

AMBITION'S CONTEST

BY CHRISTINE FABER

CHAPTER XXXII.

ANOTHER PHASE OF MAN'S HEART

On the evening of the day which witnessed her husband's return, Mrs. Courtney heard the strange and cruel story of his long absence. In her own dressing-room—to which, eager to bestow a confidence apart even from the hearing of his children, Mr. Courtney had early in the evening repaired—the devoted wife sat, drinking in the voice which was at once so sweet, because of her own wild love for the owner, and so harrowing, because of the cruel tale it recounted.

"The first month of your residence here," Mr. Courtney had begun, "my brother told me the story of your broken troth to him, allowing me to draw, as he described below, the most unfavorable inferences to yourself. He obtained from me a solemn promise never to divulge what he had told me; and in that promise, Mary, lay all the misery. If I could but have heard your story, then would not this cruel separation have occurred. When I read your passionate letters to him, I imagined that never had you used such tender language to me. And then I reviewed, with all the over care of a jealous man, your manner during our courtship. I knew that at times it had been marked by an evidence of attachment, but oftener it was shy, and as if it were constrained to be warm. Then your father's eager desire to have you wed me, your own kind attentions to Francis, all convinced me that you had given me your hand in obedience to your father's will, and that, while you would not swerve from your duty, your heart was still my brother's. I saw the agony of Francis—in a moment of frenzy he bared it all to me—and I accused myself of being the wretched cause of his unhappiness. I imagined that I had been grossly deceived, and I said to myself that I deserved it for having renounced my intention of studying for the Church. In the parting embrace you gave to Francis when he left us, I fancied I read more proofs to confirm my fears that your heart was not mine. I was maddened. I termed you false in my heart, and I flung your picture from my breast. I trampled on it, only the next moment to gather the fragments carefully up, and remove them fully from my sight. I could not put you out of my heart. My brother's letters came, and the loving messages you bade me insert in my replies added fuel to the fire of my jealousy. I shut myself up with my books, not to study, as you supposed, but to brood over my unhappiness, till it sometimes seemed as if I was going mad; then I would come forth, resolved to endure it, and to force myself to be satisfied with the semblance of your love, since I could not have the reality. But in the very midst of the affection I would lavish upon you, my miserable thoughts would rise anew, and send me back, cowed and despairing, to my solitude. Such was my life till Francis' letters ceased, and I was spared the pain of penning him kind messages from you. Howard was born. I fancied that event must help me to regain my peace of mind; but you so constantly spoke of my brother, wondering at his mysterious silence, and seeming so anxious lest some ill had befallen him, that my wound was kept constantly open. Still I struggled on, but it was a living death; and a little after the birth of Ellen, I concluded to put your affection for me to a test. I determined to separate from you a few months, possibly a year, leaving with you the impression that the parting was to be final, and that I would neither hear from nor transmit to you any tidings whatever. I was not prepared for the anguish which greeted that announcement, but I steeled my heart to it by imagining that it was not affection which produced it, but the thought of your approaching loneliness.

"You begged so piteously for the cause which led to so cruel a purpose that I gave the only one at my command—explanation for my broken troth—to enter the Church. You know too well what passed in that interview for me to harrow you again by recounting it. I deemed what you uttered about Howard becoming a priest but wild, incoherent words, though I seemed to listen and approve, and I regarded the solemn promise you made as something the fulfillment of which would never be required. I consented to your appeal to appoint a means of communication by which you might know that I still lived, simply to allay the wildness of your sorrow, and not because I intended to employ such a medium of communication as I then devised, and I wrote the word *Morie*, rather than any other, because it was in keeping with the suffering which I sought to inflict. With all the straining of my fancy to believe that it was not for love of me you grieved, I shrank from the suffering with which I felt you would receive my farewell, and to evade that I departed secretly, and in advance of the time I had mentioned.

"I little reckoned whether I vent, I had some vague idea of searching for my brother, and without any very defined aim I took passage for Europe. In London, where I sojournd for a time, I encountered in one of the streets a pitiable object, a poor wretched-looking foreigner,

clad in tawdry, tinselled garments, following a corpse that was on its way for interment. He was the only mourner, and his singular garb, and his still more singular demonstrations of sorrow had attracted a crowd of curious followers. That fact seemed to enrage his expressive and pathetic signs of bereavement he would turn and denounce the crowd in mingled English and Hindoostanee. His evident grief, the apparent friendliness of his position, attracted my sympathies—I used my efforts to deter the irritating curiosity of the crowd, and I accompanied the poor foreigner to ensure him in some sense protection. Never was mortal so wildly, so extravagantly grateful as was the poor Hindoo, and when, the interment having been performed, I brought him home to my lodgings, he told me his pathetic tale.

"The corpse, which had been interred, had been his wife, and the only relative, or even friend, the poor creature had possessed in all London. Some years before an English gentleman, residing for a time in Hindoostan, had brought the couple home with him, having been attracted to them by some signal service which Cawnor had performed for him; but the benevolent gentleman died shortly after his return to London, and the poor Hindoo was thrown upon his own exertions for the support of his wife and himself. Having learned a little of the language, he begged first; afterwards he grew detestable enough to do a little in the way of peddling. But his wife had suddenly died, and poor Cawnor was left as miserable as man could well be. He willingly accepted service with me, and never was a more docile, faithful, or affectionate servant. But no inducement could make him abandon his peculiar style of costume; he readily replaced the tinsel and the tawdriness by brighter, newer garments; but tawdriness and tinsel he would have. I turned my attention in earnest to searching for my brother; travelling from country to country of Europe, till nearly a year had elapsed. The excitement of the constant change, the intensity of the desire to find Francis, whetted because of repeated failure, kept me from reflection on the injustice of my conduct to you, and lulled me into a sort of rest which I mistook for peace. I determined to stay abroad still longer, but I could not repress my anxiety to know how you were bearing my absence, and, remembering my promise to send a messenger, I thought that Cawnor might serve the purpose. He understood enough of the language, and sufficient intelligence, to make the journey, and bring me word of all he saw. I gave him his instructions, and he departed to fulfil them. When he returned, he bore the news that you were all well. He said that you had asked no questions of him, though you had cried, and received him with every evidence of great joy. My jealousy was in wilder sway than ever. I imagined, from the very fact of your being well, that you were happier without me. It was nothing that you had cried, and that you were dressed in mourning, as he reported—you had not even asked a question concerning me. I knew you had pledged yourself not to make a single inquiry, but I argued with myself that no true wifely love could keep such a promise. I said in my heart you desired my absence, and I endeavored to stifle every cry of affection.

"Turning aside, even from the desire to find my brother, I plunged into travel and study, in order to kill the gnawing unrest of my soul. We went to the East, and there obtaining access to archives which in my boyhood had passionately desired to reach, I endeavored to die to everything but the all-absorbing work of research. I sent Cawnor to you as regularly as I did, only that he might some time bring me news which would more surely verify my jealous fears and justify me in thus remaining from you. That he would tell me he had discerned in your appearance or your demeanor, or the changes in your surroundings, traces which would assure me that you rejoiced more than mourned at my absence; and the very fact that he never found you ill, and that you always forebore to make inquiries about me, served me to continue my stay abroad. Fourteen years passed. I had become a miserable misanthrope, fancying that if I was not happy, I was, at least, at peace with myself, and that I was acting with a noble generosity in remaining away from a wife whose heart was not mine. I imagined that my books filled the vacuum in my heart; but it was all a miserable sham, for when Cawnor, having returned from his annual visit to you, informed me that my children were in Europe, my heart yearned to find them, to look upon them in secret, even though I would not discover myself to them; and to England—remembering you had many friends there—Cawnor and I turned our faces. The faithful fellow had told me that you had forborne to go yourself abroad, because of the pledge you had given me. Oh, Mary! that news steeled me still more against you. I said that you were wanting in motherly affection as well as wifely love; I gave you no credit for adhering to a promise which I fancied my true mother could have kept, and more cruelly still, I imagined that you had perhaps even taught my children to detest my memory. My soul was swept by the waters of a more bitter anguish than any I had yet endured.

I dwelt on the thought of Ellen and Howard hating me, of their turning from me should I, having ascertained their whereabouts, proclaim my identity, till I grew morbid. I used to walk the streets of London in a state little short of insanity, and poor, faithless Cawnor, as if he read my melancholy thoughts, and feared that they might result in some desperate deed, would not leave my side. Though he had never asked a single question, and I had volunteered no information of my affairs beyond that which was necessary for the execution of my commissions, he seemed to comprehend the unhappiness of my life, and to have some singular sympathy with you, for he was always anxious to pay his visits to New York, and would frequently ask me if the time for paying those visits had not arrived.

"One day I entered a gallery, more to seek relief from my thoughts, than to view the paintings on exhibition. My attention was attracted to a lady attended by a young girl and two youths. One of the latter was animatedly talking to some gentlemen, and a singular feeling induced me to draw within hearing distance. I was surprised at the lady's remarks, as were those to whom they were addressed. They displayed such singular ability, and when he had departed with his companions, one gentleman asked the name of the able youth. I heard the answer. It was enough to make me know that I had seen and listened to my own son. I then recalled the features of the young girl, detecting resemblances to you which I had failed to discern when I was in her presence, and I knew also that I had seen my daughter.

"Love for my children—such wild, passionate love as I did not think I could be capable of—then absorbed every other feeling. It had been urged into being by that sight of Howard and Ellen, and it burned thus fiercely because it had been so long repressed; but I was rendered miserable by the horrible fear that they had been prejudiced against me, I ascertained their whereabouts, and maintained a secret watch upon their movements; but I would not discover myself, by some means, I could be assured of the reception they would accord me. When they went with the Grosvenors to Italy, I followed. To Italy I again pursued, Cawnor proving invaluable in learning for me when and where they were going to make their transits. How the faithful fellow did it I know not, unless he ingratiated himself with the servants of the mansion, and obtained the news first opportunity I made him aware, her endeavor to pursue him, was enough to make him elude her. By the constant watch which Cawnor maintained I was enabled to know when Howard entered the Propaganda, and I, too, made my residence in Rome. It was exquisite bliss to be thus near where my son was pursuing his studies. I fancied I must have opportunities of secretly learning his character—of ascertaining how he had been taught to regard me; but, believing that I had no place in his affections, I regarded not the hopes which you had cherished about Howard's sacred vocation. But my own hopes were doomed to disappointment. I was prostrated with illness, from which I recovered to find that Cawnor had never left my bedside; and when I sent him abroad, to again maintain his watch, Howard had left the Propaganda, and there was no trace of his whereabouts, other than he was presumed to have returned to New York. My disappointment was bitter. To such a pitch had my love for Howard risen, that I felt I could not exist unless I was near him, and I too, determined to return to New York; but I would not repair to you, but again look upon my boy in secret. But when we reached France I was too ill to travel farther. I could not restrain my impatience, and I insisted upon Cawnor hurrying forward, and leaving me to be tended by strange hands. The poor fellow was loath to deprive me of his own care, but my determination was not to be altered, and he obeyed. He returned to tell me that my children were not home, but in Paris, where Howard was pursuing his wild career. Again I was animated—again I was impelled to exertion which my still feeble state would not warrant, and I bent every power of my soul to finding my son. One day I heard his name mentioned, but in connection with an agitated movement which could bode only disaster to those concerned in it. My fears were aroused. He would be snatched by the arm of authority ere my arms could enfold him, and once more I was distracted with mental agony. It told upon my health, and was the wild desire. My illness was renewed, more severe and more dangerous than it had first been. Thanks to the unremitting care of the faithful Hindoo, I recovered, but every trace of my boy had vanished.

"Sobered, saddened, but not despairing, I still clung to the hope of finding Howard abroad. I imagined

I knew his disposition now; that it was of the ardent, ambitious kind, which is constantly plunging into foment, and I fancied that he was only concealing himself somewhere, to escape the consequences of his last rash enterprise. I lingered in Paris for months, trusting to the Hindoo's singular sagacity to discover him; but every effort failed, and my anxiety became unendurable. I despatched Cawnor once more to America, to learn if the children were with you. You returned the message that one of them was in Ashland Manor, the other you knew not where. To Dublin then I directed my steps, and the Hindoo provided secretly about Ashland Manor, to obtain what information he might of my children. There he again encountered Anne Flanagan, but, as before, he deterred her from pursuing him. My own cautious inquiries soon elicited that the brother of the young lady who resided in the Manor had been compelled to fly the country, and that even she did not know his whereabouts. I did not believe that statement. I imagined she well knew, but that she had made that assertion in order to cover her unwillingness to accompany him into exile, and I deemed her my insidious enemy, had already painted you—heartless, for not having, since you knew not your son's whereabouts, come abroad, or in some manner used exertion to find him. I determined to go on the continent again to seek him, but some singular longing drew me to wander about the grounds of Ashland Manor, ere I finally left Ireland. There I met Ellen. She has probably told you."

Mrs. Courtney bowed her head.

"I forgot, when I looked at her, all my previous harsh reflections upon her conduct—everything but that she was my child—and my heart jumped wildly up to tell her so; but I restrained myself. I feared the very abruptness of the statement would ensure for a cold reception, and then I was not sure with what feelings she had been taught to regard me. I determined to wait until I had looked into the face of my son—till I had sounded his heart—and through him I would win his sister; for it always seemed as if I could more easily gain Howard's affections than Ellen's.

"I resumed my maniacal search on the continent. From his previous connection with political movements, I deemed that Howard's restless spirit would break forth in such organizations again; so, accordingly, my efforts were directed mostly among secret political societies. I never dreamed of his having re-entered college, and I continued to wait Cawnor to you simply that I might know whenever you had tidings of my boy. But my efforts were fruitless, and weary and despondent, I turned my course to Rome, not with the expectation of finding there what I sought, but from some strange longing to rest myself in the sacred city. There I discovered my boy, Oh! Mary, never can I forget the transport of a sling, was leaning against the wall.

"And is it you that's here, Eamon?" asked the man on the stretcher, fixing his eyes on the soldier with the wounded arm.

"It's me," was the reply. "And ye yourself, look to be in a fix, Sam Young. What have you got?"

Sam Young, the man on the stretcher, lay down again.

so I deferred my return home until to-day. But when I came, when you sprang to meet me, when you lay upon my breast, all the pride, all the sternness, with which I fancied I had fortified myself, all the feelings of the unhappy past, seemed to vanish. The first sight of you revived the love that I thought had been long dead; the first touch of your fingers recalled the old, old times when I thought your love my own. And that happy state of mind continued till you spoke of my brother; the very sound of his name recalled all I would forget, and froze again, as it were, my newly springing affection. But when he came, when he told his story, I saw in its true light my wretched, wretched course, and I have now, as I did below, to crave your forgiveness, my true and faithful wife, and to promise that my love in the future shall in some measure atone for the neglect of the past. You have already said that the past should be forgotten. Promise again to forgive and forget."

From his breast, to which she was clasped, she strove to utter her reply, but her heart was too full, and she could only look the answer he sought.

He pressed her to him, and murmured softly:

"Oh, woman, great is thy worth!" Her happiness was no longer overcast by a single cloud.

TO BE CONTINUED

A PAIR OF SPECTACLES

By Riffman Patrick MacGill

The Ulster man and the men of the South of Ireland had made a great fight of it by the Zonnebeke River and the Pommern Redoubt, and now that a day's hard effort was at an end, the dressing station to rear of the line of battle was full of stories of the struggle. The wounded were still coming in, and the dressing station, once a snug little village home, was crowded with those who had been stricken in the fight. Men from all parts of Ireland were there, farmers from the North and Midlands, fishermen from the rugged West, and cattle dealers from the South. The Ireland of the dressing station was an Ireland purged of rival party and friction; an Ireland united in a great battle against a common enemy. Here in the little ruined French home blossomed a spirit of comradeship such as Ireland had never known before. Ballymena exchanged pleasantries with Ballinacree; Cushendall limped in from the conflict leaning on the arm of Corrymeela; Ireland was united again. Brotherly love between all parties was established in the furnace of battle. Long may such a love endure!

Near the door, a bundle of khaki which lay on a stretcher stirred itself and tried to sit up. Two brilliant eyes stared from a blood-stained face and looked round the room.

"Who are ye on the look-out for?" enquired a man, who with his arm in a sling, was leaning against the wall.

"Dead, God rest him!" said the newcomer. "It was him that put this bandage on my head, and as he turned to go away to attend a young fellow next me he got hit. He fell without a word at all. One iv the bast men that ever I've met. I was goin' to say a prayer for him, but then I thought that he is a man that's not in need iv our prayers, so I prayed to him to look down on us and help us. For I know that he's watchin' us still."—The Derry Journal.

BROKEN LILIES

Although it belonged to an enclosed garden you could peep into the garden by craning over a wooden gate that admitted the outside world to services in the chapel, and which was carefully relocated after worshippers had departed. Somewhere in the enclosure rushed a rivulet; although it was invisible you could hear its mysterious, alluring laughter, and hearken to a silken rustle as it swept over stones and water weeds.

"Hold me up!" commanded the impatient Dolly. Leaning her forehead against the gate, mother obediently did as she was told.

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