't send me abroad for a music, but even that he himself taught me very well; at least you, who have heard fine musicians, do not find fault with my execution."

"No; it pleases me," he answered, with a preoccupied air, and then he turned away and seemed to be looking very intently at the fragrant little garden lying almost on a level with the low open windows.

"Why don't you continue your catechism?" she asked, after waiting a moment, and watching him with a puzzled air.

He turned to her quickly. "All that you have told me is but a detail of Mr. Tillostson's kindness to your father; there is no account of courtesy to you from the ladies of the family."

was sent immediately that they heard of papa's death, for, owing to their protracted stay in Europe, they did not hear of it until a fortnight ago. They are also the more urgent for my acceptance of this invitation, as both daughters are to be married in a couple of months, and I am, in some measure, to take their place for some time after their departure. I suppose if there was a son in the family you would like to forbid my going," she continued saucily.

"I should like to forbid it now," he said, very gravely, and placing his hand on her arm.

"I declare you are too bad, Gerald; you forget that I have never been to New York, and that I have no society here, and that—and that—"

Falling to find another cause of reproach, she was obliged to leave her sentence in its ambiguous, unfinished form, but he completed it:

"And that you are pretty, and would like to have New York admirers. Yes, I know it all, Helen; and I suppose I ought to remember that you are a woman, and a very young woman at that, and I ought not to be too hard upon you—nor shall I; but listen to me, and bear with me if I speak very seriously."

He took her hands again, and tried to look down into her eyes, but he could only see the white lids fringed by their long, dark lashes, for she kept her eyes down.

Mr. Robinson seems to be much pleased with me, and he hints of giving me a most responsible position than the one I now hold. He is hard and close with his employees, you know, and it requires peculiar management to suit him; but I have succeeded so far, and I have no doubt of continuing to do so, so long as I pursue a strictly honest and straightforward course. Then there is something else—a great hope which may be fulfilled; and if it should be, you as my wife shall be as rich as these Tillostsons are."

"What do you mean?"

He had no difficulty now in looking down into her eyes; they were lifted to his, bright with curiosity and expectation. Again he experienced that unpleasant feeling which had assailed him in the earlier part of the interview, a feeling akin to distrust of his beautiful betrothed, and again, as on that previous occasion, a longer look at the exquisite face disarmed him. He proceeded:

"I cannot tell you, nor must you seek to know, for it may be only a false hope after all. I can hardly tell why I spoke of it to you at this time unless I thought it might moderate your eagerness to go away just now. Helen—his tones changed, becoming quick and somewhat impassioned—"if you knew what I have suffered in my past life from the want of affection, you would hardly blame me for my apparently strange and unreasonable fears now. I have given my whole heart to you, and if you should prove false!"

As if in his imagination he were realizing that of which he spoke, he flung her hands from him and began to pace the room. Helen, surprised and alarmed, watched him. But his proxy of jealousy or distrust, or whatever it might have been, passed and he turned to her penitent and even a little humbled.

"Forgive me. I have frightened you; but when you know my past, as you shall know it one day, you will understand and pity me. There, look up, bonny love, and tell me when you shall start. I am to drive you to Boston, you know, and to see you safely on board the train; and you are to write every week; and you are to be very careful about those New York admirers, for I don't want you jealous; and you are to be very anxious about Miss Balk and myself as to how we shall get on in the same house together, and—"

"Stop! you are stunning me with this nonsense," and one little white hand was placed over his mouth. She was pacified and happy, and he was neither, but she did not know that.

TO BE CONTINUED

THROUGH SAINT ANTHONY

Lily Drake, sixteen, pretty, bright and affectionate, although not of the household of a saint, had attended a Catholic school because her mother liked the gentle, refined manners of the Sisters. Some years before a great sorrow had befallen her home; she had lost her father, not by death, but by a quiet separation of her parents. There was only Howard, her eighteen-year-old brother, and herself; and now her father had sent the boy to college.

Pretty Mrs. Drake went out constantly and entertained a great deal. Lily realized that it was her mother's extravagance and love of pleasure that had caused the quarrel ending in the separation. It was all so queer, so lonely! Why could they not be together again? Her mother was a prominent figure in society, but poor Lily was thinking just now that she would just as soon have a plain mother like Mrs. Donagan, Jennie's mother, who could keep her husband and the four Donagan boys and the three Donagan girls all together at home.

Lily was looking out of the window that day after class, and all at once the thought of her lonely home, and the longing for her dear father, overcame her. She laid her head down on the desk. The sound of her stifled sobs came to Sister Agnes at the end of the room, where she

was correcting exercises. The Sister looked up. Then she rose and came to the weeping girl. Some echo of the family trouble of the Drakes had reached her through the other pupils, but she did not like to speak of it until Lily herself should bring up the subject. So she merely soothed the child until the paroxysm had passed.

"Sister Agnes," the girl said, lifting her tear-stained face to the gentle one above her, "you Catholics ask St. Anthony to find what you lose. Oh, I have lost something so dear to me." The voice broke again into sobs. "Would he bring it back to me if you and the girls would ask him? He would not listen to me, because I am not a Catholic, but he could not refuse you—nobody could ever refuse you anything!"

Sister Agnes smiled indulgently at the naive compliment. "But you must ask him yourself, Lily. Of course the girls and I will join you, and if it is for your good—your real good—St. Anthony will certainly find for you what you have lost."

"Oh, Sister Agnes, it must be for my good. I can never again be happy if I do not find—Oh, don't you know? Can't St. Anthony bring my father back? Doesn't he ever find the people we love—who go away just as if they were lost?"

Sister Agnes drew the golden head down upon her shoulder. Out of the past came a memory of her own childhood—the death of her beloved father, the lifelong grief of her devoted mother. There would be no "finding" of him ever again in this world. It would be only in the Great Reunion that loved ones would be found again.

Sister Agnes went to the little cup-board in the corner of the room and brought out a pretty statuette of St. Anthony. "Lily, dear, suppose you take this home and put it in your room, and every day ask St. Anthony to find your father and bring him home. All the girls, and I, too, will ask of him the same favor. And surely, with so many pleading to him, he will grant your wish."

When Lily reached home there was sound of much chatter and laughter in the house, for her mother was holding a high tea. The girl went quietly to her room and, unwrapping the brown-clad saint, placed him upon the mantle. On the table she found a letter from Howard.

"It's fierce, Sis," the boy wrote, "not to have any home to go to any more. All the other fellows have homes. What is the matter with us anyhow? When I want to see Dad, I have to go to a dingy hotel, of course it's a good one, but it's not home. Dad is worried about his business and I don't blame him for trying to keep down expenses and paying his debts. It don't look right to owe money and keep up so much style. Anyhow, Dad is staying here at a hotel and I am going to see him soon. Just think of it—visiting your father at a hotel when you aren't an orphan or a foreigner! It's ghastly."

"Little Sis, Dad misses you so much that I sometimes wish the terms of the separation gave you to him and me to Mater. Of course, any decent fellow will respect his mother; but I wish ours wasn't so daffy on style and all that sort of stuff. I took supper the other night with Jimmy Rhodes and he has the sweetest mother and jolliest home. He wanted me to stay there for vacation, but when I spoke of it Dad seemed like he was hurt and said I was leaving him, too; so I guess I'll just go to the hotel. I know the Mater keeps the house full of company, but I think you would rather have Dad and me than all the rest. Jimmy Rhodes hasn't got near as fine a home as ours, and his father is only a clerk, but it's a real home anyhow."

Lily laid down the letter and, going over to the mantle, sobbed out to the brown-clad saint: "Oh, St. Anthony! I don't belong to your Church; I am a Protestant; but I do want my father. You find so many things for the girls—please bring me back my father!"

Even to a woman as worldly as Mrs. Drake, the mother love is given and the thought of her fine, manly son without a home was disquieting. Then Lily, her "pretty Lily," as she liked to think of her, was growing pale and was very ill—"it's the Sisters who are making Lily so serious," Mrs. Drake told herself. "They are very nice, of course, but after all a girl who is to enter society needs the training of a fashionable school. After this year Lily must leave the Sisters."

A few days later the girl sat writing to her brother, to whom she could always pour out her heart in these strange, lonely days: "And Howard, I have something to tell you, and you must not laugh, for it means a great deal to me. The Catholic girls at school all pray to St. Anthony when they lose anything and he helps them to find it. He even helps them with their lessons. So Sister Agnes gave me a statue of St. Anthony and I am begging him to find my father and bring him back to me."

Now, whether St. Anthony helps people to make mistakes for his own purposes and for their own benefit, I am not enough of a theologian to say; but at any rate he caused Lily Drake, but at any rate he caused Lily Drake, who had trusted her case to him, to place her letter to her brother in the envelope addressed to her father; and as Howard was in a way his client, also, sharing in his sister's wish, he made the boy put the letter intended for Lily in his mother's envelope. Because, you see, on account of the young girl's confidence in him, St. Anthony was direct-

ing all these people to help his own ends.

It was after dinner next day that Mr. Drake, in his lonely room at the hotel, opened Lily's letter. He saw at once that it was intended for her brother, but he read it, the while a great longing came over him to see his little girl. As he read, he saw Lily, tearfully pleading with the good saint to bring her father back to her. He put the letter in his pocket and sat thinking. Business had begun to grow better. Perhaps after all his wife's extravagances were not so harmful. Perhaps if he went home—

"I'll put it up to Ethel to make friends for the children's sake. I'll do it! Lily will soon be grown and she will need her father. Howard, too, should have a home. How he loves Lily, and how devoted she is to him! They should certainly be together in a home. I'll just make the advances and make up with Ethel. It certainly did make me sore though to have her scattering my money on a lot of foolish people when I was staring failure in the face!"

Before the bright grate fire in her pretty room Mrs. Drake sat reading her son's letter, which was really intended for Lily. She had been holding a high tea and was very tired. Somehow everything was growing tiresome. The laughter and the chatter of the crowds who frequented her house were beginning to pall upon her. She thought of the evenings at home when her husband and children were with her, and a great wave of loneliness swept over her. Then she recalled bitterly a remark she had overheard at the function that afternoon that was not intended for her ears. Perhaps St. Anthony made her listen, and like all listeners, she heard no good of herself. One guest expressed her surprise to another that Mrs. Drake should be entertaining so lavishly when her husband was known to be on the verge of bankruptcy. Mrs. Drake smiled bitterly as she recalled the words. Her supposed friends had partaken of her hospitality and then had censured her. She recalled all these things as she read and reread her boy's letter to his sister.

"Sis, that must be a very jolly saint—your St. Anthony—if you are asking him to find your father for you and bring him back home. St. Anthony! Seems like I have heard of him before. And you have a statue of him and you are asking him every day to bring back dear old Dad! If he does that, I'll never forget him. But you are better off than I am, for Dad and I have only a school to stay at when I am out of school, and after all you are at home."

Home! Mrs. Drake laid down the letter. Home! The pretty home her husband had provided for her! And she had driven him away, and his children were longing for him! Lily was grieving for her father's love and Howard was longing to come home. And it was all because of her own selfishness and extravagance. Her friends had said that her husband was on the verge of bankruptcy—failing failure and without wife or children or home!

Mrs. Drake went to the telephone. She called for a messenger and sent off a telegram: "Come home. The children want you." She hesitated before signing her name. She wanted to add, "And I want you, too." But she sent it off as it was.

Then she went to Lily's room. The young girl was spending the evening with a friend. Mrs. Drake looked at the mantle. "So this is the 'jolly saint'!" she said as she saw the brown-clad plaster statue. "Well, I, too, will ask a favor of you—that you bring my husband back. If you can find little things for other people you can find our lost love for us."

Mrs. Drake was still standing before St. Anthony when Lily came in. The girl shrank from the ridicule which she expected to receive and was surprised when her mother said softly:

"I read Howard's letter to you. He made a mistake and addressed it to me. So you asked this St. Anthony to find our father for you! Well, I am not St. Anthony, but I sent a telegram this evening to your father asking him to come back to us. I told him that you and Howard wanted him."

"And you want him, too—you know you do, mother."

Mrs. Drake drew Lily into her arms without a word, but it was answer enough.

Howard Drake was preparing for a visit to his father. He was thinking of Lily, of his mother and of the pretty home, where henceforth he would only be a visitor.

"It's fierce—that's what it is!" he muttered. What had he done that he had no home when both his father and his mother were living?—Why, Dad was not so poor, and lots of the boys in school poorer than he, had homes to go to, and he and dear old Dad had just to stay alone at a hotel! "O hant is all!" the boy cried, impatiently wiping something like a tear from his brown cheek.

Mrs. Drake began preparations for returning to his home immediately upon the arrival of his wife's telegram. He smiled as he thought of the boy's happiness when he should learn the great news. Without waiting for the elevator, Howard bounded up the stairs and into the room after his knock at the door had been answered.

"Why, where are you going, Dad?" with a fall in his eager voice. Was Dad, too, about to leave him? His father pushed him into a chair. "Where would you like best to go, my son?"

Howard looked up. The answer that came to his lips he hesitated to give.

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