## AMBITION'S CONTEST BY CHRISTINE FABER

CHAPTER XXVII.—CONTINUED

"Brother Fabian visited us once as you must remember. That visit disclosed to me that even he loved my boy. But when I, encouraged by t fact, would have presumed on it, to win some hopeful word for myself, I was sternly reminded that there was a great barrier between us. ed he had repelled my touch because he deemd it contamination, and in my woe I asked him if the sorrow of my early marriage daysmeaning the separation from my husband, and the greater sorrow of Howard's death, which was nigh being made a portion of my cup of trial-were not punishment enough for my early fault, without being so constantly wounded by his stern and repellent manner. But he only bade me rise from my knees. I did not obey him. I continued to kneel; begging Almighty God not to curse my old age for the sin of my youth to save my son from being a gade to his faith. Brother Fabian questioned why I should make such

prayer, and I told him, then, all my He saw Howard alone, as you must remember, and he urged me to permit my son to go abroad. Now you can understand why I did not accompany you; but oh! Ellen, never until you are yourself a mother, can you fully comprehend what I endured in making that sacrifice of my affection. Nor can you comprehend what I have suffered during all the years that you have been away-I have fluctuated between hope and despair. The messenger from your father continued to come, acting always in the same dumb manner; and though I poured out to him my own burning grief, I still refrained from asking him a single question. I fancied that Allan must sometime touched by the faithful manner in which I kept my promise. When you were abroad, Anne Flanagan wrote to me that she had encountered this strange messenger in the streets of Florence. She had seen him sometimes when he came to me, and I had told her the purpose of his visits. She stated that she had failed in an attempt to follow him; but should opportunity again present, she would endeavor to use it to better advantage. My heart panted to tell her to do so, but I would not violate the pledge I had given my husband not to seek to discover his whereabouts. and I replied to her, sharply discountenancing her project. But for my perfect trust in you,

Ellen, I must have broken the promise I gave, and have gone to Howard, when your letters from abroad told me how near my boy was to the vortex of ruin. From your babyhood, Howard had the wildest affection for you, and sometimes, when his outoursts of boyish temper refused to be subject to my control, they yielded to your gentler influence. Then I knew your extraordinary piety. Ah to you Heaven had vouchsafed the gift which I had so fervently prayed to be bestowed on Howardaugured from these facts that your influence—you who had never sullied your soul as I had done-would, if any earthly influence could do it, save him, and, perchance, win him to become that which would bring his father back. Your very prayers for Howard were not selfish, like mine. You, knowing nothing of my unhappiness, prayed that your brother might be gifted with a sacred vocation, because of your own zeal for God's glory; while I prayed for this ordination because upon it depended his father's return. Brother Fabian called me mad for adhering to my pledge in the face of all the circumstances which seemed to warrant my breaking it. and frequently I was on the point of vielding. But still I refrained. You were with him, and I imagined the very anguish which this prolonged separation entailed upon me, and which I constantly offered to Heaven. might, in the end, win an answer to my prayers.

Now, my Ellen, all that has ap peared mysterious in my conduct is explained. Now you know why I gave you such charges concerning your brother, and nobly have you fulfilled them. To you, under Almighty God, is due the wonderful good that has happened to Howard, and I only wait the coming again of the strange messenger to return word that all has been accomplished.

She leaned back in her chair, faint from the protracted effort to supemotions, and Ellen, restrain ing her own excited feelings, refraining even from the eager exclamation upon her lips, hurried to hang in fond solicitude over her pale and trembling mother.

I am better now, my darling, Mrs. Courtney answered to her daugh ter's fond, inquiring look, dashing from her eyes the tears which still glistened in them, and straightening herself in her seat. Then she drew the bosom of her dress a little carefully wrapped packet attached to some slender cord. With trembling fingers she opened it, and disclosed white embossed cards. The inscription was the same on Morte, written in a peculiar style of penmanship. As if they were great rarity and value she Ellen's better view.

There are twenty-one of them. she said fondly, counting them over Twenty-one times has the messenger from your father come. God grant that he may make his twenty-second visit soon.'

The young girl, so ardently bending over the cards, silently but fervently echoed the prayer.

Again Mrs. Courtney's hand sought the bosom of her dress. This time it brought forth a little ivory case attached to a gold chain of delicate She paused before workmanship. she opened it to bend to Ellen, who was now kneeling beside her, and to

twenty-three years ago, until I re-ceived the news that Howard had become a priest, have I suffered even rooms. eves to look upon this. I wore it near my heart, but I would not look at it lest the agony of separation from my husband should become more unendurable, and because I fancied that I ought to shut it away from my sight until I could imagine myself to be more worthy of him.

She pressed the spring, and the case parted to show a face that seemed strangely familiar to Ellen a youthful face, more youthful even than Howard looked, and bearing a very strong resemblance to the latter, particularly in the expression of firmness which marked the lower part of the pictured countenance. But it was not the fact of that resemblance which made it seem so familiar to Ellen; it was something that caused a feeling almost akin to pain, and she bent with passionate eagerness to endeavor to evolve some recognition from the painted features. It flashed upon her at last-the remembrance of the stranger who had accosted her in the grounds of Ashland Manor, and though the latter had appeared much older than he whom the picture represented, the similarity in the expression of the faces sufficient to proclaim the identity She started up with a glad cry, and flinging her arms around he mother's neck, she said brokenly:

"I have seen my father!", Moments elapsed before she could recover herself sufficiently to give to astonished Mrs. Courtney an account of that singular interview.

"You have seen your father," tremulously repeated Mrs. Courtney, when she had learned all that her daughter could impart; "and per haps he was not able to sever us all completely from his thoughts, else why should he revisit my early home?'

Ellen was again bending over the picture. Now she understood the feelings by which she had been actuated when she had been so singularly accosted in the grounds of spoken to her in such a manner. for utterance, too wild for restraint, and her whole soul seemed to gush forth in the cry which thrilled even Mrs. Courtney's own anguished feelings

Father! father!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

UNCLE AND NEPHEW The singular story of Mrs. Courtney's life was the next day told to the young priest, and the treasured miniature disclosed to his astonished and entranced view. It was all so like some thrilling fiction, utterly unsuited to the matter of fact times in which they lived, that he felt almost disposed to regard much of the tale as the effect of a too ardent fancy, wrought upon by long and severe suffering; but the very evidence of that suffering so visible in his mother's appearance, in her manner as she recounted her tale, compelled him to believe her statements, and he too, like Ellen, was overwhelmed by strange and wild motions.

Later in the day, when, having reported himself at the eathedral, he turned his steps in the direction of the Brothers' Institute, portions of his mother's story seemed to float before his mind like detachments of a strange dream whose impression could not be effaced. He was impa tient to see, and yet he unaccountably shrank from a meeting with the religious, whose near relation to himself he had so recently learned, and not sure, from what his mother had told him, that the Brother would desire his kinship to his old pupil to be known by the latter, he was somewhat in doubt as to the manner in which it might be expedient for him to meet Brother Fabian.

Thus actuated by doubt he ascended the steps of his old school, pausing, ere his hand sought the bell, to allow the swell of singular feelings in his breast to subside.

The autumn sunlight showered upon him as he stood on the stoop the voices of children at play on the walk below came up to him together with the hum of traffic in the adjacent streets, and the gray buildings of school and church loomed up with the same grim fronts they had worn in his school days. There was little change, save that some of the neighboring dwellings wore a newer and more fashionable exterior; but to him, who stood in such strange hesitation, what changes had not time brought! When last his feet had pressed those steps he was a youth, panting to follow wherever his wild ambition would lead, believing himself to be fatherless, and little dreaming that the religious who exercised such unwonted care over tenderly turned and ranged them for his studies had a nearer and a dearer interest than any possessed by the mere tutor. Now, he was a man, seeking only to pursue heaven's will, expecting the return of a father, and about to meet, per-chance, the embrace of an uncle. He raised his eyes to the clear sky, while a flush, born of the gratitude in his heart, burned for a moment on

He rang the bell. It was the same mild-faced porter who had been there in Howard's time who answer-ed the summons. Howard trusted to the changes which time had effected in his appearance to pass unrecognized—for "Never since the wretched night apon which your father left me, twenty-three years ago. until I once into one of the reception

What name?" he asked, as Howard seated himself where his face was in the shade.

None." was the reply, "a person Brother Fabian came. His quick, elastic step, once so familiar to Howard, and now not forgotten, sounded in the hall; his tall form darkened the doorway of the reception chamber; his dark, stern face was turned towards the silent figure in the corner; still Howard made no motion. He?waited till the religious had closed the door and advanced to the centre of the room. Then the young priest arose, and flinging back from his forehead the wavy clusters of hair, he extended his hands with a softly murmured:

Uncle ! Rapid and strange was the transformation in the dark, stern countenance of the Brother. His cheeks flushed to the red glow of animated youth, his eyes sparkled with a strange blending of tenderness and passion, and he, too, extended his hands, not to grasp Howard's, but to fling them about the latter's neck, while there broke from his lips a 'At last-my nephew

Long was that interview; for many were the questions pertaining abroad, to the cir cumstances of his ordination, which Brother Fabian asked; but there were no other inquiries, no allusions even, as to how and when Howard had been informed of his relation ship to the religious. The latter seemed to avoid all such topics, and the young priest, observing that, forbore himself to broach them. But that his children know all, and they at length the uncle conducted his wait to receive their father. Fournephew to receive the welcome of the other religious. To the latter, Brother Fabian still remained Howard's old tutor—for, not having acknowledged the kinship before, he shrank from proclaiming it now.

The young priest received a warm greeting from those of the Brothers Ashland Manor, and why he, who styled himself the "stranger," had time. They had little difficulty in remembering the clever lad whose motions pressed upon her too deep over studious work had well nigh sively. caused his death within their own doors, though they did not so readily recognize in this tall, healthy-look ing young man the delicate boy for whom even some of their number had predicted an early demise. It was a new subject for joy when they learned that his first sermon was to be preached in the Cathedral-the church which the Brothers attended—on the following Sunday.

He could hardly tear himself from their kindly importunities, and it was only when the fading sunlight announced the close of the autumn day that he found himself at last descending the steps of the Institute.

door of the old house on the battery caused Mrs. Courtney's heart to palpitate wildly, and sent her to the entrance hall to learn who the applicant for admission might be, even before the domestic could inform arms around her daughter's neck, ress in a large hotel had kept her arms around her daughter's neck, ress in a large hotel had kept her help you—the doctor first, and a nurse if I possibly can, as well as entrance hall to learn who the appliher. Ellen, knowing the cause of "pray that your father will soon this anxiety, shared it, and mother return! With all the happiness of and daughter's strange eagerness once more who, with her old habit of talking to herself, muttered:

'They're looking for the messen-

And Anne had still an anxiety of her own. Confident, from the manner in which Ellen shared her mother's apparent watch for the coming of some one, that Mrs. Courtney had imparted her confi-dence to her daughter, she feared that from that confidence Ellen might have learned sufficient to know that Anne's own story had not been an entirely truthful one, and she looked nervously for some evidence from her young mistress which should prove that her surmise was correct. She did not fear that her tale had been repeated by Ellen to Mrs. Courtney, for Ellen's own word, pledged not to repeat that confidence, was sufficient to reassure Anne.

O'Connor, according to orders received from his mistress, had speed-ily installed Dick Monahan in a posipreferred now to assume his own name, but his betrothed, averse to making any explanations till she should be prepared to announce the time of her marriage, desired the retention of his alias, and the faithful lover willingly obeyed.

So four days of the brother's and sister's first week at home passed. and Saturday arrived-the day be fore that on which Howard was to begin, for the first time, his priestly duties. He had gone to the Cathe dral on business pertaining to the morrow, and Ellen and her mother were busy with some details of the

household. A sudden and sharp ring sounded at the hall door. It was enough to make mother and daughter start and simultaneously hurry to the balustrade that overlooked the entrance hall. It was the messen-

parlor, and turned to convey the neat or clever or good-looking a girl priest: for even could she summon card to Mrs. Courtney. But that lady, pale and breathless, and followed by Ellen, was already at the foot of the stairs. She seized the card from the man's hand, and only waiting to assure herself that the inscription upon it was the same, and to motion to her daughter, who, undecided whether to advance, had remained midway on the stair, to follow her, she hurried to the parlor. The domestic went below to re-

count what had occurred to his fellow help.
"Faith, I'm thinking that what with the children coming home, and Master Howard being a priest, Mrs.

Courtney is not herself at all. Sure, you'd think she couldn't wait to but that she must fly to meet She just snapped the card, without a is in the parlor with him."

O'Connor, as he frequently did, assuming the privilege which length of time in his present position conferred upon him, reproved the domestic for passing any comment, but at the same time, he was himself deeply engaged in pondering upon the cir-cumstances, and he looked over at Anne Flanagan, who had also heard the remarks, with an expression which seemed to indicate that she could explain the mystery if she would. But whatever were the thoughts of the woman, she betrayed the parlor was a singular scene. the centre of the room stood that strange, foreign looking figure; his black eyes glistening, it might be from emotion, and his tawny face slightly flushed, perchance, from the same cause, for Mrs. Courtney had already brought Ellen forward as the daughter of him from whom that card had come, and had poured forth, in touching language, the message

she desired to be returned.
"My pledge is fulfilled," she cried, tears of joy streaming down her cheeks, "and he can no longer delay to fulfil his My son is a priest; he will preach his first sermon to morrow, in the Cathedral, Tell him fold love shall be given him, and in the happiness of the future we will all forget the past." The man bowed, and looked as if

he was eager to depart. Mrs. Courtney still detained him. "Now, at least," she said, "I may ask a question: "Is he from whom

you come far away ?" The man put his finger to his lips, but his eyes sparkled more expres-Surely, you may answer that

now," she importuned. Still his finger continued pressed to his lips-still his eyes sparkled. useless to question, to entreat a reply; he only met each with that same dumb response, and she suffered him to go. But even at the door whither she attended him, the

deserted wife once more asked : "If be should come will it take him

long to reach us?" Again the same dumb show on the part of the stranger ensued, but this time his eyes seemed positively to speak-as if they would convey all that she desired—but her own eyes were too dim with emotion to read the look, and, bowing again, he darted down the steps, and sped Every ring which sounded at the rapidly on to the thoroughfare beyond.

Mrs. Courtney closed the door, and turned back to the parlor where

Ellen still stood. was not unnoticed by Anne Flanagan, my heart is breaking for my hus-

TO BE CONTINUED

## THE GREEN FIELDS

In an upper room of a New York tenement house a sick woman lay, wearily looking out at the tall "sky buildings opposite with scraper " dull and unseeing .eyes. Her thoughts were far away indeed: and instead of the houses and chimney-stacks towering aloft on every side of her, she saw a little straw-thatched cottage, resting fail and pleasantly in sweet and unpolluted sunshine and fresh breezes, against the kindly side of a green Irish hill.

The more she thought and dreamed of it the greater became her longing. a sick and sore and hungry longing, to go back there again. Surely if she could only go home once more, this heavy pall of sadness would be lifted tion suitable to that gentleman's capacity. Honest Dick would have of soul and body would be banished away, as if by magic, at the first breath of her pure and invigorating native mountain air, leaving her strong and brave and wholesome as she was in the days when she had so foolishly left it and her happiness behind her! Yet deep down in her inmost heart she knew and felt sure that never again would her eyes rest on that fair and pleasant place, the fairest and sweetest and most desirable of all places on God's beautiful

earth to her now. Why had she ever left it? Simply for the love of adventure and the desire to outdo the other girls of her neighborhood in store of wealth, and grandeur of garb and demeanor, whenever she felt inclined to turn her eyes westward once more across the seas, and come home to spend a triumphal holiday amongst them. liness and hard work and a bruised Why shouldn't she have a gold watch and broken heart, and that she would and silk dresses and real ostrich not see her home, or the green fields,

as herself?

It had been hard to leave her widowed mother, to be sure, to say nothing of her younger sisters and brothers; and of course there had always been plenty of work for her, as the eldest, sometimes a good deal too much, she used to think, to do at home. But what easy, happy work it had been, after all, she now, to help to keep the little house tidy, to dress the little ones for school, feed the chickens, pick out the weeds from the flower front of the door, or water the gayblossomed little border that lay around the housewalls beneath the wide · spreading, low · thatched eaves.

And then there had been the long. happy, winter evenings by the fire that strange man, whoever he is, side, when the work on the little farms grew slack, and this neighbor word, and herself and Miss Courtney | and that dropped in for a chat and a of story-telling around the cheerily blazing fire of turf and logs in wide, old-fashioned grate. Poor Ned Carmody, 'twas he that had been the finest step-dancer and raciest storyteller of them all! And how differ ent her own lot in life might have been had she hearkened to his wooing and married him, instead of breaking his poor, faithful heart deserting him as she did—all just because she was determined never to live under the same roof as her mother-in-law even though old Mrs. them neither by word nor sign. In Carmody, sweet faced and kindly and good, would surely have been the easiest woman in the whole world "to get on with." How happy she might have been!

And then there was dear Sister Rose at the convent, who had always made such a pet of her during her school days and after. And kindly, jovial Father James, whose cheery "God save all here!" as he stepped in over the threshold of their little home had been enough to gladden and uplift the saddest and heaviest of hearts. Was he alive still, she wondered. And if he could see her now would he recognize in the hardfaced, world worn and bitterly disillusioned woman she knew her be to day, the rosy-cheeked, blueeyed, innocent little colleen on whose silken head of curls he had so often

Her heart chilled within her as she thought of the terrible change he must discern in her, not only in her looks, alas! but in her heart and soul and mind. How many long years it was since she had last knelt to a priest in confession! And would she ever find the courage to it now, even were she given the opportun-

Time and again a great longing had come over her to feel once more the happy sense of relief and uplifting which a good confession so won derfully and almost miraculously brings in its train. But her heart failed her each time as she thought of the great length of years she had been away; and of telling her sins to for the whole length of the twenty odd years she had lived in this desolate, sorrowful place, where, as somewomen were steeped to their very

Well, she could only thank God that after all, she had never been you before I go? You seem very quite as evil as some of them. Her sins were rather those of omission than of commission; and it had been so easy, after all, to slip out of the way of regularly attending Mass and the Sacraments in those first days in

all the happiness of ssing my children, her companions drift away from religion in just the same way as herself, especially after a couple of them had been dismissed for going out to Mass on Sunday at an hour when the managress had appointed other duties for them. And then when, still a girl, she had married a man of alien religion, or rather of no religion at all, it seemed the easiest thing in the world to drift away altogether from the practice of the ancient faith which she had learned at her mother's knee.

What a foolish, wicked creature she had been! Yet, had and selfish and heartless as her husband Tom had proved himself to be, she had at least always tried to be a good and faithful wife to him. Even after he had left her altogether for a younger and better looking woman, she had still preserved the native purity and modesty which was her rightful Irish inheritance, working hard early and late to keep body and soul together at machine-work that was ill and grudgingly paid for. And though she had forgotten almost every prayer that she had learned at her loving mother's knee so long ago, there was never a time when temptation came to her that she did not offer up a little petition to the Mother of God that she might help and save her at least from lapsing into a life of such terrible infamy and shame as she here saw on every side of her. That little whispered prayer alone. she knew, had saved her.

Ah, why had she forgotten the holy teaching and practice of her own beautiful faith, in everything else save in that! If she could only kneel before kindly Father James once more as in the happy days of long ago, and see his hand lifted to bestow the blessed absolution above her weary, humble head! She knew now that she was dying, dving, though a young woman still, of lone ger Both caught the gleaming of the embroidery on his cloar, as the domestic ushered him into the Bridget Cassidy, who wasn't half as the courage to send for one, who was is the most precious, the most valu-

there to deliver such a message for her, here in this awful place? neighbors, the few she knew of them would simply laugh and shrug their shoulders at the silliness and simplic ity of such a request. There was only one other Catholic, as far as she knew, in the place beside herself, and that was Mrs. Carroll, a very old woman who lived on the next story, and who used sometimes to pause as she passed her door to bid her a kindly "Good morning." But the old creature had been ailing for some time, and it was so many weeks now since she had seen her or heard her voice that she felt the poor old body must be very ill and bedridden, if actually dead and buried without her

If only she could have come to her —yes, she might then have found courage to make her request, and tell her of the terrible longing that now filled her heart to be safely shrived once more of her sins. A little while ago she had yearned for the green fields at home. Now nothing else on earth seemed to matter save that she should go before her with her soul newly shriven and made white. And again the little prayer to the Blessed Mother of God, 'Memorare," the one little prayer which she had not altogether forgot ten, went heavenwards from her pale and bloodless lips.

Almost before it was ended a lov knock resounded on her door, and somebody came softly and gently into the dimly-lit room. Looking round. she saw, as though in answer to prayers, a priest—no, not dear Father James, though she thought for a moment it was he-but a priest much older, with silvered hair, and just as kindly and holy and sweet a face.

"My child, you are ill, and all alone here!" he said in some surprise with a deep, rich, Irish accent, as he came forward and blessed her, his eyes resting with a pitying gaze on her worn and pallid features. anything I could do for you, poor child? I have just been upstairs visiting a poor old Irishwoman named Carroll, and she told me that you too. were Irish and a Catholic.'

"I am, Father, but a very bad one, I fear," the sick woman faltered; and then, as she saw the look of tender pity and concern deepening in rather tian departing from, his eyes, the tears suddenly welled into her own and she said with a broken sob am sure it was the Blessed Mother of God herself who sent you to me, Father, dear, for its nearly twenty long years, since I knelt to a priest, and I'd like dearly that you'd hear my confession before I die.'

All her fear and despair were gone it was as if all the long years of care lessness and neglect were rolled back and away, and she knelt once more, a happy, innocent child, at dear Father James O'Loughlin's feet.

He heard her confession there and then; and after it was finished, and absolution given, said to her with a a strange priest, as all priests were to twinkle of mingled benevolence and her now-and had been almost indeed gratification in his blue Irish eyes: Well, you feel better now, my child? That's a relief, isn't it?

'It's like a great heavy burthen one had truly said of it, men and lifted from my tired, weary heart, she said, her poor face flushed with a new and radiant happiness.

And now what else can I do for desolate and alone here," glancing round the bare and comfortless room Have you no one to attend to you? And have you no better food than that stale-looking loaf." She shook her head.

some money and food. Is there anything else you would like? I'll be coming back tomorrow.

If only I could get back to Ire she sighed only I could see the green fields once

My poor child, you are very weak and ill, and Ireland is a very long way off. I think Heaven is much nearer to us - now," very gently And perhaps, poor child, there will be green fields in Heaven for us

With another parting benediction he left her, closing the door very behind him as he went. Norah Tynan O'Mahony, in the Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

## ONLY A CATECHISM

Hurrying along the street, at the dinner hour one day, a man stepped sideways quickly, stooped, and picked up a little, tattered book. "Only a Catechism," laughed his companion.

"Did you think it was a bank book?"
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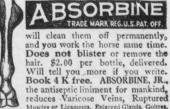
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