

THE WATERS OF CONTRADICTION

BY ANNA C. MINOQUE
Author of "Cordons," "Borrowed From the Night"
CHAPTER XV

At noon the next day, when Arthur's train was bearing him to his new life, Joe laid the letter in his hand. She read it, and her spirit seemed to go down before the words.

"I can not follow you, Arthur," she cried piteously, and hid her face in her hands. "Blood will tell—always, always," said Miss Cora, when Lucy told her what Arthur had written her concerning himself.

Two years passed. Joe, supreme master of the Hall, was bestowing upon the land a care that was increasing its value and future productiveness. No crops were planted, but the seed of the heavy blue grass, carefully gathered, was sown back upon the land, and the money Arthur allowed him was largely expended upon the purchase of fertilizers, for the worn-out fields and neglected places, while stones were carefully gathered for the repair of the rock fences, and the dead-wood that had been allowed to cumber the trees was removed, stumps were leveled, and sapplings set out.

The life of the community flowed on in a current that to the unthinking observer might appear sluggish; but to the individuals comprising it, the aspect was entirely different. Love, hate, hope, despair—the old struggle works out in each human breast, and call no life uninteresting, because the outward appearances are calm.

Love came to Sylvia, a love totally dissimilar from the romantic attachment which had felt for Arthur Stanton, and, casting aside the traditions of her class, she had given herself to Miss Cora's iconoclastic nephew, and her suddenly developed democracy proved nearly the undoing of her mother. A healthy grandson, however, speedily kicked down all the stately dame's barriers, and the bright political aspect of her son-in-law's future, completed her resignation to her daughter's choice of a life partner.

When her own awakening had come to Lucy, she looked from her circumscribed life to the great world beyond, and a wild, impassioned longing seemed to drive her into it. Out there forgetfulness would be easier, and before she could live this new life, memory must be killed. It was then Duty raised her white hand. Out there she was not needed; here a place none but she could fill awaited. It were infinitely better that a generation of children should benefit by her instructions, go into manhood and womanhood properly equipped to meet their duties, than that she in the rush of the busy world, should have her ears deafened to voices that now had a power to sting. Moreover, to win her victory here would give it a value, it should not have if out there; and Lucy bade the tempter to be gone, and resumed her work as teacher in Stanton School.

Afterward Jasper Long took up the thread of a friendship that had been so singularly snapped (if he had come to know her, he ever remained silent) and the kindly folk smiled and said some day there would be a new mistress in the old home in the valley. But Jasper spoke never a word of love, and Lucy, grateful for her blessing, gathered her tender friendship into her empty life. Still Jasper knew he was waiting, and sometimes when Lucy's old gay laugh filled his ears with its music, as they drove or walked together, he felt as if he had taken a step nearer to his destiny.

Thus the two years passed, and one morning Jasper Long, after a night of watching by the bedside of his suddenly stricken father, found himself master of his life and his inheritance. He was young, and in the leisure that had been his he had been developing by a course of reading his own mind, and now he was free to give himself up to the one mistress who never proves unfaithful, albeit she never fulfills all the desires of her lovers. He put his affairs in order, made arrangements for his future as an art student; then he sought Lucy. The drive along the way they had taken that Sunday, the memory of which was fixed forever in the mind of each.

A silence had hung for a long while between them; then he said:

"Do you remember, Lucy—"
"Yes," she interrupted, "I remember," knowing what his question was.

"My duty, as it stood then, no longer exists," he continued. "I am now free to live out the life I was ready to prepare for my son. I shall start in a very short time for Paris to enter a school of drawing."

"I am glad—so glad," she said, although she felt her heart sink like lead, thinking of herself. A slight pressure on the reins stopped the horse in its unguided walk.

"Lucy, will you come with me?" She turned her surprised face toward him. In the gloom of the evening and the trees, it showed like a cameo, and thrilled his artistic soul with its exquisite beauty. He took her little hands.

"Come with me, Lucy, as my dear wife," he whispered, and as he drew her toward him, she felt all her being yielding to the request. By one of those emptying flashlights of consciousness, she saw her life as it was, in all its toil, its dullness and its loneliness; then, as swiftly was unrolled before her the life that might be hers, as the wife of Jasper Long, rich art student, successful artist.

"I owe you so much, Lucy, as my friend; as my wife, you shall be the inspiration of my life, of my work. I shall fill your life as fully as I may; my supreme object should be your happiness. O, Lucy, even now, if you bid me give up the career I have mapped out, I should do so. Lucy! Lucy!" he cried, and now his face was close to hers. "What passed over your life passed over mine! We can belong to each other by sorrow as well as by love."

She felt herself being drawn into his life, even as her body was being drawn closer to his breast; then the spirit of that other hour they had driven down that way, brushed its wings against this, and with it came the prophetic knowledge of the hollowness of their union that had then been allowed her. A marriage of their bodies and an eternal separation of their souls? The thought set her back in her own place. She withdrew herself from his clasp.

"No, Jasper, that cannot—cannot be," she said. "You do not understand, Lucy," he said, his hands following hers. "I ask for nothing you cannot give! I only ask for your companionship—only the privilege to be yours—I and all I possess, all that may come to me. And I cannot leave you!"

Again she hesitated, for her time without him rose before her.

"I do understand," she said, however; and still I say I cannot go. But you must. Now turn the horse and let us go home." He gathered up the reins, and Lucy, looking from his face to the sky, saw a great luminous star melting through the fading light of the western sky.

"Look, Jasper!" she cried pointing to the star; but he did not follow her direction, and instead caught her white hand and pressed it to his lips. Other years passed. The children who had come to Lucy clutching their primers in their chubby hands were now in the advanced classes. Her family and the community had accepted the fact that she would follow her bent until old age should incapacitate her; and, if the former grieved in silence over her willfulness and regretted their one interference with her will, the latter rejoiced that since such was to be her fate, they were blessed by her work.

As for Lucy herself, she had come at last into a little world of quiet happiness. She had conquered self, and standing on that vantage ground she had found she was mistress of her destiny. She perceived that while nothing any more could harm her, the very world seemed bent to give her happiness. She was living in a realm of love and benediction in her family, in the school and in the community. The song was now perpetually in her heart, the smile on her lips, and the sparkle of heart-gladdening in her eyes.

"It was worth while, all that went before, to come into such a kingdom," All day that thought had been with her. It was a tender April day, the last one of the school year; for Lucy had succeeded in having the term extended even beyond the time secured by Miss Cora. On the morning of the exhibition was to take place, followed in the afternoon by a picnic in the wood across the creek. There had not been much study, for the final drilling of the children in their parts of the entertainment they had prepared for parents and friends, had taken up the greater portion of the day. Now, with noisy shouts and laughter they had left, taking their books and slates with them. Lucy's roll-book and lunch basket were on the desk, and as she stood surveying the room, ready for the great event of the morning, a sudden wave of gratitude for the good that was allowed her, overspread her soul, and again she thought.

"It was worth while, all that went before, to come into such a kingdom." Then she was aware that someone was standing in the doorway. She turned quickly, the clutch of alarm at her heart, and saw a man, tall, bearded, well dressed, looking at her through the dusk that had descended upon the room.

"Lucy!" There was only one voice on earth so to call that name, and knowing Arthur Stanton was the speaker the woman saw her world which she had just held to be all-desirable vanishing around her, while the old wild

torturing love leaped into life, fighting blindly as it came.

He strode across the floor, and she knew he was coming to take her into his arms, crush his kisses upon her lips, knew he would do this thing, that she had no power within her to prevent it; and also knew that in so doing his hardly won manhood, his proudly held womanhood would be smirched, outraged, trampled upon.

"O Christ, save us!" The prayer stopped him at the desk, and as he looked at her across it, she knew that she had wronged him.

"I am free to come to you, Lucy," and the voice went to her in a wave of tenderness. "Were it not so—Oh, Lily! Miss! My Lily! Miss!"

THE END

AMBITION'S CONTEST

BY CHRISTINE FABER

CHAPTER II
THE COURTEYS

The "Courtney House," as it was familiarly known, having been in the proprietorship of the Courtneys from the time that the first of the family—emigrated from England—made himself a home in the then Dutch city of New York, was situated on a corner of one of the down-town streets, with its front looking out upon the Battery, and its rear facing a line of warehouses, whose dingy exterior formed no pleasant contrast to the row of elegant buildings in course of erection just beyond. It was a substantial building, though irregular in form, and unfashionable in appearance, and seemed, with its grim exterior, to frown on the improvements which modern times had made in the buildings about it. But the ocean breezes swept athwart its dark face, and the bright green of the Battery grass—which was then allowed to spring in its natural luxuriance—with the trees that skirted the grassy edge, made the house ancient and unfashionable as was its construction, a desirable residence. Such Mrs. Courtney evidently thought it, for she refused to locate her residence further up on the island as so many of her fashionable neighbors had done, and she persisted in a strange determination to have brought done to the building which might alter its external appearance. Within the massive structure, all the appurtenances of more modern times which wealth could supply, were collected—velvet car-pets, satin cushioned furniture, and embroidered curtains, centre tables of hewn oak; gilt paintings, with solid gold knobs; oil portraits by the celebrated masters of old; gilded vases, whose massive golden rims gleamed in the afternoon sunlight; while at each end were immense mirrors, which reflected and magnified the splendor and spaciousness of the elegant apartments. In the room adjoining were rows of volumes on every side; large, inviting chairs; a centre table covered with an embroidered cloth, upon which rested a curiously constructed lamp, and bowered glass windows, which allowed the light into the apartment with a subdued radiance that seemed to give a sacred air to the place. Throughout the house, in every room, was found the evidence of a highly cultured taste. It was thus from the time that Alban Courtney brought home his young Irish bride, and allowed her to remodel the interior of the house as her girlish fancies prompted, and it was evident that the most perfect taste. Her genteel management had made the old house on the Battery a paradise to him; whose home it had been from childhood, and the very servants were wont to love the will of the young mistress. The same servants who had welcomed her advent to the grim old mansion were with her still, and loved as of old the supposed widow, Mrs. Courtney; supposed, because the master of the house had gone away suddenly after his wife had donned deep mourning, which she had worn since. When questioned by wondering friends, she had answered:

"He is dead to me for a time," and persistent inquiry could elicit nothing further. Gradually the strange disappearance had ceased to be the principle theme of fashionable gossip, and Mrs. Courtney was conceded to be considered—a widow. Always reserved in her manner, she repelled more than ever the friendships which would have thrust themselves upon her, and, secluding herself almost entirely from society, she devoted her time to the careful nurturing of her two beautiful children. That they repaid her devoted-care was evident in their elegantly refined manners when abroad, their unselfish, affectionate demeanor at home; and "Master Howard" and "Miss Ellen" were regarded with no less affection than their mother by the warm-hearted domestics. It seemed to have been Mrs. Courtney's intention to educate both her children herself—as she was well qualified for doing—at least, until their tender years should have passed; but the boy's eager mind panting for the stimulus of rivalry, and his ambition being fired by accounts of school triumphs—which he sometimes heard from occasional playmates at the house—he implored his mother to send him to school. She feared the effect of incessant study upon his health, which had never been robust, but she yielded at length to his entreaties, and entered him as a pupil in a Cath-

olic school, which was at that time the most celebrated one of the kind in the city. Her tender, maternal instinct would have sent the carriage with him each morning and for him in the afternoon, but he indignantly refused, saying:

"I am not a girl, mother, and I want to seem no better than the other boys."

So the elegantly dressed little lad footed the mile which intervened between his home and the school—on stormy days alone being induced to use the carriage; and his mother's fear for the effect upon his health seemed to have been exaggerated, for save an occasional attack of illness, which rarely detained him from school more than a day, he continued in his wonted health and spirits. Her anxious heart had at length somewhat lulled its fears, though it was evident to even casual beholders that the boy grew every day more fragile and spirituelle in appearance, and her matronly pride asserted itself when year after year awarded to her son the first prize of his class.

This year was his last at school. A few months travel through the States had been planned to ensue, when his college life was to begin; hence his being chosen as the deliverer of the Valedictory. Upon that Valedictory he had well nigh expended all the strength of his nature, working on previous nights till long past midnight, despite the entreaties of his mother and the gentle remonstrances of his sister. Now, as both hung over the satin-curtained bed in his own room, whether he had been domestic, the mother censured herself for having permitted such a strain upon her boy's mental energies. "And you are right, Madam," answered the portly physician, who had attended the boy from his infancy.

"I know it," sobbed the lady; "but only save him this time, doctor, and he shall not glance into a book again."

"That would be out of your power," was the somewhat curt reply. "That forehead," pointing to the face, white as the pillow on which it rested, "betrays a mind that will never rest till it has worn itself out. But this is no time for regrets; we must work to save the lad."

And, tenderly as did Mrs. Courtney herself, the physician attended to his patient. The long, sultry summer had well nigh gone, the patient rallied from the fever which had succeeded his hemorrhage, then he recovered sufficient consciousness to know the loving forms about him, ere his eyes began to lose their wild, unearthly expression; and the Indian summer had begun ere he was able to recline in the invalid chair. His mother and sister were his constant companions; and, still too weak to speak, he was wont to press lovingly from one to the other, to press their hands, and sometimes to recline his head on his mother's shoulder.

One evening that Mrs. Courtney was summoned to the parlor to receive some kindly meaning, but boisterous visitor, the sick boy turned to the gentle girl at his side, saying, with sudden strength in his tones: "Ellen, separation from my books is killing me. Oh! for one hour of the study I used to have."

He looked mournfully toward the handsome bookcase, whose well-filled shelves constituted his own special library, and which he would have in his own room, with all the other apparatus that he deemed essential to his study. Thus glared the corners of the apartment; a small telescope lay on a centre table; maps with self-adjusting frames filled a recess; large parchment charts, with diagrams upon them drawn by his own hand, rested near a small cabinet of neatly labelled minerals, and a few crayon drawings, which he had done when very young, hung upon the walls.

"I am so much stronger tonight, Ellen," he said, when he had looked long and wistfully at his books; "your reading to me a little while cannot hurt."

"The doctor's orders," she hesitatingly answered. "We will defy for once," he replied smilingly, "and I will prescribe for myself. So, careful little sister, do my bidding tonight, at least till mother returns."

He seemed so much better as he leaned back on the velvet cushion, looking up with almost his own bright smile, and the least possible color in his cheeks, that tender hearted, loving little Ellen could not bear to refuse him. She brought the volume he requested, and, seating herself on an ottoman at his feet, began. Her voice, promising to be exquisite in its fine modulations, had already been so carefully trained by her accomplished mother, that her reading was somewhat marvellous for a girl of her years. The volume treated of ideas beyond her comprehension, but her naturalness of style and loving little Ellen thought that her mind as completely as they were doing to her brother. He was listening, while his eyes were that weirdly intense gaze which was his wont when deeply interested, and his cheeks assumed the vivid red of bygone months.

"How noble," he interrupted, "how grand such a life!" His sister closed the book, and laying her hand on his arm, said softly: "Do you think that God thought it so?" He answered a little impatiently: "I am not viewing his life in a roiling light; I am only looking at

its intellectual grandeur. But I am forgetting—you cannot understand these things just yet."

She answered as softly as before: "I know, dear Howard, that these things are far above me; but it seemed to me that a simple life of hidden virtues would be far greater than this showy lining of intellectual character as you call it."

"You are talking now, as nearly all girls do," he answered, a little scornfully. "Of course, you cannot understand the thoughts which agitate men's minds—you cannot conceive the delight it is to away multitudes by that powerful something in one's character, which influences them despite all will to the contrary; you cannot know what it is to feel one's power in this respect. Oh! the grandeur, the strength of such a mind. It might make one almost defy death."

He sat erect, but it was only for a moment. His head fell helplessly back on the cushion; the color died suddenly out of his cheeks, and a vivid stream rushed from his mouth. The agony in the scream which his sister gave caused him to open his eyes; but it was only to let the heavy lids close upon them instantly, and to sink into a stupor from which the combined efforts of the two physicians, whom Mrs. Courtney had distractedly summoned, failed to arouse him for hours.

"Ah," the broken-hearted mother moaned, "I would have given him to God without a murmur a few years hence—but not now—oh, no, no!" Ellen reproached herself as the cause of her brother's second hemorrhage, wrung her little hands and wept, till from sheer exhaustion she slumbered at last on the foot of his bed.

Wretched days passed till the lad was thought to be dying. Curious neighbors closely watched each visit of the physician, marvelling at the fierceness of sorrow for a child, when the disappearance of a husband had been borne with such apparent indifference. Everything in the shape of apparatus for study had been removed from the lad's room—his mother would not have a single book in sight, though the grave physician shook his head and pointing to the blue-veined temple which had just been released from an icy bandage, said:

"No use, Madam—that mind even now in its fever delirium is performing the labor of healthy days."

It seemed so, for the boy frequently raved of the studies in which he had been engaged, as if he were in the classroom with all the stimulus of class-rivalry about his ears. "Contrary to all expectations, death did not visit the lad then; and, when the grass was beginning to show its light green on the Battery, he was able to recline once more in the easy-chair. He was very pale and ethereal looking, and there was a supernatural brightness in his magnificent eyes, and a wasted look about his face, which seemed to betray how slight the tenure by which even now his life was held. But his mother wept tears of joy in seeing him so, and the pilgrimages to the nearest Catholic Church to offer thanks for her son's unexpected recovery; while his sister, anticipating his wishes, sought eagerly to gratify them all, save permitting a book to pass into his hands, or acceding to his desire of reading to him. He smiled sadly when first refused, but did not proffer his request again. From the window of the room he could look out on the bay, and he spent long hours in watching the numerous crafts as they passed and repassed. When interrogated about the persistent watch which he maintained, and remonstrated with on his desire to have the window open that the ocean breeze might fan his face, he answered impatiently:

"I'm denied books, which are to me part of my life. I cannot live without some such companionship, so that," pointing in the direction of the bay, "just now supplies their place. The vessels, passing to their destined ports, seemed like a panorama of souls, and the unpretending little schooners are emblematic of my gentle sister here."

Ellen was kneeling on the ottoman—her usual seat—beside his chair, with her clasped hands resting on the velvet arm, while Mrs. Courtney, standing at the centre table, was engaged in preparing some medicines. Howard had looked at neither while he spoke, but Ellen glanced toward him while she answered:

"And do not the humble little schooners perform as useful a part, in their way, as the ocean vessels, and will not God bless the humble souls as quickly as the grand, intellectual characters you speak about so often?"

He made an impatient gesture in his chair, and a half scornful look came into his face while he replied: "Why will you obtrude those religious views of yours into every conversation we hold?" "Why?" and the child's eyes looked up with a woman's earnestness in their depths. "Because, dear Howard, we ought to be humble in everything we do, or would wish to do, and"—speaking with a solemnity of tone beyond her years—"you call these my religious views—should they not be yours as well? Are we not children of the same faith? Have we not both been taught these principles?"

"Don't," interrupted Howard, striving to place his hand over her mouth; "do not moralize now. I can't bear it!" The phial in Mrs. Courtney's hand fell, shivering into glassy atoms at

her feet, and Howard and Ellen, looking up at the sound, saw her turn suddenly and walk hastily into the adjoining apartment; but neither suspected that she had left the room to conceal from them her sudden emotion.

TO BE CONTINUED

A NARROW ESCAPE

"Yes, but, John, can't you be serious, dear. Don't you see that I'm very much in earnest, you big foolish fellow," and as little Mrs. Donovan looked up in her husband's laughing face with a quivering lip and eyes perilously near to tears, there was no doubting the truth of her words.

"All right, little woman," John Donovan said, with sudden compunction, bringing to a quick conclusion the last lively steps of an Irish jig which he had just been performing in the middle of the sanded kitchen floor. The stalwart young farmer, handsome of face, brawny of limb, merry-eyed, and kindly of tone, had ever been of such a light-hearted and easy-going disposition that his friends sometimes said of him that he would still be found dancing and singing on his death-bed.

"What is it, dearie? Sure 'twould be the hard-hearted fellow, indeed, could refuse you anything. Tell me, Mollie, what is it that you want us to do, astoreen," he went on, in his coaxing, colloquial way, as his wife remained sad and silent.

"You know very well what it is, John," she answered, dejectedly. "That bothersome confession again!" he asked, with uplifted brows and a very wry face. "Ah, well, I'll promise you I'll think about it, little girl."

"Yes, but you always say that, though it's nearly three years now since you knelt to the priest, and tomorrow is Ascension Thursday, and the very last day for the performance of the Easter duty," his wife said, with a little sob in her voice. "And I'm getting so hopeless, so very disappointed in you, John."

His eyes rested on her pretty down-cast head with a look that wavered a moment between irritation and tenderness. Suddenly at the thought of all that his little Mollie, his dear wife, the loving mother of his lovely children had been to him:

"A perfect woman, nobly planned, To warn, to comfort and command,"

the latter feeling gained complete sway. "All right, little woman," he said, passing one arm affectionately about her. "Don't cry. I'm not worth crying about, my pet. And I'll do what you ask, I promise you—anything rather than see you fret."

Mollie lifted a grateful face, into which a sudden little radiance had crept like sunshine after rain. "Today?" she asked, eagerly. "Must it be today?" She nodded decisively. "Yes, if you want to fulfil your Easter duty for this year. Tomorrow is the very last day," she said again.

"Well, I must be off to Dublin Market this morning, so it will be a bit awkward," he began. "That is just the one of the very reasons I want you to go and make your peace with God," his wife said earnestly. Having lived all her life amidst quiet country lanes and fields, such places as cities and seaports and market places were fraught in Mollie's imagination with a thousand dangers. "You know, John, that but I'm miserable all the time till you come back, fearing you'd be killed by a train or a motor car, or maybe swept into the river by some of those wild cattle being shipped off to foreign parts."

"No fear, dearie," he laughed confidently. "I can take better care of myself than that."

"But one never knows," she went on, "what may happen or what moment we may be suddenly called on to appear before God. Think of all those poor people who went down in the Titanic! And of the poor young lady who was killed the other day by the motor, not a hundred yards from our gate!"

"God help them, poor creatures," her husband said with feeling. He had been amongst those who helped the unhappy victim of the last accident from beneath the overturned motor, and he could not yet think of the poor dead girl without a shudder. "After all, confession is not such a hard thing at all, John, when one makes up one's mind to it. And one feels happy after it—just as though one were walking on air." Mollie went on hopeful at last that her words were having some real effect. "If you went into one of the city churches as soon as the market is over, the priests are sure to be hearing confessions there all day."

"All right, I'll do that," her husband said quickly, as though catching on to an unlooked for chance. That would be much easier after all than having to go to Father Tom Dempsey, who, of course was very good, but in whose black books John Donovan felt uncomfortably sure he had long been now.

"You'll promise me, dear, for sure," Mollie asked, pleadingly. "Surely, Mollie, I promise," And he kissed her with a smile.

John Donovan kept his word. Mightily glad he felt of it, as he stepped from the cool duskiness of the great city church into the fresh radiance of the May day that very same evening. Truly, as Mollie said, he felt as though he were walking on air, as though the heavy accumulated

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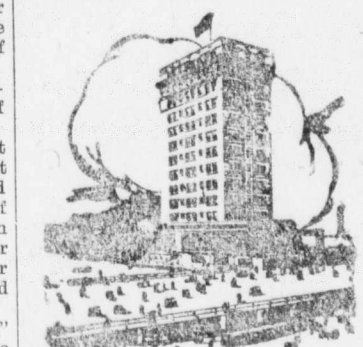
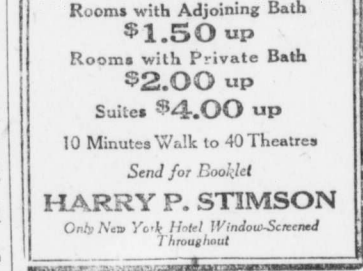
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